

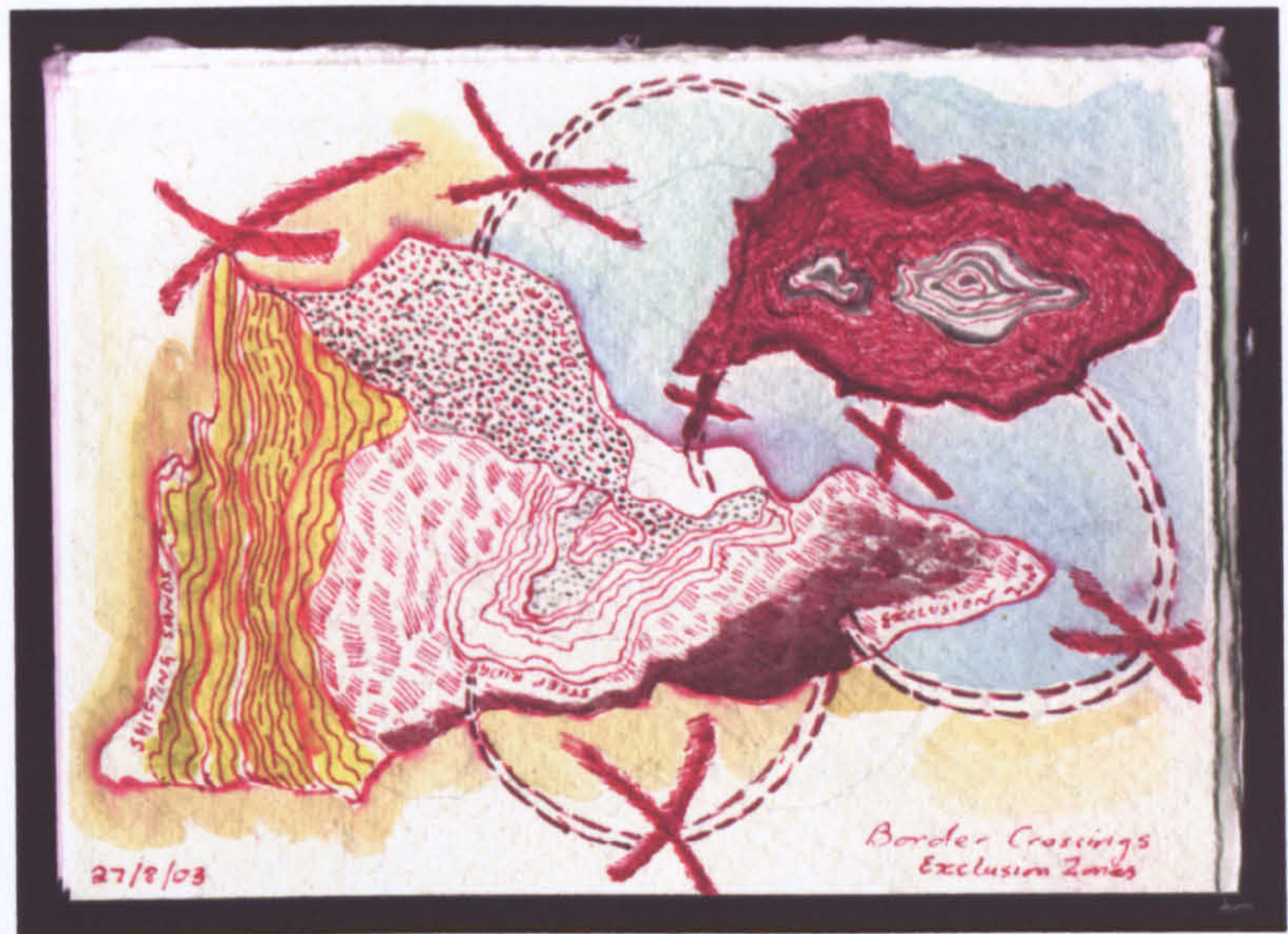
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**BORDER CROSSINGS:
In/Exclusion and Higher Education in Art and Design**



Submitted for the degree of PhD, April 2004

29/04

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ABSTRACT

This study explores ideas of inclusion and exclusion – *in/exclusion* - within art and education contexts, more specifically how they shift and alter within the processes of selection to one Scottish institution of Higher Education in Art and Design. The empirical focus of selection is told through detailed narratives that follow the thinking and responses of a diversity of selectors to the visual and written submissions of wide ranging applicants. These discussions make visible the ways in which candidates are deliberated into and out of the institution and are layered further by a broader quantitative look, exploring how this detail plays out more widely in the chances of in/exclusion across all applicants.

This research has implications for a number of areas, including policy and practice on social in/exclusion, particularly as it relates to the arts and Higher Education. However, it is not solely an access or admissions study; it tries to extend understanding and approaches to in/exclusion by questioning what people are being included into as well as the ways of in/excluding. It gets inside and lays open a process of decision-making that has not previously been explored in this kind of depth and is made visible here through an often *troubling*, personal, methodological and theoretical assemblage of stories and crossings. My own shifts as a learner, artist and educator en/unfold with selection narratives and rich visual images that confront and question issues of representation, difference and risk as they surface within the research. It is this very detail of insight, getting inside those areas that are often unspoken and unseen that

makes this investigation so unusual, adding new layers of questioning and understanding to the many approaches that exist in thinking and acting on in/exclusion.

If there was any sense that in/exclusion to Higher Education in the Arts and Design might be determined or resolved simply by altering indicators and numbers in terms of social class, education or the spatiality of where an individual lives, then this study offers a different kind of view. It reveals a more complex process of looking and decision-making, in which selectors often try to see beyond the surface of the visual and written in search of the individual. It shows the shifting balance in what is looked for in a process that is fraught with chance, ethics, trust and emotional dilemmas. In doing so, it makes the case for a more reflexive and ontological engagement in approaches to in/exclusion. Nothing is certain. In/exclusion becomes an assemblage of elements that displace across selectors, taking new forms and combinations that are rooted in qualities that *applicants* bring with them as well as what *selectors* bring into the process. How these fold together can lead to very different outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to a large number of people who have been the greatest of friends and support throughout this study. The research would not have been possible without the initial backing of the institution in which the research took place. I am indebted in particular to all of the academic staff that laid open their practice, the team in the Registry and the Directorate who endorsed the idea in its early stages - all offered tremendous generosity. It would not have made it to these final stages without the support of the Institute of Education at Stirling University, who not only awarded a full time scholarship to the study but also bolstered its development with unprecedented encouragement and guidance, in particular through the supervision of Julie Allan and Vernon Gayle.

Paul Cosgrove not only provided continual day to day motivation but also acted as an invaluable and very patient friend and sounding board over the entire period. I am indebted to Paul for resolving numerous 'working with long document' problems and for scanning and formatting images. Paul also helped to rationalise the initial selection map, laying out the possible permutations that an application might take.

Jane Telfer, with more imagination than I could ever have hoped to muster on my own, worked to take this initial mapping of selection into the graphic and pictorial form that appears in the study. Jane takes all credit for the final appearance of the visuals. She made everything happen that I wanted, selecting and juxtaposing areas from my notebooks with other images and text - and then went some more.

Adele Patrick was the most supportive and very best of 'critical friends' that anyone could wish for, constantly encouraging and always there to offer advice and friendship. To all other family and friends who encouraged and motivated, I am especially grateful.

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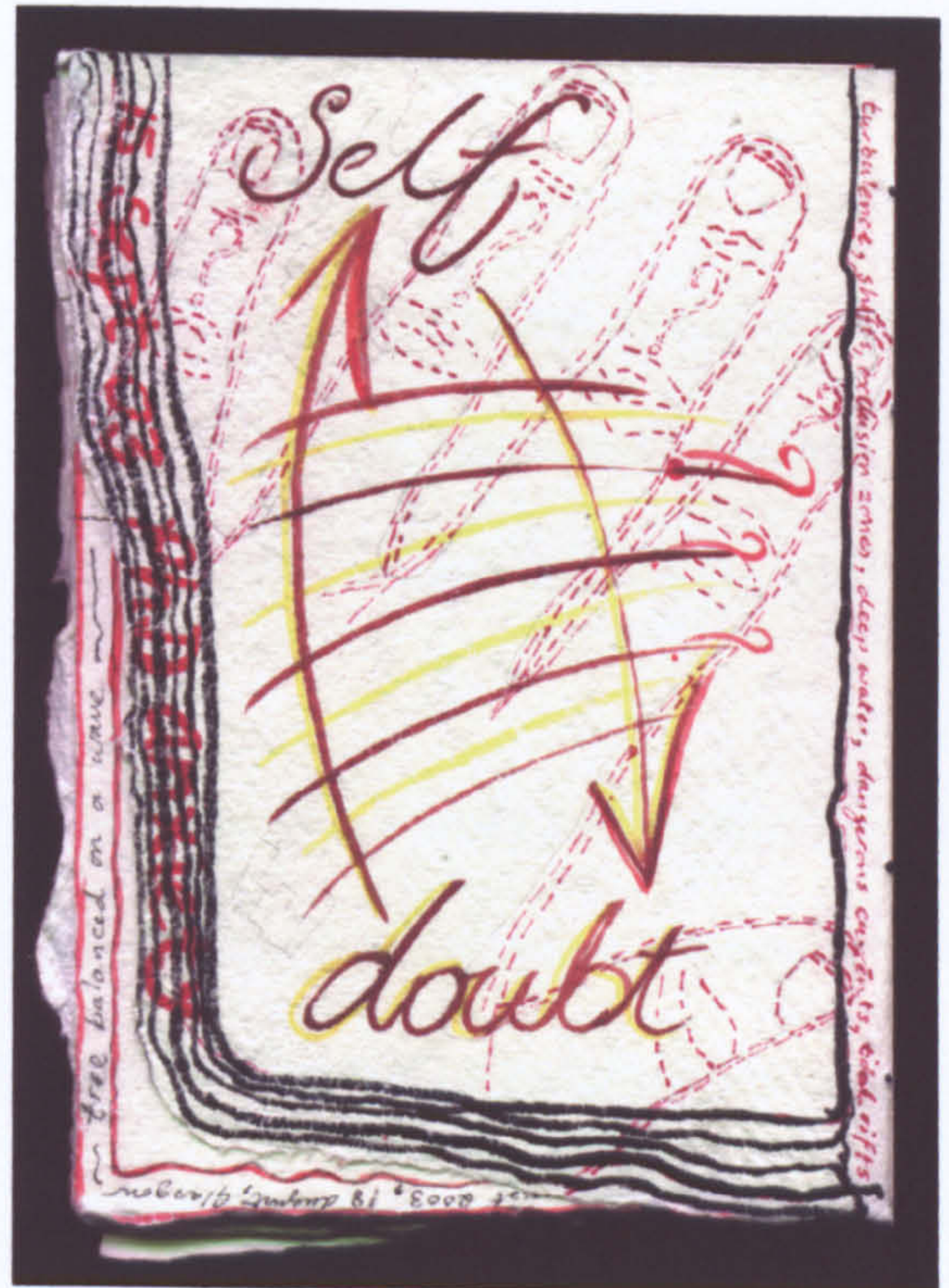
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Introduction



STORIES AND CROSSINGS

I now understand better why I experienced so much difficulty when I began speaking [...]. I know now just what was so awesome about beginning, for it was here, where I speak now, that I listened to that voice [...] where its possessor is no longer (Foucault, 1972a:237).

Writing about the difficulty of beginning, Foucault suggests that the way to “enter this risky world of discourse”(Ibid:215) is not to stand too long outside of it looking in, but to become enmeshed in it, “borne way beyond all possible beginnings” (Ibid.). This research is part of that desire to get inside of something, in this case to explore ideas of inclusion and exclusion – in/exclusion - within art and education contexts, more specifically the processes of selection within one Scottish institution of Higher Education in Art and Design.

At a time of rapid expansion in Higher Education, such a study has implications for a number of areas, including policy and practice on social in/exclusion, particularly as it relates to the arts and Higher Education. It also has relevance to widening access as well as concerns to develop fair admissions procedures and related processes of quality assurance. However, it was never intended solely as an access or admissions study, and along the way of this research journey it has shifted in form and structure into an “assembling” (Rose, 1996:169) of stories and crossings, personal, methodological and theoretical. This assemblage of parts draws on a wide field of thought and includes ideas of borders, crossings, collisions, heterotopias, risks and ontology and shapes how the writing is organised, as well as the thinking within it. As an assemblage it draws closer to the practices of visual art that my own education and experience is grounded in. Yet

these overlaps are also what make it more difficult to fit readily into any one specific field or genre, fuelling some of the uneasy, though productive, self-doubt and anxiety that also runs through this writing, in particular over issues of representation.

As can be seen from the title of the thesis, I have opted to draw the terms inclusion and exclusion together - *in/exclusion*. In much of the political discourse these shift and appear interchangeably (Scottish Office, 1999a), suggesting something indeterminable as well as a sense of process between them, a state of flux, where one cannot exist without the other. This inter-dependency or “paradoxical inter-relationship” (Edwards and Miller, 2000:4), where “traces of exclusion” are inherent within “the practices of inclusion” (Ibid:3) reinforce the ideas of crossing that run throughout the layers of this study. The empirical focus of the visual arts, specifically art schools' processes of selection, also embraces such cross over, in particular through the methodological folding of the ethnographic with the quantitative. The spaces of selection where the qualitative work takes place is seen as a critical boundary and interface between the processes of one institution, its staff and potential applicants. It is selectors at work in those boundaries and the stories that they tell at these points that give insight to the diverse approaches and emotions of decision-making. The texture of the selection narratives grows out of the detail of rich observations of selectors at work and follows their thinking and verbalised responses to the paperwork and visual submissions of a breadth of applicants as they are deliberated into and out of the institution.

This is a process of decision-making that has not previously been explored in this kind of depth and is made visible here through an unprecedented level of access and

openness by selectors and the institution itself. Nothing is “sanitized” (Lather and Smithies, 1997:xvii) in these narratives and ensuring selectors and applicants’ anonymity has been a key part of the means of representation. Studies of selection have most often been told through interviews, rather than observations, and in the words of admissions officers (Thompson, 1997) or student voices (Green and Webb, 1997). This study is different in going directly inside these processes as they happen, processes that are in themselves unusual, involving very distinct areas of practice. In addition to the application paperwork, selection to art and design involves the submission of a portfolio of visual work that is central to an applicant’s journey through this decision-making. The selection stories reveal a complex, often highly specialist and shifting process of looking and interrogation, fraught with risk, chance, ethical and emotional dilemmas. These ideas also shift from the micro and are extended and troubled further by larger-scale quantitative work, which enables a broader mapping of all applicants’ experiences in relation to in/exclusion from the institution. Together with the qualitative, this macro look at selection reinforces the complexity of factors and processes that appear to affect an individual’s chances of entry.

The study as a whole and in particular both the methodology and selection stories, are overlaid with my own narrative and reflexivity on the process. Being *in* the research experience was troubling of and to myself as an artist, educator and learner grappling with new and other academic conventions; there was also a growing sense of my own shifting and multiple-selves (Peshkin, 1988). My insider/outsider relationship to the institution in which the study took place was also part of this troubling. The relation had

been a sometimes confusing mix of part time PhD student cum teacher and researcher, which added to the tangle of trust, ethics and emotions raised by the selection narratives. The shift to Stirling University and into very different and mostly unknown academic conventions led to my struggle to find ways of making the research process feel like my own and that grappling with practice is also a central part of this study. Throughout, I draw on a wide range of approaches and thinking, not only from writers but importantly the more visual and political “border pedagogy” (Giroux, In Garoian, 1999:63) of artists and art educators. This has been an important personal means of questioning and understanding the research process, as well as many current approaches to in/exclusion.

Culpitt (1999) makes the point that as “questions” about particular subjects and areas:

Seem, increasingly, to be part of the commonality of public discussion, there is a need [...] to look again at [...] issues that we have either become bored by or so certain of our assumptions that we have stopped thinking (ix-x).

Amidst such a broad and current gaze of looking at Higher Education and in/exclusion, it seems particularly pertinent and even more critical that research and practice tries to find new ways of arriving at understanding and knowing. The crossings and collisions of this study are part of my own attempt to come to something differently, as an arts practitioner, traversing and questioning how art practice might be both troubled *by* and troubling *to* ideas and approaches to in/exclusion. Bhabha (1994) suggests that in the “borderlines of the ‘present’” and the “shiftiness of the prefix ‘post’ [...] we find ourselves in the moment of transit” between “inside and outside, inclusion

and exclusion [...] an exploratory, restless movement [...] hither and thither, back and forth” (1). This is precisely where I feel myself to be and the space that I hope this study might inhabit.

RESEARCH JUNCTURES AND SIGNPOSTS

My reasons for wanting to step inside these institutional processes are bound up in a personal and professional background of crossings. As someone who was part of the first generation in my own family to move into Higher Education and the arts, I consciously shifted my art and education practice into diverse, formal and informal sites (Dean, 1996, 1999, 2000a). It was this movement between such spaces that shaped my concern to understand where different experiences might overlap and collide with the growing discourses of social inclusion and exclusion. My visual art base initially prodded me towards a more practical interventionist study, bridging Higher Education and the community contexts I had personal and professional links with. However, art’s role within approaches to in/exclusion was the very thing that led to my questioning of what art really achieved, for whom and whether some other kind of probing and understanding was necessary.

The decision on which way to head with this study was also very much influenced by the wider social and political context I found myself working within as an artist and educator. Current government and funding body concerns with in/exclusion in Higher Education had led to wide ranging developments in institutional approaches to increasing and widening participation. Beyond the Dearing (NCIHE, 1997a), Garrick

(NCIHE, 1997b) and Kennedy Reports (FEFC, 1997), a range of related studies were also emerging; such as Gibb et al's (1998) index of deprivation in Scotland that linked lack of participation in education to poverty indices and post codes. Raab et al's (1998) identifying maps and postcodes of participation in Higher Education emphasised the spatiality of these exclusions. Woodrow et al's (1998, 2002) audit of institutional approaches to widening access foreground funding body concerns with the identification of *best practice* in achieving inclusion. Leaver destinations for Scottish Secondary Schools (Scottish Office, 1999b) relayed details of performance in relation to Higher Education participation at both local authority and national levels. Performance Indicators (HEFCE, 1999, 2000) offered measures for participation based on age, social class and type of school and allowed every UK Institution of Higher Education to view its performance in comparison with others. Considerable funding was being directed to programmes that aimed to increase awareness and enable experience of Higher Education amongst individuals and groups currently under-represented, particularly in terms of age, geography, race, and social class¹. The field of in/exclusion appeared busy, producing material that showed the extent of in/exclusion yet also seemed to lack a more critical engagement with the detail and texture of people and place.

Much further into the study, I became aware of more discursive analyses of inclusion and selectivity that opened up experience in more complex ways, such as Allan's (1999) ideas on individuals' recognition and resistance to a discourse of lack and deficit often externally exercised upon them. Thompson (1997) and Williams' (1997) research into

¹ For example *GOALS* in the West of Scotland, with its focus on state schools recognised as having a low uptake into Higher Education (See <http://www.GOALS.ac.uk>).

mature students and Higher Education, showed how admissions' discourses often constructed and made such applicants feel like outsiders. Brown and Scase's (1994a) work on employment selection, revealed the shift from a desired human and educational capital of skills and qualifications, to a more subjective social capital of fitting in. In/exclusion was now also about applicants' suitability, based on how you looked, dressed and talked (Warhurst and Nickson, 2001). Quantitative work by Callender (2002) and Gayle et al (2002) used statistics in what appeared as more meaningful ways, relating the effects of financial and familial variables on participation. Additionally, the detailed, qualitative work of Reay (1998), Reay et al (2002), Archer and Hutchings (2000) and Archer, Hutchings and Ross (2003) explored individuals' reasons for *self-in/exclusion* particularly amongst the working class.

Writers such as Skeggs (1997) and Reay (1996, 1997, 2001) added to these ideas more reflexively by discussing their own *working class* shifts into *academia*, questioning the crisis of identity that arises between where you come from and what you become². Many of these writings and studies magnified Bourdieu and Passeron's (1998) ideas on social and cultural capital, as well as Beck's (1999) concepts of risk, both personal and financial as part of the explanation for an under and over representation or in/exclusion of people within Higher Education. Despite the importance of such research, much of the work particularly in relation to social class and in/exclusion,

² The term working class is often used in the literature to describe in particular, social groups IIIM, IV and V, skilled manual, semi and unskilled workers. Like Reay and Skeggs in particular, I recognise that fixed classifications that label people as one thing or another are problematic. However, as Skeggs and Reay point out, they also convey a potential for shared experience that stems from background, which can often make these crossings even more difficult to navigate.

remained either broad based and generic in terms of data sources and policy implications, or, conversely, honed in on a very specific spectrum of social class³. Attention to the *particularity* of subject specialisms was rarely, if at all, addressed. This seemed to have particular relevance in terms of areas such as Higher Education in Art and Design, where the approach to admissions and selection and nature of learning and teaching is distinctive. Art schools select on a mix of paperwork, interview and, uniquely, a portfolio of visual work. Learning and teaching is mainly delivered in studios and workshops rather than lecture theatres and classrooms. While the role of the arts was clearly not outside of this in/exclusion surveillance (Blake Stevenson Ltd, 2000; Matarasso, 1997), research and practice seemed to bypass the potentially important contextual issues that related to specific fields, in particular the very area that I worked in, the visual arts.

Throughout the focus of this study, the four Scottish Institutions of Art and Design operated a 4 College system of admissions that sat outside of UCAS⁴. This *Scottish Joint College Application Scheme* (SJAS) was the principal route that anyone wishing to study Fine Art and Design at one of the Scottish Art Schools would take. While the process allowed applicants to declare both a first and second choice of institution from across the four colleges, how selection operated in practice inside each institution was open to distinct practices and “academic autonomy” of approach (Schwartz and Webb,

³ As mentioned previously, most typically Social Classes IIIM, IV and V as determined by the Classification of Occupations 1980 (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys). In this study I extend this to encompass a much broader spectrum of social classes.

⁴ Universities and Colleges Admissions Services (UCAS) is the route that most applicants applying to Higher Education would follow to submit an application.

2002:180)⁵. In this particular institution, applicants declared a first, second and third choice of specialist department selected from a pool of ten possible areas across two faculties or schools. It was these choices that determined who looked at an application and associated visual work.

Selection to the first year of a four year Fine Art or Design BA (Hons) course was of particular interest as it involved the largest number of applicants across all of the institutions. On average over the six years preceding this study, applications to all four of the Scottish Art Schools had been close to 11,000. These paper applications materialised into some 9000 portfolios for a target intake of roughly 3,000⁶. This does not reveal fully the level of competition for entry to individual Colleges; applications to particular institutions have consistently been four and five times in excess of the numbers accepted, while others receive application numbers much closer to their target intake.

SJAS offered access to a contained and specific time slot, large numbers of applicants, and, due to the range of specialist subject areas involved, a potentially wide range of views across a gamut of selectors. It was a system that provided an important interface between the institution and its potential applicants and in the case of this study, led directly into the administrative and academic centres of the school. However, this long-standing process was on the cusp of change to UCAS. It was a change that would make the process part of a more centralised system and in the long run it was hoped

⁵ This is acknowledged in guidelines for application to the Four Colleges, which flags up that all four Scottish Art Colleges have their own selection procedure.

⁶ This information was taken from a *Scottish Joint Application Scheme 1999 Application numbers* memo. Figures for one institution were incomplete which would increase these numbers slightly.

would also alleviate some of the administrative burden of selection, in particular increased demands for statistical monitoring. However, it would also potentially mean change in how selection to Fine Art and Design was conducted at a practical level. The timing would be different and the process of detailed portfolio review in tandem with the paperwork, then decision on interview, seemed likely to change.

The shifts that would be brought about by UCAS were not the only factors that made this seem like a critical moment to undertake such a study. Alongside the expansion of the Higher Education sector new and developing legislation was being introduced, including *the Race Relations Amendment* and *Disability Discrimination Acts*. New forms of admissions training were being developed and piloted, as was consultation on fair admissions procedures (DFES, 2003). All of these seemed set to have an effect on how institutions worked, in particular their processes of admissions, learning and teaching and retention and support. As institutions struggled to find ways through such change, it seemed even more important to trace and understand what currently went on in the hope of informing potential shifts. Selection was a space through which to explore how processes of decision-making within the Fine Arts and Design might extend, overlap or disrupt this wider social and political context of thinking and practice on in/exclusion.

As well as the questions that these areas prompted, the final decision on the focus of the study was sign-posted by work I had just completed on non-traditional students' routes into Higher Education in Art and Design⁷. This was a process that took me right inside the workings of the institution. While a wealth of information resided in the

⁷ This was a six-month part time study, funded by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council. 'Non traditional' related to applicants aged 21 and over.

applicants' application forms, much of the data wasn't inputted to software that would enable any dynamic exploration. The institution had information on students who gained entry, however little means of moving it around⁸. As well as a curiosity over ways in which the limitations of existing data input and analysis might be addressed, I wanted to know more about the kinds of applicants that applied and did not gain entry. Who were they? Where did they come from? In what ways, if any, were they different from those who got in? What factors - personal, educational, and institutional - might affect applicants' chances of in/exclusion? How might selection practices shift across selection areas? What might this interrogation offer to approaches to in/exclusion and how might it affect understanding of art and education's relation to this area in practice? It was this complex mix of factors that led me to go inside these selection processes; to try and understand the *why* and the *how* of in/exclusion to Higher Education, specifically in relation to the arts and design.

STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION - VISUAL AND WRITTEN ROUTES

The writing in this thesis is organised into five further sections, each with its own detailed introduction. My concern here is not to repeat any of this, but only to flag up some of the key ideas that I try to engage with in each area, opening up some of the themes and crossings that emerge. Before going into this, it is important to say a little about the use and role of visuals in the writing and their importance to the study. Visual

⁸ Interestingly, the main way I was able to get information on students' residence, i.e. local authorities and postcodes was through discussion with the Finance Department, who at that time offered more flexible access to information.

images are threaded through the text and are a mix of those sourced from other artists' work and my own personal notebook entries, made over the course of the study. These visuals, not only the latter ones, are part of my concern to render the personal in ways other than the written. They are also part of an interest in offering different kinds of access to the text and ideas within it and finally, but no less importantly, the visuals are part of a desire to bring some tactility to the object or artefact of the thesis itself. I have often found the look of a PhD thesis austere and once inside, the impenetrability seems reinforced by the sparseness in the layout of such a volume of words. I hope that these visuals help with the accessibility and perhaps encourage an interest in looking inside.

Writers such as Stanley (1992) have written about the dissolution of "apparent boundaries between the autobiographical self and others" (13), which Coffey (1999) describes as a movement from ethnography to projects of "ethno-autobiography" or "auto-ethnography", where it is less clear where self ends and ethnography begins (155). While Coffey suggests it is "epistemologically wrong to deny the situatedness of the self" (Ibid:22), she also cautions the risks of becoming too self-centralising. One of my biggest struggles throughout this study has been how to incorporate my own emotional entanglement into the text in ways that would raise awareness of its importance, without falling into any "complacent apathy of self centralization" (Spivak, 1996:101). I wrangled over how to do this and in the end, decided that the use of visuals had a key part to play. However, I wanted them to be more than just illustrations, whether of artists' work or memories and emotional triggers that surfaced in my own journals. The visuals had to add to the experience of reading, and hopefully understanding, of the

study. Between sections, the images are intended to visually punctuate the shift between each part, opening up space between one area of writing and another. Inside of the chapters, rather than wrapped up *in* the body of the text, I have chosen to bring these visuals *alongside*, as an assemblage of image and text. The choice of translucent paper on which some of these images are printed allows a layering to be built up, where the reverse of images covers, but does not fully obscure the text below. These translucent sheets have to be peeled back, turned over, and laid or pressed on to the opposite white sheet in order to read in yet another way, at the same time releasing the text below to a more familiar kind of reading.

This approach extends into the visuals of the statistics. It would have been straightforward to import tables and charts directly into the writing but again I wanted to soften these and give more of a sense of their being worked *on* and worked *out*. In their original software rendered format, the statistics are hard-lined and clinical looking and I worried that they might be too off-putting to engage with unless the reader was really familiar with terms such as chi, phi and degrees of freedom. I have rewritten these statistics by hand, with a soft leaded pencil that smudges and changes tone. I have not hidden where mistakes have been made, erased and written again and in this kind of appearance they feel closer to how the process of thinking and analysis actually was. It wasn't straightforward and clear as the software print out can make it appear. It was one of getting it wrong and trying again. The data necessary to understand how the statistics are written up in the text is all there, but is in a slightly different form and one that I

hope might make it a little easier to engage with⁹. This is an approach I have used in the past in my own artwork, where language communicates on the more familiar level of literary reading but also the visual. Miskowiec (1993) describes this approach as “etching words upon [...] objects and images” that at times appear almost “hieroglyphic” (9): “we know they are words and have meaning, but we may not (always) know what those meanings are; their revelation remains incomplete” (Ibid.). I hope as Derrida (1976) proposes that this use of the visual is a *differance* that is insightful and helpful but also adds to the experience of reading.

Productive collisions: personal, literature and art is the first of the crossings. This section extends insight to the motivation behind the study, by opening up some of my own personal and professional crossings and experiences of in/exclusion. The idea of trouble that runs throughout the study is also introduced here, as difficult visual and textual representations of in/exclusion lay open ideas of difference and risk. A wide range of writing and thinking related to in/exclusion is drawn upon, including Foucault, Lefebvre, Bachelard, Douglas, Kristeva, Lister, Levitas, Bourdieu and Passeron, amongst many others, who help navigate shifting ideas of social control, normalisation, social geography, spatiality, risk, blame, and social and cultural reproduction. The New Labour turn from *exclusion* to *inclusion* and movement from ideas of segregation and individual blame to processes of social and cultural assimilation is charted through the changing terminology of political and policy discourse, showing a range of emerging

⁹ Interestingly, it was only through my re-drawing and re-writing of the tables and figures that I actually felt that I understood them more clearly. It helped me to see and come at them differently, opening up my own understanding.

government tactics and strategies for monitoring and measuring in/exclusion. The sites of education and art are entered into, examining how in/exclusion plays out in these fields. The work of a wide range of artists and art projects signal how ideas of the heterotopia and border pedagogy might challenge approaches to in/exclusion, engaging with and within the tensions of representation and contesting assimilation through resistance and complexity of approach. These include work such as the Heidelberg community in Detroit's transformation of their neighbourhood, Tele-Vecindario's challenging publicly sited media renderings of local people's views on external interventions, Ewald's visual literacy projects and Lacy's large-scale community performances.

Troubling methodology opens up the trouble of *being in* the research experience. As well as journeying through the qualitative and quantitative methodology and empirical context of the study, bounded fields and academic conventions in research and writing are also questioned. This area engages with ideas of multiple selves, ontology, truth and the problem of the real, and the ethical tangle of research, in particular issues of representation. An equally broad range of writers including, Eagleton, De Certeau, Lather, Spivak, Baudrillard, hooks and García Márquez weave through enfolding ideas of memory, narrative and critical fiction as I struggle to make the process of research, analysis and writing feel closer to the processes of art-making. Again I draw on and present the visual work of artists such as Kahlo, Fusco and Gomez-Peña as a way of coming to methodology, analysis and writing in other kinds of ways, questioning forms of writing and the role of the reader in the making of the text.

Case studies of selection enters into the individual selection stories and shows the complexity of crossings and shifts as applicants and their visual work are openly discussed, folding in and out of selectors' narratives and into and out of the institution. A language of chance and risk is relayed in decision-making tied into ideas of certainty/uncertainty, readiness/non-readiness and teachability/unteachability. The troubling of methodology in practice is rendered visible as the role of ethics and emotions surface amongst selectors, as well as in my own shifts as a learner moving through the selection process, trying to make sense of experience and finding myself both part of and complicit in it. The visual plays an important part here too as applicants' routes through the process are plotted visually for each individual, helping find a way through the complexity of their journey, possible choices and outcome.

En/unfolding selection is an attempt to take the selection narratives out into a wider field of applicants, drawing on other selectors' words as well as the quantitative work to extend and open out some of the key issues raised. Deleuze's (1990) idea of the fold offers the framework for these en/unfolding narratives and statistics to cross over, accentuating the discord between processes of looking and rendering further explanations for risk and chance as applicants' scores, interview and entry odds are made visible.

Visual and discursive crossings tries to find ways of re-articulating the complexity of the selection process and the study as a whole into propositions for what art might bring to in/exclusion that is different from and challenging to many current approaches. Visible and devolved criteria, reflexive spaces, wider crossings, and the place of ethics,

emotions, ownership, responsibility, risk-taking and ontology all emerge from the research as potential ways of learning *from* practice in order to put back *into* practice. Stefani's (2002) and Schwartz and Webb's (2002) concerns with reflexivity as a space for individual and institutional development are key to these propositions. Schwartz and Webb (2002) make the point that "assessment has long tended to be a 'closed', individual and autonomous activity" (184). This study signals that re-thinking approaches to in/exclusion, in particular within institutions, requires a challenge to ideas of transparency as a vehicle for proving rather than improving (Ball, 2000), to more open reflection and self-interrogation. It gets inside of that *closed* space, with selectors exposing their "practice", "warts and all" (Schwartz and Webb, 2002:184), reinforcing the need and potential for another kind of transparency; not only an appearance, but one rooted in more bold and honest work on our selves and the processes we employ. I hope in my own reflexivity that I also achieve this, by engaging with the tensions of selection and the research process, in particular confronting my own sense of fallibility, or as Gomez-Peña writes, *being in the heart of the wound*¹⁰. It is not an easy space and at a time of increased scrutiny of practice it is this very openness that sparks such trouble in this study, as the ethical dilemmas, responsibilities and risks of visibility become even more magnified.

Drawing on Marcuse, Becker (1996) suggests that the "strength of art" also "lies in its Otherness", in "its incapacity for ready assimilation. To be effective, art must exert its capacity for estrangement" (43). The experience should not be "easy" (Ibid.). Art should not be about assimilation into "the existent society but at each turn", should "challenge

¹⁰ Personal inscription by Gomez-Peña in his book, *The New World Border* (1996).

the assumptions of that society” (Ibid.). This study makes the case for engagement with complexity and a different relation to risk and risk-taking in order to challenge practice. It reinforces the importance of crossing into difficult sites and the need for institutional advocacy for individuals to take these risks, opening up space for more productive collisions and conditions for “critique, reflection and support” (Schwartz and Webb, 2002:184).

Productive Collisions: Personal, Literature and Art



INTRODUCTION

“Still stuck” (10/8/2001 - personal journal entry during first literature review attempt)

Writing a literature review was perhaps the biggest and earliest struggle. Institutional protocol stipulated that this should be completed by a specific point in time; one that didn't seem to fit the trajectory I was on. A literature review at such a specific stage, suggested that there was a linear route through things, punctuated at specific intervals by requirements and this only increased my sense of anxiety over how I fitted into this kind of approach. On reflection it wasn't just the timing that created the problem; it was my not quite knowing how a review should look, what it should be or do, and, if I am honest, also being nervous of writing. I hadn't come out of that kind of experience. I had little history to draw on. It took three attempts - four if I include this piece of writing - to find a way through it all. As I tried to lay out some order to the literature, the breadth of writing on in/exclusion became entangled with experience - personal and professional - both my own work as an artist and educator as well as that of other visual arts practitioners. Together they were a means of anchoring, questioning and making sense of each other and helped trouble the *why* of in/exclusion; *how* I understood it through my own experience, as well as via what others said, wrote and practised.

Personal Crossings charts briefly my own shifts as one of the first generation in my family to move into Higher Education and the arts, as well as crossing into diverse areas of teaching and development in education. I use an early personal memory to get inside this area, to contextualise and help clarify my motivation, locus and approach. I also use

media references and images from my own art education practice to reinforce how ideas and approaches to in/exclusion appeared to me in practice.

In/exclusion acts as both a break and a tie between *Personal Crossings* and *Productive Collisions*. A broad range of theoretical, empirical writings and research are drawn upon in an attempt to trouble some of the more problematic issues I encountered in relation to in/exclusion, in particular the construction of ideas of risk. These writers offered a means of moving conceptually through in/exclusion by questioning its operation across a range of sites.

Productive Collisions, draws on wider forms of art and education practice that illustrate the sometimes difficult and hard hitting approaches that artists have taken to issues of in/exclusion. As art is increasingly adopted as both a strategy and site for inclusive practices, this section explores how such *productive collisions* can trouble in/exclusion and yet also find themselves at the heart of contention. While I have presented these three areas separately, it is really this assemblage of the personal, art and literature that I hope, reinforces the sense of crossings between them.

PERSONAL CROSSINGS

End of summer term, exams over, pupils drifted off and school seemed to empty; I spent all the days that I could in the art department. That morning, I'd climbed the stair well to the top of the building. Looking through the window, the concrete play field opened out on to mostly disused parkland, greying post war tenements and the tip of a giant water tower that dominated the north east skyline of the city. In this light and quiet there was a sense of how Glasgow's planners might have envisaged Cranhill; a new housing scheme on the outskirts of the city, hilly and green¹¹, a place for families emptied out from the inner city. The art

¹¹ Cranhill was and still is hilly and rolling. Place names were made up of far off lighthouses and remnants of the past such as Sugarolly Mountains - all of which conjured up almost fairytale dimensions.

department took up the top floor north section of the school that my six brothers and sisters attended with, before and after me. I heard somewhere that it had the accolade of being one of the first comprehensives in Europe but any former glory was well hidden beneath the now dilapidating interior and exterior. However, climb the stairs to the art department and another vista was opened up. From the windows of different rooms you could see north to the hills of the Campsie; eastwards, the scheme shifted into other more distant schemes, beautiful, as they shelved one on top of the other. West, the towers of the University of Glasgow could just be seen and south, the distant hills of the Cathkin braes. A 360-degree panorama was there; in winter big sunsets hung low in the sky and in summer, streaming sunshine days were spent drawing outside on the school rooftop¹²

But this day would be different from others. I was 16, heading into my 5th year as I entered the art room. My teacher was there, smiling; he had good news for me he said. I'd been accepted for Castle Toward, a residential visual arts course for 4-6th year pupils, put forward by their art department as 'good' at art, with potential to go to art school. I was chuffed. "You know you can apply for help to go" he said. The excitement dissolved into embarrassment. He must have seen it on my face and added that these things were there to take advantage of. "Think about it" he said. I did, all the way home and the more I thought, the worse it sounded. I worked in the evenings. I had my own money. Why would he mention this? Surely he could only have asked if he thought I was poor? It was the first time that I remember, where it seemed that where you lived might be the way that people saw you. I lived in a council house in a scheme. How did that make him see me?¹³

I struggled to make sense of my own crossings; to try and reconfigure my sense of self, as someone that moved into Higher Education as part of the first generation of my family to go into further study and the arts. Reflecting on classed experiences – of academia in particular – a wide range of writers such as hooks (1994a), Lawler, (1999), Skeggs (1997), Morley (1997) and Mahony and Zmroczek (1997) helped me realise that I wasn't alone in feeling a confusion of feelings at what these crossings meant. As they

¹² This view was literal as well as metaphorical. It showed that things went further and wider; that different kinds of worlds were out there. Art (and sometimes English) were the only areas in the school where it seemed that such panoramas were engaged with.

¹³ Although at the time this felt awkward to me, even then I knew it had been said with the best intentions and interests. Castle Toward was a real leveller of a place as students from all areas and backgrounds met, worked together and formed great friendships. The importance of this was raised recently with threats of its closure and past students coming to its defence in the media (See Jamieson, 2004)

describe, I also saw myself shift and change in these different contexts. I would travel on the bus every day to art school, then home again in the evenings and those different parts of me never seemed to meet.

My crossings continued as a visual arts practitioner and educator where I purposefully moved between different sites and contexts, from Higher Education to a wide range of community settings. As an artist I was interested in how public space could act as a focus for art practice, education and development. I had worked on a number of large-scale public art projects, collaborating with landscape architects in particular to build the arts and education into developments and planning processes (Dean, 1995). However, I had often felt that while participation and education were always discussed, they stayed peripheral rather than integral to the physical changes brought about. The kind of project I wanted to be involved in didn't seem to exist. I had to find and make that context for myself.

I crossed again, this time into arts development, researching project ideas, raising funds, talking to potential partners and identifying possible sites to develop work within. It was a time of change, between a Conservative and New Labour government and also Glasgow's yet again changing self as it made its bid to be *UK City of Architecture and Design 1999*¹⁴. Participation, education and community were flagship ideas of Glasgow's bid and the city's multitude of Housing Co-operatives were a much publicised part of that community laden ethos (Sudjic, 1999). While ideas of inclusion may have fore-

¹⁴ I say "yet again" as Glasgow had already presented the *Garden Festival* in 1988, which was the start of some major urban renewal. It was also *European Capital of Culture* in 1990, which continued the shifts and changes in the city.



Figure 1

grounded the rhetoric of the 1999 campaign, many housing co-ops existed and their level of tenant involvement had often grown out of desperation at a lack of any alternative means to bring about change (ex:s, 1998). Dramatic physical and conceptual transformations were already taking place in some of Glasgow's largest housing schemes, such as Castlemilk and Greater Easterhouse (Figure 1) and it was my interest in this kind of ownership and involvement that led me to Lochfield Park Co-op in Easterhouse¹⁵.

Over a period of four years we worked together, and realised an array of art and education projects, developed as part of their long-term planning for social and physical redevelopment. Through the development of one small space, partnerships were established with primary and secondary schools, a Further Education College, artists, educators and training providers. Summer and after school projects were set up along with Part Time accredited National Certificate courses and mentoring schemes, where young, mainly Co-op residents worked with artists and in turn mentored younger participants (Dean, 1996, 2000b; Perman, 1997). Public space was the focus of their

¹⁵ I'm very conscious that in trying to keep this brief, I'm making things appear as though they all happened with ease - they didn't. It was always exciting but difficult to move and start again. The shift into art development and the relationship built up with Lochfield Park Co-op (LPC) outlined here took months of planning, research and discussion within the community. Easterhouse, was the largest of Glasgow's peripheral housing schemes, with a falling population at that time of some 37,000 people (equivalent to the size of Perth, a well resourced town north of the central belt - unlike Perth, Easterhouse had few amenities, not even a bank). More than 40% of Easterhouse's population were under the age of 25 and almost half of the working age population were unemployed (Anti Poverty Strategy, 1994). Lochfield Park Housing Co-op was one of eight community housing organisations established in the area and part of a nucleus of around 50 community ownership groups all over Scotland at that time. In addition to the physical transformation of poor quality housing, a commitment to embedding jobs, training and education within the infrastructure of the community was at the heart of most of these developments. This was exactly the context I wanted to be part of and was fortunate that LPC had an incredibly open and forward thinking Committee, Director and staff body, interested in trying different kinds of approaches. They wanted as much as possible for their community and the people who lived there.



Self

The biggest problem I encountered was my lack of industry connections. At first, I was very shy, but starting to write for me has helped me gain a little bit of confidence. I really enjoyed it and I was able to get my first job at a publishing house.

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the Future

The biggest challenge I faced was to see a lot of setbacks and problems. The company had already started losing staff, and the market was shrinking. I really wanted to see the future, but I had to be realistic. I decided to write for the first time. I am...

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Time

Location

I think it's a great idea to provide a service that is not only convenient, but also a way to make sure that you are always in the right place at the right time. I am...

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Figure 2

research and development of ideas. From observational drawing to the physicality of life-size photograms, ideas and images of self were transposed and transformed and finally reflected back on to diverse public sites (Figure 2).

As we developed work together, what crucially seemed missing was a link with Higher Education. My own research and travel in the USA as part of a Churchill Fellowship allowed me to see how areas of Higher Education were rethinking themselves and their relation to diverse communities through a range of strategies (Dean, 1997). Artists Judy Baca and Suzanne Lacy's founding of *The Visual and Public Art Institute* in Monterrey, California was built on a pedagogical philosophy of art, institutions and communities working in tandem with one another, with courses geared, linked and partnered with diverse local organisations and groups. *The Chicago Arts Partnership in Education* was established on the premise of learning through the local and created wide-ranging partnerships between schools, museums, universities, community groups and associations. *The Children's Environmental Research Group* at The City University of New York established innovative, participatory modes of research with young people in some of New York's many housing projects; as active participants they shaped and developed new forms and means of inquiry into public space and its use. *Intermedia Arts* in Minneapolis made a critical departure with its experimentation in organisational structure by "letting go" (Borrup, 2003a:1) and "transferring responsibility" (Borrup, 2003b:2) for the form and shape of cultural programmes to a changing, ethnically and socially diverse group of people from within the community. *The Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs* also in



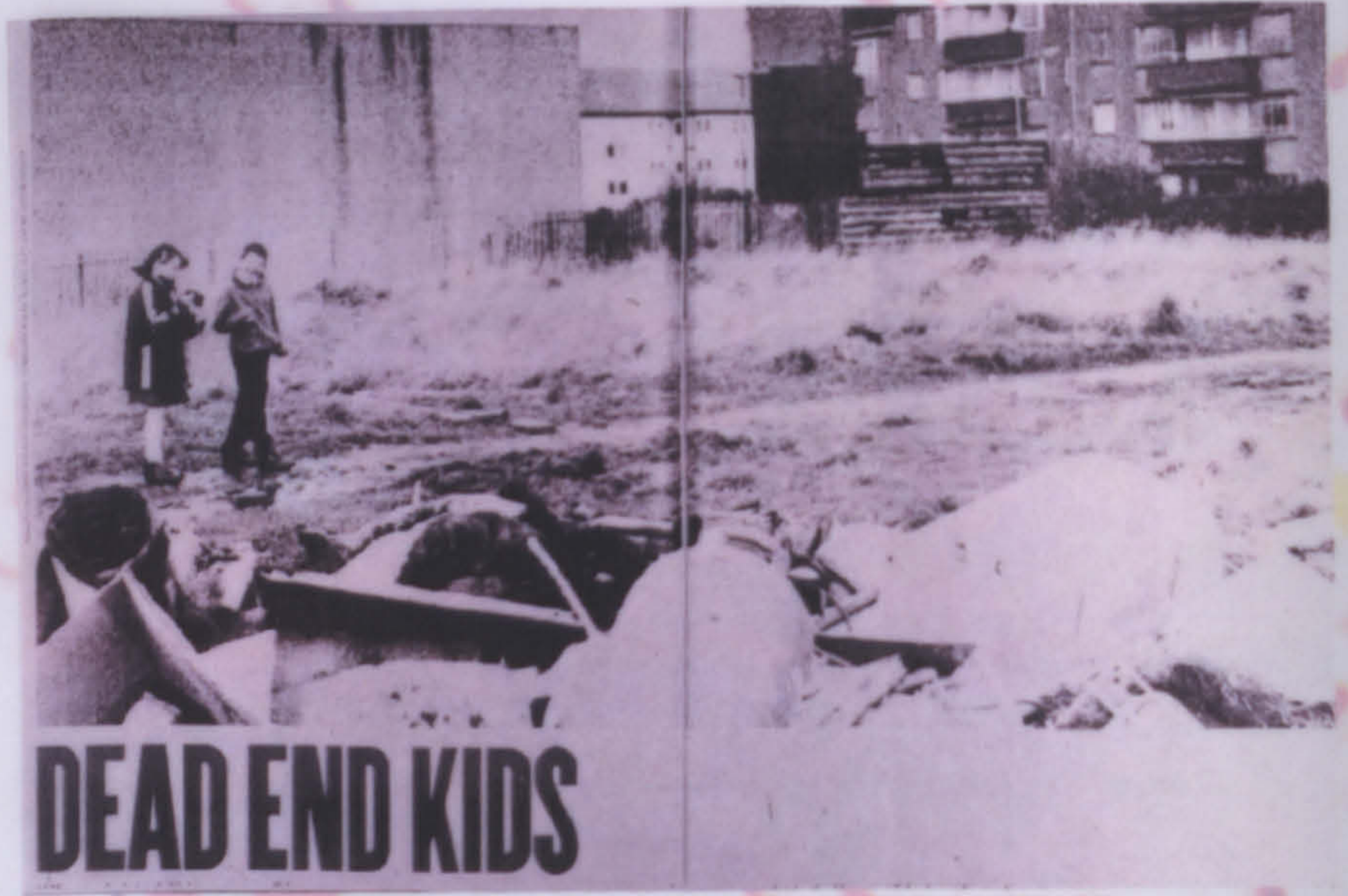
Figure 3

Minneapolis, placed students from diverse specialisms in highly charged social and political community sites, researching and developing their learning in situ and through practice (Figure 3). These seemed like radical approaches that raised new kinds of questions about philosophical bases and biases, offering a challenge to institutions to look at and re-envision their purpose and approach¹⁶.

Yet despite all of these potential ideas and what was achieved - including the publicity and international visitors to the Easterhouse programme, such as President Jacques Chirac, Prince Charles and delegations from across the globe - questions of representation still surfaced. During the filming of a programme specifically about Lochfield Park Co-op, including the artworks programme, tenants reeled off stories of the stigma they felt about living in Easterhouse, and their concerns over perceptions of how the area was seen internally and externally (ex:s, 1998). No matter what changes were brought about, it seemed that a self-consciousness at how fragile all of this was still hung over residents.

Media representations or mis-representations of social exclusion reinforced such feelings. These included Stamp's (1997) plea for *Glasgow to rise again from the ruins of the worst laid schemes*. This was an article that failed to recognise that many people wanted and chose to stay in *those worst laid schemes*. Likewise with *Poor relations* (Marcel-Thekaekara, 1999), where a little girl with a crutch, is set within an almost Dickensian scene of spatial desolation and *Dead end kids* (1999), with a small boy and girl abandoned within an expansive wasteland. Images like these seemed to invite fear of what this way of living represented, suggesting that the socially excluded were both *at*

¹⁶ Information on the projects detailed here can be found in the URLs listed in the bibliography.



After a decade working among tribespeople in the mountains of India, **Mari Marcel-Ti** thought she knew all about poverty and what it means. Then she visited Glasgow . . .

Poor relations

risk from something, as well as *a risk to* something (Figure 4). Yet my memories of growing up were very different from these representations. The spaces I grew up in may have looked like that on the surface, but they were places of openness, beyond control, where you could make and define your own place. These were spaces of production (Lefebvre, 1998), not fixed and one dimensional, but “social spaces” of “unlimited multiplicity” (86). Unlike the media images, many writers and artists conjure up the “daydreams” and potential of space (Bachelard, 1994:189). For example, Lacy's (1999) childhood memories of transforming dirt and water into mud bricks for “assembling” worlds (69) and Kingston's (1997) play time reclamation of patches of earth, forming debris into outlines of houses, not to play games in, but to sweep clean. Buss (1995) and Hart's (1997) research with young people on their use of space, reinforces these ideas of how perceptions both shape and are shaped by views on the spaces that people inhabit. Kristeva (1991) suggests that this introjection of people into the psyche as *other*, creates an unease and discomfort that is difficult to shift. Indeed it is this continuing construction of difference and arising fear that leads to a need to normalise in order to control. Lupton (1999) and Douglas's (1984, 1994) juxtaposition and orchestration of risk, danger and blame reinforces this idea of the desire to *alter* in order to *include*. People, the risks they are at and are also seen to represent, have to be identified, measured, intervened with, and fitted in. Yet as Sibley (1998) suggests these are strategies that may increase “social and spatial distance”(120), “strengthening [...] boundaries between those who belong and [...] do not belong” (Ibid.).

It was these contentions and crossings that led directly to my questioning of the

relationship between the visual arts and Higher Education to the kind of community that I grew up in and later found myself making work. My concern was to explore where these different experiences that I straddled, overlapped and took shape within the growing discourses of social inclusion and exclusion.

IN/EXCLUSION

SEGREGATION AND CONTROL

The breadth of literature and wider thinking on issues of in/exclusion, in particular its link to shifting political agendas, allowed these personal experiences to be re/articulated, made sense of and also challenged through other kinds of understanding. Writing about the effects of the Conservative rule of the 80's and 90's, Brown and Scase (1994b) propose that during this time, the popular explanation for social polarisation lay in the creation of a newly defined and blameable "underclass" (10). Just as the media images had signalled to myself and many others, these were people who spatially, socially and culturally were "set [...] apart from the rest of society" (Ibid:11). However, they were also people who were visibly delineated as a "deserving and [...] undeserving poor" - those genuinely in need of help and those seen as "scroungers exploiting an overgenerous and insufficiently-policed system" (Levitas, 1998:15). Under this regime, responsibility or blame for exclusion lay, not with government, but with individuals themselves. It was an approach that led to stark distinctions in terms of "socio economic rewards and life chances" (Brown and Scase, 1994b:1) and led to a society that became "increasingly polarised" (Ibid:11) between the "have and have nots" (Ibid:10). In this

context, the idea of the state as a “universal provider” was thought to sap “personal initiative, independence and self respect” (Levitas, 1998:15) and any hint of dependency became a “pathological moral and psychological condition” (Ibid.).

Developing Foucault’s ideas on classification and normalisation, Dean (1994) suggests that the use of the term underclass was a “symbolic device” for the “division” and rendering of the “dependent” (35). Social division was a “cultural thesis” of a “culturally distinct [...] minority”, lacking in individual agency to move beyond dependency (Ibid:32). The project of resolution was one of segregation, separating out social groups and blaming the individual for their circumstances. This was not a concern with helping the socially excluded, but in tidily separating *us* and *them* - the “enterprise culture” from the “dependency culture” (Moore, In Dean, 1994:23) and the “respectable”, “responsible” “majority” (Brown and Scase, 1994b:10), from the “dependent and [...] feckless minority” (Ibid.).

Levitas (1998) shows how this “characterisation of the underclass in cultural terms” escalated and “was consolidated” through the involvement and writings of the American social commentator Charles Murray (17). Murray's (1996) thinking focused on a behavioural definition of poverty, referring not to a “degree [...] but to a type of poverty” (23). Commenting on Murray’s ideas, Levitas (1998) demonstrates the prevalence of notions of disease and contagion within his thinking on specific sections of society, “whose values” were seen as “contaminating” (Murray, In Levitas, 1998:17). Indeed she cites how on a visit to the UK, Murray described himself as a “visitor from a plague area, come to see whether the disease is spreading” (Ibid.).

This kind of discourse was by no means a new phenomenon. Writing on the development of technologies of social control in 18th and 19th Century Europe, Foucault (1991) explores the means of identification of the socially excluded and the technologies of discipline and reform affected upon them. Investigating the ways in which these technologies of power arose out of particular instances of social, political and moral thought, Foucault suggests that the techniques employed brought forth hierarchical layers of classification of difference, deviance and anomalies. Dreyfus and Rabinow (1986) explain that these technologies were so integral to this classification and control of the social body that although “designed to eliminate” (195) and isolate dangers, they in fact brought the very phenomena of exclusion further into being. From the micro separations of the quarantined of the plague, through to the “massive, binary division” of leper colonies, “rituals of exclusion” were developed and exercised (Foucault, 1991:198), through which the socially excluded were “separated out [...] stigmatised” into “an undifferentiated mass” (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1986:190). While such segregation and exclusions were controlled and constructed out of anxiety and risk of contagion, the technologies of identification and definitions of difference gave rise to wider fears. Through the use of “procedures of individualisation to mark exclusion” (Foucault, 1991:199), detailed information was constructed about individuals and groups, which:

Entailed the analysis of a geographical area; the supervision of its inhabitants; the control of individuals; a hierarchy of information, decision making, and movement down to the regulation of the smallest detail of everyday life (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1986:190).

These strategies of identification, isolation and control of the socially excluded was an exercise of “power through space” (Ibid:191), in which “people appear and disappear” (Foucault, 1991:198). Notions of risk figure strongly in these projects of exclusion as they shift from segregation and containment, through to wider reforms of transgressions based on the “binary division and branding” of the “(mad/sane; dangerous/harmless/; normal/abnormal)” (Ibid:199). In Murray's (1996) writings such ideas were still prevalent. His classifications, indicators and measures included factors such as illegitimacy, crime and drop out from the labour force and while these stigmatising characteristics became strongly attached to specific groups of people, such as lone parents, they also became synonymous with ideas of need. In turn, these were seen to lead to the development of a “distinctive set of morally undesirable attitudes and behaviours, characterised by [...] parasitism, crime and immorality” (Levitas, 1998:20); considered contaminating and in danger of adversely affecting all who came into contact.

Levitas (1998) argues that strategies to resolve this situation only “reduced” or placed even greater conditionality on “citizenship rights”, or indeed led to their complete “removal”, through increased forms of marginalisation and exclusion (18). What is demonstrated throughout the 1980's is a shift from an examination of the “structural basis of poverty to the moral and cultural character of the poor themselves” (Ibid:15). It appeared, as Lister (1996) suggests, a “voyeuristic preoccupation with individual poor people and their behaviour” that neatly bypassed the “processes and institutions” that may in fact have created and maintained “disadvantage” (11).

THE NEW LABOUR SHIFT: FROM EXCLUSION TO INCLUSION

New Labour seemed to bring about a change, a “turning point” between the relations of power and governmentality (Foucault, 1979:13). This turn around in the political scene led to a situation in which “the instruments of government, instead of being laws, now become a range of multiform tactics” (Ibid.) directed not at territory, but at the population at large. People, their welfare and improvement, at an individual and wider societal level, became the “ultimate end of government” (Ibid:17). New Labour's new governance would be one that would follow old ideals of equality, not through traditional ideas of redistribution, but through inclusion and expansion, amidst an “oxymoronic rhetoric of ‘excellence for everyone’” (Garmanikow and Green, 1999:60). In order to achieve this, greater government control and presence was needed to influence further layers of social life. These tactics of governmentality relate to what Foucault (1986) terms “pastoral power” (213). Plotting its early development within Christianity, the objective of pastoral power was to lead “people to their salvation in the next world” (Ibid:215). In this new government context, as Foucault proposes was witnessed in the 18th Century, we see a changed objective to “ensure” salvation “in this world” (Ibid.). To achieve this, forms of governance and power move out into other sites, “spread out in to the whole social body” with the “support” of “a multitude of institutions” (Ibid.).

Under this kind of governance, blame no longer lies with the individual, but with a government concerned to know its subjects in order to determine what is best for those seen to be on the margins and at risk from forms of exclusion. As a consequence of these

very visible strategies of intervention, social exclusion has become a much stronger spectacle. Just as Conservative technologies established ideas of individual blame, under New Labour, a fusion of individual and shared moral responsibility became the construct. Inequality would no longer be ignored, but would instead be controlled through increased interventions within diverse sites and spaces, with a focus on those identified and labelled *at risk*.

The rising influence of the European Union, particularly French Social Policy is widely accepted as giving rise to the New Labour discourse of *social exclusion*. In this wider European context, exclusion was seen in a more complex and overlapping way, where social, cultural, economic and spatial exclusion was explored in relation to particular sites, such as “education, employment, housing and health” (Levitas, 1998: 21). However, it was the discursive shift from individual blame to a meld of individual, institutional and societal responsibility, and what that gave rise to that was of particular interest to me. Within the first year of government, New Labour established special units and policy action teams to investigate and develop strategies to tackle social exclusion. *The Social Exclusion Unit* (SEU) was formed in 1997, with the principle aim of identifying, defining and monitoring social *exclusion* and government success in bringing about social *inclusion*. One of SEU’s reports describes social exclusion as a:

Short hand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdowns (SEU, 2001).

While utilising this shorthand, the work of the SEU has been to define the causes and

effects of social exclusion, in order to monitor and tackle. In Scotland, under the auspices of the new Parliament, the Scottish Executive deals equally prolifically with the project of inclusion through similar forms of research and policy action teams. While the commitment to tackling the “causes” of exclusion and not only the “symptoms” is clearly signalled across these different government agencies, departments and policies (Endean, 2001:51), *The Scottish Social Inclusion Network* by its very nomenclature reinforces the in/exclusion divide. These causes of exclusion singularly or in combination, are clearly dynamic, both producing social exclusion and creating a situation of being *at risk* of exclusion. This offers an important discursive construction. While under previous, particularly Conservative, discourses, the socially excluded were represented as *a risk* or danger to the good, moral fabric of society, we now witness a very different idea of external and internal threats that place individuals and groups of people *at risk*. If *risks* are presented by the social excluded, they are no longer only simplistically to the *good* from the *bad*, but jeopardise New Labour principles of equality, cohesion and citizenship.

Within this way of thinking, if the socially excluded and the risks that surround them, as well as their causes, can be identified and defined, then interventions and strategies can be put in place to target and rectify. Social *inclusion* can be achieved. However while this implies a radical shift from the underclass discourse of the 80’s, Fairclough (2000) suggests that ideas of “moral deficiency” and a “culture which needs changing” are also implicit in New Labour’s language (62). Dependency, deficiency and cultural fatalism have not disappeared, they are just more covert, as they seek out and depict the

parallel worlds of the included and excluded. Fairclough makes the observation that New Labour's focus on *exclusion* with the aim of *inclusion*, is essentially a project of assimilation, which undertakes no real critique of society. It only "presupposes that there is nothing inherently wrong with contemporary society as long as it is made more inclusive through government policies" (Ibid:65). This questioning is echoed by others such as Oppenheim (1998), who suggest that while the current approach to understanding may appear "more all-embracing", there is a difficulty when moving from "the level of ideas to clearly defined policy goals" (15).

The shifting of terminology through ideas of poverty, deprivation and social in/exclusion illustrates something of the struggle with definition and means of understanding in order to address such issues. Yet paradoxically, it is precisely these attempts to understand and render social in/exclusion visible that are bound up in the difficulties. The establishment of Policy Action Teams, Social In/Exclusion Units, Partnerships and indicators of performance, as well as the identification of the *excluded*, may demonstrate attempts at *inclusion*. However, as Oppenheim (1998) argues, rather than only trying to attain an inclusive, "static end-state" (14), there is a growing need "to identify [...] the institutional processes that bring about exclusion" (Mingione, In Oppenheim, 1998:14).

INDICATORS OF EXCLUSION

Developing indicators of poverty form part of this action to target, define and monitor who the socially excluded are as well as the risks they are seen to face. In

Higher Education and in the arts monitoring of the demographics of students, audience and participant figures have become increasingly prevalent. Within a broader public arena, in an attempt to define the kind of population inherited by the New Labour Government, an array of reports have emerged that seek definition of what social exclusion is through ever rising measures and indicators (DSS, 1999). Devised to enable the government to monitor its objectives in relation to in/exclusion, indicators fall into two key categories: those designed to tell us about “current” characteristics of the socially excluded; and those designed to “capture factors that increase the risk” of “deprivation” and exclusion (Endean, 2001:51). The government’s own *Opportunities for all: tackling poverty and social exclusion* (DSS, 1999), utilised close to 40 “success measures” for judging progress (DSS, In Howarth et al, 1999:7). Research funded by *The Joseph Rowntree Foundation*, expanded the number of indicators of poverty and social exclusion to 50 and aimed to produce a “quantitative picture of poverty and social exclusion in the round” (Howarth et al, 1999:7).

While these indicators are wide ranging, the overwhelming sense is that indices present an overly generalised picture of socially excluded groups. For example, Howarth et al’s report is separated into broad headings such as *Children, Young Adults, Older people and Communities*. As Micklewright (2001) points out, multiple indicators can create a “fuzziness” (45); while showing concern for “many different aspects of societal well-being”, they also inhibit clarity in the “picture” that emerges (Ibid:46). In particular, the nature of how such multiple indicators are summarised can lead to an oversimplification that bypasses the detail of individual circumstances, contexts and

experiences. This is an idea reflected in Mingione's (1997) consideration of exclusion, which questions the "methods and indicators used to pinpoint [...] social exclusion", and also problematises the "frequent use" of the terms *poverty* and *social exclusion* as "synonyms" that generalise the complexity of exclusion (10).

Reports such as *Experiences of social exclusion in Scotland* (O'Connor and Lewis, 1999) confirm something of these ideas. O'Connor and Lewis's research highlights the need for experiential texts and the difficulties of any simple definition of exclusion. Participants in the study saw the term social exclusion as useful in bringing the "complete divide between [...] 'the excluded' – and [...] 'the included'" to the fore (67). However, there was also concern that the complexity of what exclusion is in practice was being overly simplified and that consideration of "the coexistence and interdependence of circumstances" was often overlooked (Ibid.). The risk was that social exclusion became a generalised phrase that made reference to exclusion but failed to open up the complexity and highly contextualised nature of experiences of exclusion. Without this detail, the general labelling and targeting of people as socially excluded, vulnerable or at risk, "functions to 'pathologise' individuals and pushes them 'further towards the margins of society'" (Ibid:70; original emphasis).

This can also be seen in the use of performance indicators in Higher Education (HEFCE, 1999, 2000), where variables such as state school participation, postcode and social class are indicators of success in achieving social inclusion. However, as the publications themselves make clear the "social profile" of an institution may be affected by the characteristics of the area from which it is recruiting (HEFCE, 1999:10). There is

therefore a need to develop “catchment area context statistics” to describe the effect of context and regional variations (Ibid.). If this detailed information of locality was taken into account, then institutions where concentrations of poverty and low educational attainment is most extreme, might be expected to reflect a student profile more closely linked to its locality. However, as Jary and Thomas (1999) point out, as benchmarking takes account of the levels of entry qualifications required at the point of admission, more elite institutions and subject areas, often with higher levels and expectations for entry, were in effect set lower benchmarks for widening access. Until the relation between locality is more thoroughly explored, institutional change or performance in relation to in/exclusion remains ill defined, affected by missing data and distinct rules for different institutions. *The Times Higher Education Supplement's, Poor face a steep climb: access elite* (Thomson et al, 2002), is one example of this. The article gives the impression that some institutions are making huge strides in relation to social inclusion, when a closer consideration of the figures reveals that some areas of data are missing amongst institutions and successes are only relative to the data available.

The important issue this raises is that indicators need constantly to be monitored and most importantly developed contextually, with strategies that relate to people and place, both of which are open to change. These contentions demonstrate some of the problems with approaches to monitoring and measuring, or as Strathern (2000) has called it, the *Tyranny of transparency*. The danger with any indicator of performance is that institutional self-interest to appear to do well only in relation to the variables stipulated, can divert attention from any wider questioning of institutional mechanisms, as well as

students' experiences of such processes. This is made visible by reports, such as *Including me* (Universities Scotland, 2000), which is full of stories and pictures of individuals represented as successes in widening access. There is, however, no questioning of the processes and structures that might maintain exclusion. Instead, previously excluded individuals are presented in a way that singles out and represents them as different. While all parties may have agreed to tell their stories in this way, the images relay a sense of manipulation and de-politicisation of individuals' experiences. Who is the publication aimed at? Does it reach the communities identified as under represented, and if so, what does it offer to them? Or is its purpose only for the Higher Education sector to signal in/exclusion *successes* to itself?

SPATIALITY AND CAPITAL

Amidst these indicators, new areas of concern, such as *area effects* (Atkinson and Kintera, 2001) have also emerged. This is linked to Government aims that “no-one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live” (SEU, In Buck, 2001:2252) and a concern to understand whether this might compound the disadvantages of social exclusion. In this context, the spatiality of where you live is seen to have a profound effect on life chances, education, employment and health. Gibb et al's (1998) *Revising the Scottish area deprivation index*, and other recent poverty and social exclusion studies (Howarth et al, 1999), point clearly to how demographics and geodemographics¹⁷ link to

¹⁷ Tonks (1999) explains how the term 'geodemographics' was “generally used for commercial applications of Geographic Information Systems” employed widely in “marketing” and now within the “education sector”.



Figure 5

areas such as education, health and poverty. In a list of 200 postcodes throughout Scotland, Gibb highlights spatially how concentrations of financial poverty overlap with low participation in education, as well as higher health risks.

This concern with spatiality also extends more specifically to Higher Education, where the continued exclusion of particular groups of people in terms of geography and social class has become a particular focus (NCIHE 1997a, 1997b; FEFC, 1997). Along with the desired expansion of the sector these reports introduce a very visible concern with widening participation amongst traditionally under represented groups particularly in terms of social divisions. As Brown and Scase (1994a) propose, within this expanding system, those from working class backgrounds and traditionally more excluded from Higher Education, “hardly shifted” in proportionality to those from managerial and professional backgrounds (36). Raab et al (1998) and Raab and Storkey’s (2001) studies of Higher Education participation via postcode offers a visual mapping of cities throughout Scotland, and shows the often stark spatial divisions of participation and non-participation (Figure 5). As can be seen in the illustration of the city of Glasgow, red indicates participation that is twice as high as expected and yellow, under representation, some four times lower than expected. While this work is interesting because of the harsh extremes of (non) participation it makes visible - most often between affluent and poorer areas - these static representations are also frustrating because of the lack of detail or texture of what goes on within spaces and communities.

Drawing on ideas of “social geography”, Cresswell (1998) points out that exclusion “is an active expression” (208); such mapping of participation is not an innocent

representation, there are processes and dynamics at work in establishing and maintaining these situations. These ideas are clearly and visually articulated in Reitman's imaginary map, *The peninsular of submerged hope* (In Cresswell, 1998:209). This not only lays out areas, territories and groups in terms of in/exclusion and determined by factors such as sexuality, class, ethnicity and disability, but more interestingly, points to the forces that produce marginalisation. This is not just an innocuous picture of how things are, but as Sibley (1995) suggests, it shows the “exclusion of ideas which [...] constitute a challenge to established hierarchies of knowledge and [...] power structures” (116). What this postcode mapping fails to make visible, is a critique of the “power - over geographical space or over the territory marked out by groups within an academic discipline” (Ibid.).

Participation in Higher Education in particular has also become bound up in a discourse of forms of capital, where social, cultural and human capital are seen as key areas for attention. Brown and Scase's (1994a) early research on processes of selection, shows something of these ideas in operation and how forms of capital are perceived in terms of acceptability, suitability and fitting in. Their work outlines the ways in which the shift from bureaucratic to adaptive organisations has impacted on approaches to selection. They argue that the educational capital of skills and qualifications is no longer the key factor for inclusion; instead, social and cultural capital are now the sought after qualities of acceptance. This, they suggest, leads to an inherent subjectivity in selection processes, as decision-making becomes bound up in the social, cultural and educational capital of selectors themselves. Cicourel and Kitsuse's (1963) work extends these ideas

to the role of *Educational decision-makers*. They propose that within the distribution of classes of people across a hierarchy of colleges, the ways in which individuals are processed through these systems may provide more entrenched explanations of exclusion. Their examination of the ways in which an organisation decides on an applicant's suitability, highlights internal hierarchies of knowledge and social and cultural bias. They argue that individuals working within these organisations both hold and relay particular kinds of views on people's backgrounds and experiences that affect how individuals are consequently constructed and edited into or out of institutions.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1998) argue that social and cultural reproduction is at the heart of how ideas and forms of capital operate in much educational practice, particularly examination and selection procedures. They describe such processes as "social selection under the guise of technical selection [...] legitimating the reproduction of the social hierarchies by transmuted them within academic hierarchies" (153). In *Homo academicus*, Bourdieu (1996) takes these ideas right into the very heart of an analysis of hierarchy within the French Higher Education system, suggesting the potential for even more embedded forms of exclusion to take place. These writings show more complex ways of considering how forms and relations of capital are shaped and developed by wider social and institutional factors and processes. Forms of capital become bound up with the concepts of habitus and field; where the influence of family, friends, institutions and spaces are seen as interrelated with the kinds of choices made by and available to individuals. Reay, David and Ball (2002) and Reay et al (2002) draw on these ideas in their studies of Higher Education choice. Here, they suggest that where

familial and institutional habitus are in symmetry, there is an almost seamless fit between the decision to study, as well as the choice of place in which to study. This suggests that forms of capital are not fixed, but are dynamic and affected by wider factors, and that any move towards an understanding of in/exclusion has to be as a process, requiring far greater complexity of investigation.

Writing on access to Higher Education specifically, Davies, Williams and Webb (1997) demonstrate the specificity of decision-making, arguing that the “diversity of actors” involved in these kind of selection decisions “means that a range of discourses” emerge (17) “and within each position [...] elements combine and recombine (Ibid:18). How different selectors construct “individual and group subjectivities” (Ibid.) illustrates “alternative understandings” (Ibid:19), positions and practices that “are not fixed or unchanging even within one institution” (Ibid:18). In order to explore how “selectivity” (Williams, 1997:24) is legitimised by individuals and department areas, there is a need to focus “on the nature of [...] exclusionary and inclusionary discursive practices” in specific and detailed contexts (Davies, Williams and Webb, 1997: 22).

This is some distance from reports such as Woodrow et al (1998, 2002), which seek out models of *Good practice in widening access to higher education*. Woodrow's reports suggest that there is enough research into the *why* of social exclusion; the social, cultural, familial factors at work are well known and what is needed is a pragmatism of resolution that achieves a required *end state* of inclusion. While Woodrow proposes that the problem also lies with institutional attitudes and not only with the non/applicant, the focus is clearly on mechanisms for change that can be readily adapted across

SHIFTING SANDS

Want a job? Forget university and find a hairdresser

Looking good is 21st century's key work skill, report claims

By Rex Peterson

PASSING your exams was once a passport to a good career and a comfortable, middle-class lifestyle, and since the Thatcher revolution of further education, a trophy for degrees and MBAs has looked out too good that it is the field and beautiful, not the clever and qualified, who are getting all the breaks.

The findings of a new Industrial Society report, written by Chris Walsford and Dennis Hickson of Southwicks University, suggest that the future generation of workers should be better brought up on interpersonal and grooming skills than continuing for their higher honors.

to "look good" and "sound right". Call centres are a case in point. Survey after survey has found that people associate Scottish accents with such feel-good factors as financial acumen and straightforwardness, so Scotland has had a call-centre boom.

The phenomenon of choosing staff whose appearance and manner attract customers and sends out positive signals about the firm is termed "softcore labour". Looking the part has become increasingly important for employees in hotels, bars and shops, particularly those in the process of doing themselves up.

One such, a boutique hotel chain called Elba, ran a recruitment campaign for staff whose "personality"



Figure 6

institutions. This work relays a naïve sounding divide between *elite* and *excluded* worlds and avoids explanation and complexity in favour of an appearance of change that fails to really engage with processes or experience.

However, there are also more disturbing shifts in ideas and thinking on in/exclusion and forms of capital. Think Tank Demos's publication *The wealth and poverty of networks: tackling social exclusion* (Christie and Perry, 1997), focuses exclusively on ideas of capital, located within an educational, economic and job market framework. One of the authors, Perri 6 (1997) states that arguably the most valuable form of capital is human, "not just formal qualifications but more subtly knowing how to behave at work [...] how to please a customer" (5). Beyond the social and cultural, forms of capital have extended now to include the aesthetic, where how you look and sound is as, if not more, important than qualifications (Figure 6)¹⁸. Warhurst and Nickson's (2001) study of employment selection, identifies the kinds of social, cultural and aesthetic capital expected of applicants and advocates for skills training in "looking good" and "sounding right" (12) in order to fit in. Within some Higher Education access initiatives ideas of difference are also reinforced, with student mentors described by participants and also represented or imaged as "special", again relaying an uncomfortable divide (Ross, 2000:3).

Approaches such as these give a sense that the fundamental idea is to "change cultures [...] amongst the socially excluded" (Levitas, 1998:8). This reinforces the criticism that current approaches to social in/exclusion essentially lie within a cultural

¹⁸ This image and discussion of these ideas appeared in Roz Paterson's (2001) article *Want a job? Forget university and find a hairdresser*, *Sunday Herald*, 4 February, 2001, 6.

and social integrationist mode. The language is clearly one of “influencing the ‘cultural lenses’ - aspirations” and “attitudes” of the “socially excluded” and how they “perceive the incentives they face” (Perri 6, In Fairclough, 2000:62). It suggests a compensatory and deficit mode of thought, as explored and questioned by educational inclusionists such as Allan (1999), whereby individuals are seen as lacking, in this case the required forms of capital necessary to become included.

In these images and kinds of thinking, there appears to be no resistance amongst the *excluded*; people are waiting to be identified, targeted and *included*. While some critiques of institutional and societal processes such as Bourdieu (1979), signal a distinction between classes and their relation to forms of capital, much of the current discourse on forms of capital seems only to relay a lack. This is a kind of deficiency that demands a compensatory approach, through *Nurturing social capital* (Preece and Houghton, 2000) and *Tackling disaffection* (Hayton, 1999), amongst those individuals and groups identified as excluded. While Hayton's contributors offer a diversity of perspectives in thinking about social exclusion, and Preece and Houghton advocate for change in institutional structures, sites and modes of delivery, the titles illustrate what Fairclough (2000) calls the “language of ‘social exclusion’” (51). As he dissects New Labour policy Fairclough shows the prevalence of exclusion as a condition rather than a process and, predominantly the object of verbs such as “combat”, “attack”, “tackle”, “fight” and “eliminate” (Ibid:56-57).

The goal of gaining social, cultural and human capital seems to be part of finding a way out of circumstances that can only be achieved through acculturation. Cohen and

Taylor (1976) have described this as *Escape attempts*, yet rather than escaping our habitus, it seems that indicators and strategies for in/exclusion need to interrogate how interactions across “social space”, both shape and are shaped by us (Painter, 2000:254). Otherwise, as Fairclough (2000) points out, all strategies are about being “acted upon” (64), rather than acting independently and fail to question or alter exclusionary processes in operation.

CULTURAL TURNS

Education and the arts are clearly now seen as key sites for the surveillance and measuring of in/exclusion, as well as providing the tools and means of tackling social exclusion (Blake Stevenson Ltd, 2000; Matarasso, 1997). Within Scotland’s National Cultural Strategy “education and culture” become “inextricably linked” (SNCS, 2000:41) and the language of in/exclusion is equally contentious. In the arts, the concern to democratise culture is highly visible; impacting on individual and organisational funding for the arts as well as diverse forms of educational and outreach development. Along with the formation of the SEU the New Labour government created a newly established *Department for Culture, Media and Sport*, outlining the place of culture in the government agenda for a renewed Britain. Culture is not only seen as an important economic part of developments but the skills integral within art making are noted as “among the most needed in the modern workplace” including “communication [...] problem-solving, risk-taking, flexibility and creativity” (Arts Council of England, In Buckingham and Jones, 2001:2)

However, it appears that the value of culture and people's participation in it doesn't end with the gaining of valued skills. Policy Action Team (PAT) reports such as *PAT 10* (1999) place the emphasis on people not as consumers or spectators but as participants in cultural activity through which communities can be improved, with performance measured against indicators of "health", "crime", "employment" and "education"(22). We are presented with what appears an uncomplicated shift from *problem* and *identification* through to *solution*. There is no doubt or debate; individuals and neighbourhoods *will* become healthier, less crime ridden, more gainfully employed and better educated through participation in the arts. These ideas are echoed in Scotland's own National Cultural Strategy *Creating our future...minding our past* (SNCS, 2000), where art and culture are located within a language of "individual or community self-esteem", "power of participation" (50), "social benefits", and "sustaining, developing and regenerating communities" (Ibid:51). However, these are seen as "'soft' measures" (Ibid.) that require harder methods of "audit" and "robust evaluations" (Ibid:67). Prior to funding, the social purpose and function of the arts has to be made explicit and its success in practice has to be measured against indicators that vary depending on the particular policy or funding framework that the work is located within. While writers such as Matarrasso (1997) and Phillips (1997) have explored the social benefits and impact of the arts, principally in term of esteem and confidence building, they have advocated for more experiential narratives to be taken into account. Indeed most interestingly, Phillips (1997) draws on the long history of art activism in the USA to question both the means and very idea of measurement. When we list "effects" she asks,

is this the same as “articulating their value” (18) or indeed exploring the very idea of value?

Under this new “cultural turn” (Buckingham and Jones, 2001:3), the “psychological benefits of participation in the arts” and diffusion of “social tensions” through art, forms part of a “democratising impulse”, most often attached to “regulatory conditions” for funding (Ibid.). While it appears that space has been opened for new kinds of “educational-cultural complex”, as organisations seek out partnerships through which to “secure their existence” (Ibid:4), there is concern amongst some art organisations and artists over increased control of what art is expected to be and do. Tregaskis (2001) has questioned where, amidst this cultural turn, is the space for art to just be art? The use of art and culture to serve diverse social and political agendas is important, however rather than being “its raison d’etre”, Tregaskis argues that the “services which artist can and do perform should be an outcome of a thriving cultural activity” (1-2). While a National Cultural Strategy might appear to open the way to reconsider the role of the arts within wider social and political agendas, there is also a danger of closing down experience. As well as “active” participation in cultural production, as Buckingham and Jones (2001:12) argue, there also has to be a “critical” engagement (Ibid.) Without this, rather than challenging in/exclusion through wider ranging questions and approaches, culture becomes part of a menu of worthy and “magic ingredients” (Ibid:13); “a means of social control” or “safety valve” for the release of “social pressures and tensions” (Ibid.).

PRODUCTIVE COLLISIONS

Art's relation to in/exclusion is laden with contention and resistance to assimilation. Becker (1996) suggests that artists' quest for an "isolated consciousness" that at one point may have been seen as "progressive" and "liberating", has now manifested "itself as a hopeless break between the artist and the body politic" (87). Becker also proposes that part of this problem lies in the nature of the education of artists, and that "the art world has become increasingly hermetic, its discourse often incomprehensible to all those outside its closed systems" (Ibid.). This leads to a divide, a sense of in/exclusion between artists, art practice and wider areas of society, which becomes a cause of "hostility" (Ibid:57), particularly when public subsidy is involved. This kind of political and public contention over art practice has become increasingly prominent; who and what is art for (Dissanyake, 1988), is both a moral and political concern, particularly within in/exclusion agendas¹⁹.

However, for many involved in the arts, the anxiety is that the desire to include and be seen to be inclusive, brings about such increased control that the potential for other kinds of change and challenge is overlooked. Becker (1990, 1996, 1997), Willis (1990) and Matarasso (2001) all argue that inclusion has to go beyond a "single track" of "changing audience" and "changing community", to a "cultural inclusion" that changes

¹⁹ Renee Cox's "*Yo Mamma's last supper*" and Andre Serrano's "*Piss Christ*" show the level of contention. Cox represented herself as a black, female, naked Christ, and Serrano, a beautiful photographic image of Christ on the cross submerged in a jar of the artist's own urine. Attacked from within and outwith the arts, Serrano and Cox's work even led to the formation of a "decency panel" staffed by "decent people" determined to put an end to public funding of – in Mayor Guilliani's words – such "anti-Christian", "disgusting" and "outrageous" artworks. For more information on this debate see Davies (2001) and McUsic (2001).

“art organisations” (Matarasso, 2001:3). This has to be achieved through processes that question “the work and value of cultural institutions”, encouraging open and wider discussion about “culture itself” and what that means within and to a range of individuals and contexts (Ibid.). To do this means creating space for risk-taking and engaging with the trouble that lies between ideas of control and resistance, conformity and dissent.

In a hard hitting text *Who made us the target of your outreach?*, artist Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle (1994) confronts the difficulties with many approaches to in/exclusion as lacking in resistance or cognisance of the values of wider forms of individual and community experience. Manglano-Ovalle highlights the “disturbing similarity between initiatives such as community policing and cultural programs” (15), that opt for “harmony” and “benevolence” over “stridency” (Ibid.) Manglano-Ovalle argues for a “critical framework” through which to “mediate difference”, without which, the “productive collisions” between art, education and localities, are silenced (Ibid.). One of his own projects *Tele-Vecindario* realised as part of the *Culture in Action* programme (Jacob et al, 1995), involved working with West town residents, a predominantly Latino, Chicago community, to explore and make visual often confrontational counter narratives from within the neighbourhood²⁰. The project was built around an existing after school programme for excluded pupils, many of them gang members, and acted as a

²⁰ *Culture in Action* was organised by curator Mary Jane Jacob and tried to take artists and art practice outwith the city out into Chicago's many neighbourhoods. While it received considerable international attention much of the practice was questioned on the very grounds that Manglano-Ovalle raises, as interventions that do nothing in the longer term. Interestingly, as Snodgrass (1995) notes, Manglano-Ovalle's project, metamorphosed into “new incarnations” of *Street Level Youth Media* (<http://streetlevel.iit.edu/>).



Figure 7



Figure 8

provocative challenge to ideas of assimilation. Defiant narratives were made visible on large publicly sited monitors, positioned throughout the West town streets and revealed how young people living there felt others perceived them. The public works formed part of a massive block party that brought hundreds of community members and visitors to the area - for many it was their first and possibly only time in West Town (Figure 7). Cultural tensions are prevalent in these works and difficult situations and opinions are not shied away from but instead are brought to the fore.

This idea of spaces and people as sites of potential heterotopias, in which unusual crossings and radical experimentation can happen, offers up other ways of thinking about in/exclusion. These are collisions that present a challenge to any “oppositions” which may still appear “inviolable, that our institutions and practices have not yet dared to breakdown” (Foucault, 1998: 238). Within these contexts projects such as *Heidelberg* emerged. In a neglected Detroit neighbourhood artist Tyrone Guyton, with the support of neighbours began to render and transform both the real and imagined. They gathered up surrounding debris and embellished buildings; created fields and gardens from abandoned shoes; trees made of toy cars; canvases from car bonnets; the most intimate and beautiful details arose from discarded objects (Figure 8)²¹. *Heidelberg* is of interest because of the kinds of risks it was seen to produce. Once neglected, the neighbourhood now attracted such attention from outside, that the authorities could no longer ignore it. It was a visibility that led ultimately to its destruction amidst continued forms of resistance from within and outwith the Heidelberg community.

²¹ For information on Heidelberg, see URL: <http://www.heidelberg.org/>



Figure 9



Figure 10

Diane Balmori and Margaret Morton's (1993) *Transitory gardens, uprooted lives* used photographs and interviews to document people's reclamation, use and relation to disused land in New York City. Again, neglected and ignored public spaces, this time in the lower and upper east side of Manhattan, formed the basis for the spontaneous creation of unofficial personal and social spaces, community gardens and casitas (Figure 9) like the massive and now demolished *Jardin de la 10*. Again, by drawing attention to forgotten spaces, many of these gardens were destroyed, with the spaces recovered by the city. Each time however, they seem only to shift and resurface some place else. In protest against this kind of legislation, artist Michael Rakowitz's ParaSITE project²², involved the development of transportable shelters for the homeless that attached to and utilised the heat from ventilation systems throughout the downtown streets of Manhattan. Never designed or considered in any way to be a solution to homelessness, Rakowitz's work was an attempt to increase the visibility of homelessness as a response to sanctions that seemed increasingly about ensuring the invisibility of homeless people (Figure 10).

At the intersection of art, education and community development, artist and educator, Suzanne Lacy's collaborative community performance, *The Roof's on Fire*, transformed the space of a rooftop garage into the culminating site of a three-year project with predominantly black Oakland teenagers. Here, hundreds of semi-structured and spontaneous conversations that challenged issues of representation took place from within open-top cars and were broadcast on public television. Lacy's approach builds on

²² For more information on ParaSITE see URL: <http://www.possibleutopia.com/mike/parasite.html>



Figure 11



Figure 12

Kaprow's (1996a, 1996b) radical art/education experiments that tried to shift sites from "the specialized zones of art toward the particular places and occasions of the everyday" (Kelley, 1996:xii). Lacy works to establish a "coalition" (O'Connor, 1995:34) between wide ranging people and groups, such as artists, institutions, schools, administrators, students, in order to align art's "public role" within a critical theory of education (Ibid:35). O'Connor notes that some participants revealed their sense of discomfort at "being viewed as anthropological objects on display for middle-class whites" (Ibid.). However, this was precisely the discourse of engagement being aimed at; to explore the critical "effect of media" on how lives are represented and on the students' own "decision-making processes" (Ibid.) (Figure 11).

A more recent performance work, *No Blood No Foul* (Figure 12), enabled the space of a basketball game to become a complex site for questioning existing rules between Oakland police and teenagers (Giroux, 1997). This was developed further in the even more elaborate *Code 33*, that tried to stimulate wider public debate on relations between Oakland teenagers and police, including discussion of "criminalization" and "police brutality" (Roth, 2001:47). Lacy's work is built up around ideas of activism, politicisation and what writers such as Garoian (1999) and Giroux and Shannon (1997) have termed performing pedagogy, achieved through the visibility of other narratives and their challenge to official discourses. The work is not about "defining people by a type of socially prescribed identity which frames and fixes them" (Lacy, In Garoian, 1999:51) and neither can it be reproduced. These performances are only made possible through the discourse of specific communities, and an art practice that is about the

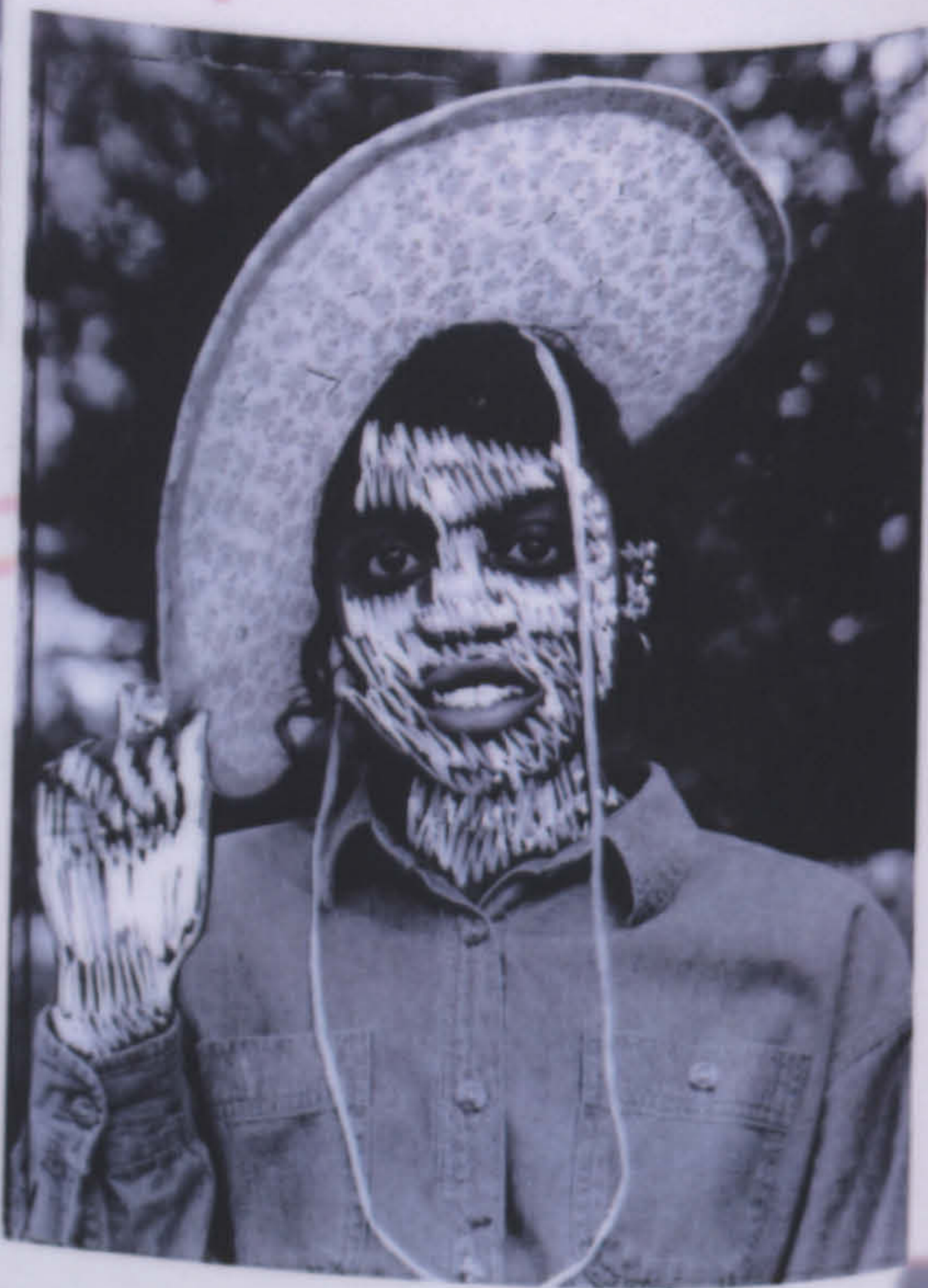
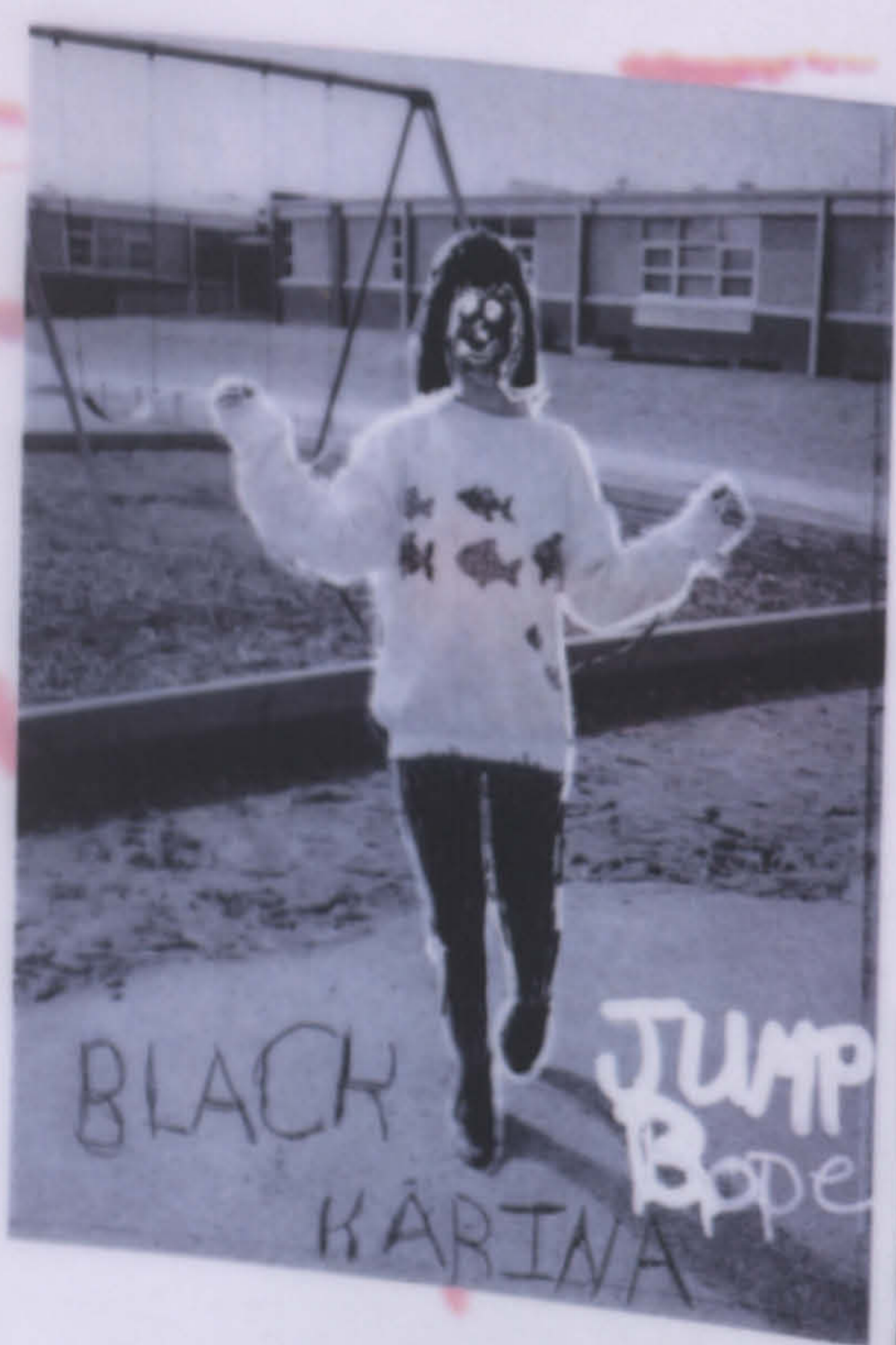


Figure 13

creation of a “contingent space wherein ideas and their means of representation are continually reconsidered” (Garoian, 1999:67). These are “fraught arenas” (Roth, 2001:61), unpredictable and ephemeral, with no predetermined outcomes; they make space for, and are affected by, chance interventions and accidental audiences (Pruesse, 1999).

On a smaller but no less important scale, Wendy Ewald's (Ewald, 2000) collaborations with young people offer up yet another kind of relationship between artists and art practice. “History, cultural stereotypes, misperceptions and power” are all explored in the uncomfortable and often harsh visual narratives of these collaborators (Weinberg and Stahel, 2000:12). Images such as *Black Self/White Self* cause the viewer to confront and question their own visual and cultural stereotyping (Figure 13). These are not conciliatory images, but are difficult viewing, just as many experiences of in/exclusion are and their “force” lies “directly” in the “underlying cultural tensions” (Ibid:10). Amidst these powerful visuals, Ewald's own images are “on equal footing” with participants, just “one voice [...] among many”, and leave us wondering who “is seeing and being seen”, “who is the teacher and who is the student” (Ibid.).

While the pedagogical potential of art practice is built upon, Ewald's projects differ from the vast number of educational programmes - particularly photographic ones - that operate as “a pedagogical exercise in skill development and creative expression” (Ibid:7). Ewald provides a “framework”, then leaves the “stage - the photographic set” wide open for the production of highly contextual, unpredictable and often “menacing” insights to the complexity of young people's lives (Ibid:8). These processes now form

part of a number of research and visual literacy programmes that interrogate in/exclusion in practice²³, extending, altering and re-framing the work of artists, educators and institutions within wider, social, cultural, political and ethical contexts.

There are many layers to these projects and they create as many questions as they answer. However, what is of interest is that these programmes were not specifically about conflict resolution, social impact or increased self-esteem, as much art within an in/exclusion framework seems increasingly expected to be. They may well have achieved some or all of these things, but their importance lies in their making of space for these *productive collisions*, through which to challenge existing processes and mechanisms. Such projects are not obsessive about difference or fragmentation for their own sake; instead, they disrupt spaces to enable other kinds of negotiation, discussion and co-operation, taking a more difficult route towards equality and inclusion.

These kinds of approaches, or “border pedagogy” (Giroux, In Garoian, 1999:63) seem a far cry from government and funding body approaches, where statistics and demographics, rather than shifts in cultural practices become the end state of measuring success. I am conscious that it may seem too easy to be critical of strategies that aim to bring people into the very sites that they have been excluded from. However, as others such as Levitas (1998) argue, the contention is with the ways of including, what people are being included into and what it is that they remain excluded from. The dangers are that attention is diverted from the kinds of questions that need to be asked about

²³ Ewald's own work with the establishment of a *Visual Literacy Project* at the Center for Documentary Studies is a key example. See URL: <http://www.cds.aas.duke.edu/ltp/index.html>



Figure 14

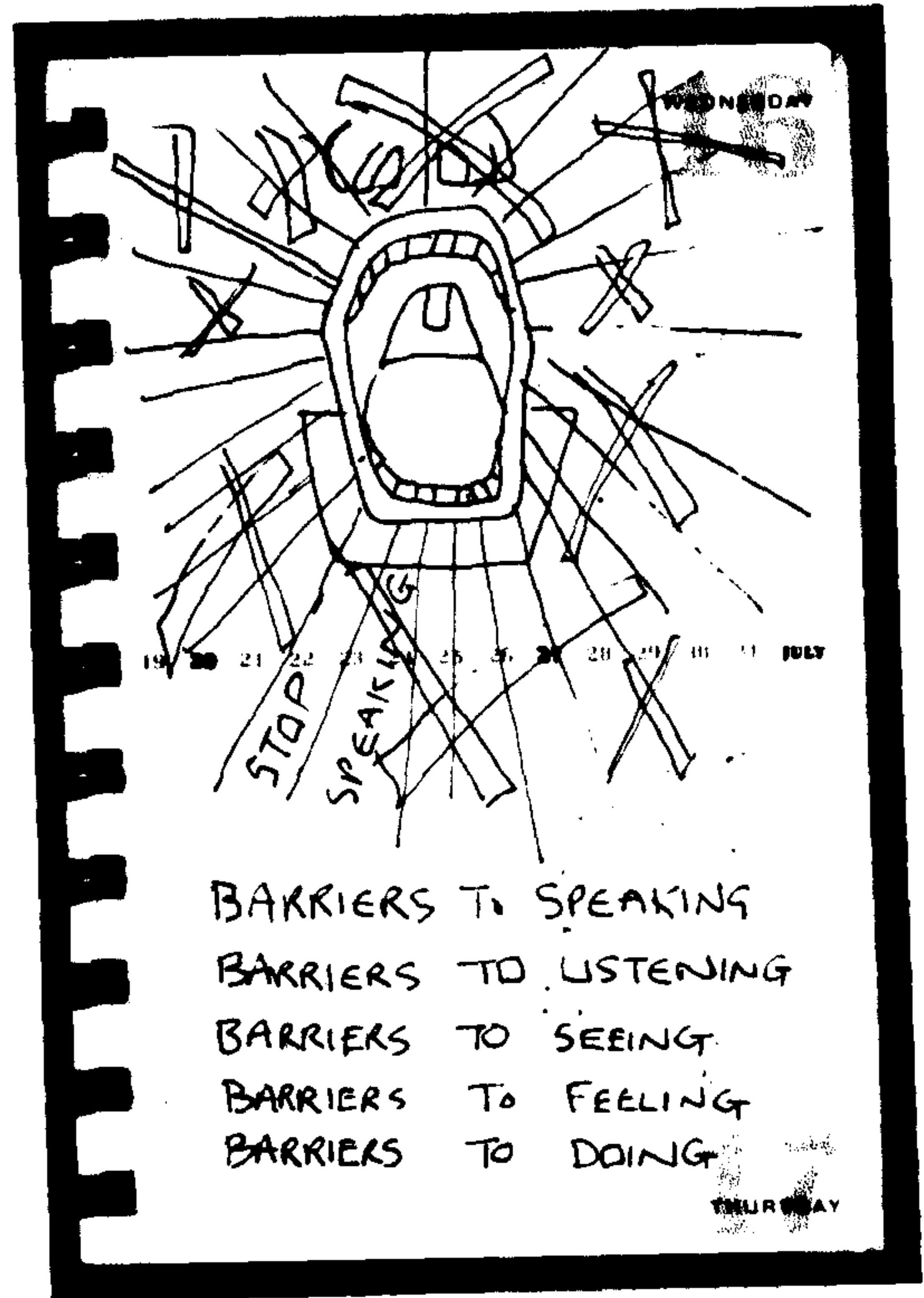
organisational and institutional practices and policies; the very processes and mechanisms within institutions that may maintain such situations.

Perhaps one of the biggest difficulties with much current government policy and discourse on in/exclusion is that it seems to make solutions appear simple, when perhaps, as many of these art projects show, we need to make things more complex. Becker (1996) suggests that the complexity of these contentions and issues pose a pedagogical challenge. There is a need to “engage”, with the “tension created by what cannot be easily absorbed and therefore engenders struggle” (68). Something of that struggle can be seen in artist Emily Heath’s performance in the City of Glasgow. Described in a newspaper article as *Live and dangerous* (Brown, 2001:11) Emily's slow and painful crawl through the city streets reinforces ideas of risk from crossing over into other spaces (Figure 14). In her slow and exhausting movement through hundreds of people making their way through the city, we become conscious of what is happening around her and what she and the work causes to happen. Actions and reactions, people walking on, looking back, stopping for a few seconds, several minutes, tripping over her, oblivious, or joining in uninvited, crawling alongside her. Rogoff (1999) proposes that often the spaces that are constructed for the staging, presenting and controlling of our viewing, are less insightful than what may occur within the *mis en scene* around it. It seems that this is precisely what many of these art projects achieve; they inhabit and make visible the potential of these often overlooked, real and imagined spaces.

As all of these crossings took shape, I realised that this way of thinking also had to apply to my own approach. It was necessary to shift from the kinds of interventions that

I was familiar with and felt sure of and participate in processes that were less known to me. Going inside the institution's processes and spaces of selection meant crossing into the unfamiliarity of other kinds of approaches and participating in the uncertainty of looking - at both myself and others. Heidegger (1993) suggests that any boundary or border we may imagine or see between things “is not that at which something stops, but [...] that from which something *begins its essential unfolding*” (356; original emphasis). I wasn't sure what would happen in these new contexts; what kind of trouble or possibilities this kind of crossing would give rise to. I hoped only that perhaps in those spaces of *essential unfolding*, ideas might overlap, disrupt and reconfigure other kinds of potential in how to look, think about and respond to issues of in/exclusion.

Troubling Methodology



INTRODUCTION

The benefits of hindsight and desire for readers' clarity can often make the journey appear more ordered and straightforward than it was. In this chapter I try to lay out the different layers of the methodological journey, offer insight to the approaches taken and explain why and how they were followed. In doing so, I also try to make visible the dilemmas and struggles that these processes engendered. Schostak (2002) suggests that the research journey and in particular representation is a:

Double structure: one track is the life of bodily engagement with the world; the other track is the life of reflection in order to represent (2).

I recognised, like Schostak, that the journey was at the very least a double structure. In this case it is an attempt to show its multi layered nature: the practical elements of the process and its impact on my approach; the deeper, process of bodily engagement, *being in* the research experience; and finally, the struggle with writing, the means of rendering experience visible. I feel that I have already made this appear like a too linear process when in effect it wasn't at all; these elements overlapped and shifted back and forth. Part of my difficulty was to find ways of understanding that complexity in all its multiplicity, in particular the effects of distance. The space and time between *being in* one experience and then finding yourself *in* yet another, the process of reflection in order to represent.

In the initial section, *Mapping the Groundwork*, I lay out some explanation of the context of the research; selection to Higher Education in Art and Design. The peculiar nature of selection to the arts and design involves submission of a written application

and portfolio of visual work²⁴. This portfolio sets the arts and design apart from most other processes of selection that are based, in the initial stages at least, on a review of applicants' paperwork, and in particular qualification levels and experience. The key aims in this section are to allow some understanding of the journey of an applicant and their application; signal how the pilot interviews and observations affected and shaped the study and finally, aid understanding of further, potentially more complex sections.

The section on *Troubling the Research Experience* borrows its title from Lather (1991) and St. Pierre (1997) and continues to draw on their ideas as well as those of others, writers, theorists and artists, in *troubling* the research process and the sense of who I was within it. This section is concerned with the troubled nature of *being in* the research experience itself, as well as the troubling of the data that emerged and the means of representation. It explores the waves of trouble I encountered, beginning with my initial crossing from visual arts practice into other academic conventions and my sense of in/exclusion from much of the language and approaches I found there. It then shifts into the growing sense of trouble that arose from *being in* the research experience. In particular, it details my attempts to find ways of working with and through the emerging material that brought these practices of research closer to the visual art processes I had known, learned through and practised. I draw on the thinking of a wide range of writers, many of whom I had found much later on in the process, who grappled with ideas of research disruptions (Lather, 1991; Baudrillard, 1994; Stronach and

²⁴ In this case a portfolio is a body of work contained in a folio or folder. The submission can be made up of slides of work perhaps too large to contain in the folio, as well as actual or original visual artefacts, such as drawings, sketchbooks and photographs.

MacLure, 1997). While I also make reference to numerous texts on data analysis and research design, I pull heavily on the work of artists such as Gomez-Peña (1996, 2000), Kahlo (Herrera, 1992) and Fusco (1999, 2001), who allowed other and very important ways of visualising the difficulties encountered.

In *Writing stories* I try to address the journey through the means of representation. This is really enmeshed with the previous section, as hopefully becomes clear in the reading. Writing was a process of analysis and reflection, not just an end in itself, but also a way of coming to understand and know something. Writers on narrative and story, particularly in research, such as Clough (1999, 2002), hooks (1991), and Emihovich (1995) all offered ways of recognising that *trouble* over forms of representation was not uncommon and indeed was an area that demanded questioning.

These diverse approaches helped enormously as I struggled to understand my differences and establish strategies through which to navigate my own way through these processes. In constructing this chapter I also draw on memories, journal notes and images of experiences that figured strongly during this time. This was a point of significant and influential change as I moved from one institution to another and generated a high level of reflexivity in the form of notations and drawings. I have included some of these in the hope of illustrating something of the personal shifts that ran alongside and overlapped with the methodological trouble.

Schostak (2002) asks what should be “ringing around” the readers' mind “once the reading is over?” (230). In this case, I hope a sense of a learner's uncertainty over the research process, the place of reflexivity and what Denzin, (1997) has called

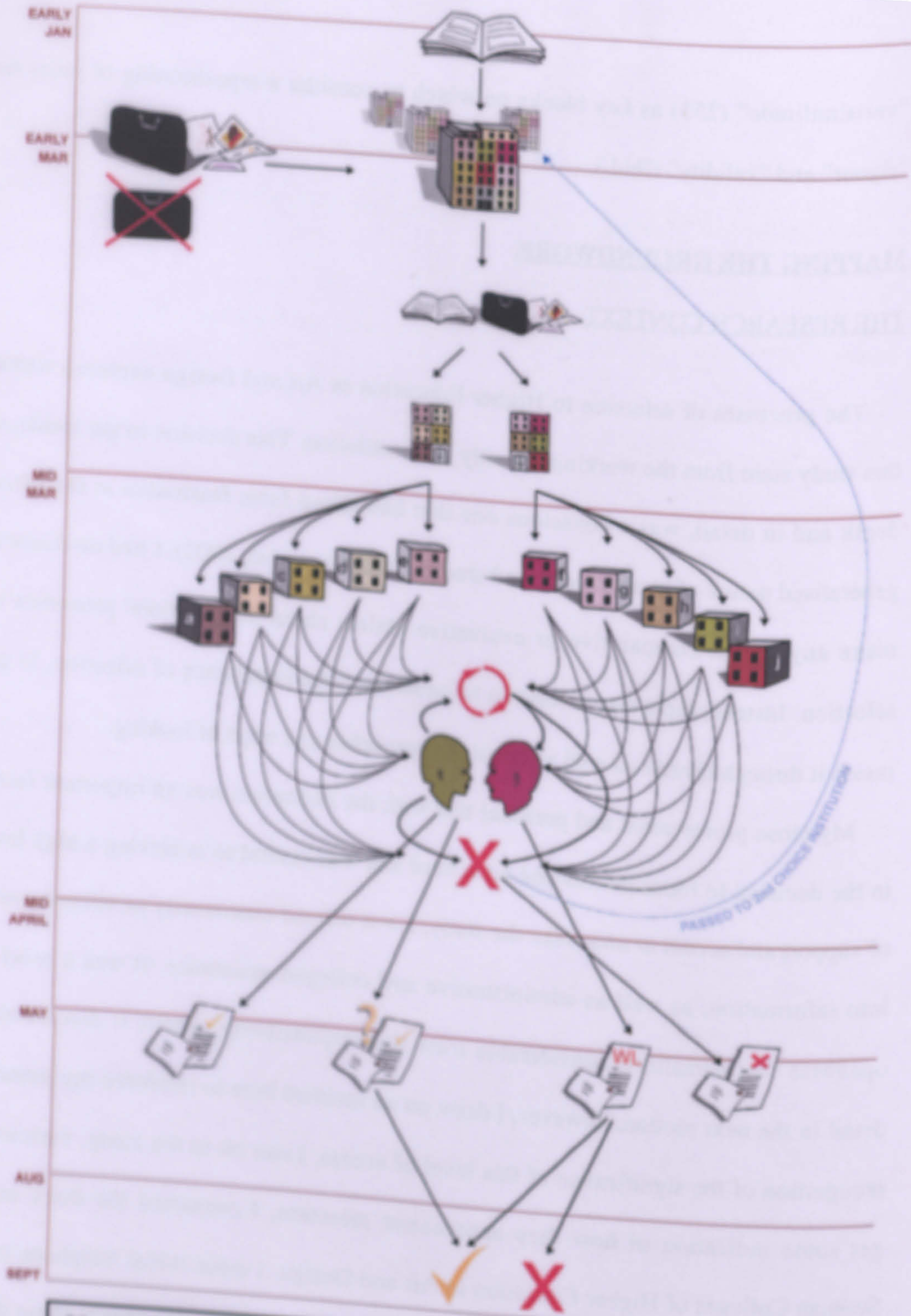
“verisimilitude” (253) as key blocks on which to consider a repositioning of ideas on “rigour” and “validity” (Ibid.).

MAPPING THE GROUNDWORK

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

The processes of selection to Higher Education in Art and Design explored within this study stem from the workings of only one institution. This decision to get inside, in depth and in detail, was a conscious one that had arisen from frustration at the often, generalised nature of many reports and studies (Woodrow et al, 2002). I had no desire to make any broad, comparative or evaluative claims about arts schools' processes of selection. Instead, there was a concern to understand the experience of selection, to get inside it through diverse as well as detailed approaches and ways of looking.

My close professional and personal ties with the institution was an important factor in the decision to focus on this one art school and was central to achieving a high level of support and access to undertake the study. I was offered enormously privileged routes into information, as well as administrative and collegial assistance. It was a level of openness that demanded considerable trust and responsibility, which is discussed in detail in the next section, however, I draw on an incident here to reinforce my sense of recognition of the significance of this level of access. Later on in the study, curious to get some indication of how they approached selection, I contacted the three other Scottish Colleges of Higher Education in Art and Design. I made initial telephone calls to find out who I should speak and write to, and explained it was only to talk about their



	APPLICATION FORM		SPECIALIST GROUPS		CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE
	INSTITUTION		REJECTION		UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE
	PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION		REFERRAL		ACCEPTANCE
	NO SUBMISSION		INTERVIEW		WAITING LIST
	SPECIALIST SCHOOLS		APPLICANT ROUTE		

Drawing 1

selection processes and, if possible, see how some of it happened in practice.

I had deliberately cold called rather than drawn on contacts and had been, perhaps naïvely, surprised by the responses. One institution agreed to put it to their admissions committee and then responded in an e-mail that my “access” was “denied”. Another had been helpful, however, hadn't been able to direct me to the right person to talk with before selection was complete. Another had wanted to put it to their admissions committee, however recognised the time delay and agreed to meet and talk with me outside of this approval. During the meeting, they had advised me that it would have been better to use my contacts, that the e-mail approach hadn't been a good one: “you could be anyone.” The significance of the access I had received really began to sink in as I realised the kinds of risks that such an *insider* look seemed to present to others.

PILOT INTERVIEWS

As the decision to explore selection became more concrete, I began to lay out a journey and plan of what happened as an applicant travelled through the process (Drawing 1), as well as what I needed to do to follow and capture that information. A series of interviews were conducted with people from both inside and outwith the institution, who had current and past involvement with the selection process, either as selectors or client groups, such as Portfolio Preparation Courses. I spoke with each person individually and, curious to know what kinds of selection stories different people might tell, I asked them just to give an account of the process from beginning to end. I had wondered what kinds of issues, if any, might be raised in relation to selection. Also,

unsure myself of what actually happened, I hoped it would give a picture of what went on and allow me to understand whether what was said to happen would be close to what I might observe happening on the day.

I hadn't quite known what to expect of the selection process, however, the idea of some general criteria that applied across all of the areas had seemed a possibility. However, the interviews began to open up a number of ambiguities that signalled potential differences in approach across selectors. Interviewees hadn't been confident of how other selectors and subject areas made decisions on who gained interview and/or entry and had hinted at a kind of "unilateral" approach. There were suggestions of shifts in what areas of an application were deemed most important, alternating between an emphasis on references over applicants' statements and *visa versa*. The practice and priorities *across* selection began to appear as less certain or known. If anything was fixed in this process, it was a sense that each application had to be looked at "through the person applying". This introduced questions about the potentially devolved nature of looking and how that might shift across so many different selectors. I began to wonder if there might be any agreement in approach. The interviews suggested that a knitting together of the visual work in the portfolio and the written material of application forms was key, but I wondered if all selectors would feel and behave the same? Might that be the core criteria of this process?

As well as the potential unilateralism in approach, the possible effects of artistic taste and class on decisions was also raised by one of the interviewees²⁵. This too had pointed

²⁵ This had been a strong element in my own questioning at this time, influenced by Bourdieu's (1979, 1996) thinking on cultural capital and reproduction.

to a need to see the visual work in tandem with the paperwork in order to understand the experience that applicants were coming from. Again I began to wonder if this might surface during my own observations and how and if selectors would work to reach a level of understanding about an applicant and their application. Amidst some of the uncertainty triggered by interviewees' responses, there was a growing questioning about responsibility and accountability. How was any of this monitored? How were applicants measured? The interviews, although limited in their numbers, had been detailed and opened up a number of unknowns, particularly in terms of variations in the process, priorities and what selectors brought to decisions. While all of the interviewees could describe the journey of an applicant, none of them it seemed was confident of how the process operated across and amongst different selectors.

PILOT OBSERVATIONS

In order to get a feel for what actually went on during the selection process and test out the practicalities of what a larger-scale study would involve, two departments were observed during selection decisions for second year direct entry²⁶. While this was a much smaller intake, I wanted to see what journey an application took and what selectors did in practice, how they used the paperwork, portfolio and interview. I knew from my own interviews and more general discussions that selection involved the review of a hybrid of paperwork and visual artefacts contained within the portfolio. Up until

²⁶ This happened earlier on in the year, and applications mostly came from individuals who had attended Further Education or other advanced courses and were trying to gain access to second and sometimes third year of a specific course. Places were tight and numbers accepted were much smaller than those to First Year.

now I had only seen blank paperwork, however, the reality of what this gamut of information would amount to seemed overwhelming. Personal statements sometimes extended to two pages and references, applicants' photographs, parental occupations, qualification levels, schools attended, employment history, all revealed incredible detail about individuals²⁷. On top of this, for entrance to First year I knew that applicants had to signal three choices of subject specialism that they wished to be considered for. I had presumed at this stage, in theory at least, that the application would be looked at by all three disciplines and had built in time with this in mind. On the day, a score sheet was also added to this bundle. Scores ranged from 1-4, with 4 being highest and 1 lowest. Selectors scored the application and decided whether they wanted to interview or not, or refer to another specialism²⁸.

The observations of direct entry allowed me to see how different elements of the application were used, in what ways and also get a sense of my own performance. I had asked selectors to provide feedback on my practice, in order that I could gauge what they needed to do, rather than constantly interrupt their process on account of my own needs. I noticed that some liked to browse quickly through the portfolio and get a feel for what they were looking at, a kind of warm up. Others looked slowly, page by page.

²⁷ The standard qualification requirements for September 2000 were stated as 3 Highers (C grade or above) - normally including English and Art, though at this time, not stated as compulsory - plus two other subjects at Standard or 'O'Grade (Grade 3 or above). Or, passes in 2 subjects at 'A' level - normally including Art - plus 3 other subjects (including English) at GCSE/ 'O' Level. Other qualifications such as Irish Leaving Certificate, Scotvec, GSVQ, GNVQ were listed acceptable as equivalent to the above.

²⁸ There was also space for brief notes/comments, which could assist with feedback should applicants contact the School. However, many staff commented that these notes were really made as reminders to themselves rather than as a means of providing formal feedback.

Selectors had been straight with me about my presence and its effects²⁹. I realised quickly that any ideas I had about being detached and unobtrusive were going to be difficult. If I wasn't reacting aloud with them, then some selectors invited me to do so. I began to get a clearer sense of how I might need to adjust and think about the large-scale approach.

During the pilots, selectors were asked to speak their responses to the visual work and paperwork out loud, an approach that carried through into the broader study. These pilot observations raised much stronger discursive ideas about applicants' attributes. "Progressive", "individual" "maverick", "embryonic", "attitude", "freshness", "lively", "determination", seemed some of the more positive responses to the visual work (Dean, 2002:239). Conversely, the "competent", "diligent", "lacking personality", "narrow in thought", "undistinguished", "old fashioned", "standard", "manufactured", "dutiful", "twee", "lacking in substance", "too formulaic", were negatively attributed (Ibid.).

There was a sense that the applicant - the person - and their visual work became one and the same. The interviews had suggested that there was a search for the individual through both the paperwork and visual submission, now from the observations it appeared that the emphasis might be even more on the visual. Questions were raised again about the differences in approach between selectors and how the numbers of applicants being looked at might affect the time and level of consideration. Did knowledge of applicants, for example through previous applications or informal contact prior to selection, affect the outcome? The potential significance of selectors' knowledge

²⁹ Early on I'd asked so many questions to begin with that one selector – rightly – asked if I would “keep quiet” and give them a chance to look!

and relation to particular feeder courses and tutors was also part of that question. Ideas on forms of capital and reproduction (Bourdieu, 1996; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1998) also figured strongly in these initial responses to the data. This included, for example, the social capital of family and peer networks that could be drawn upon by applicants and seen by some selectors as trusted sources. It also included interest in the cultural capital of more exotic life experiences, such as travel; levels of access to forms of art and culture, galleries and artists. Yet this seemed too limited an explanation, as the decision on outcome did not always fit into that pattern.

The story that emerged at this point gave the impression of shifting and devolved criteria across selectors; different ideas on what an applicant should know about the institution and subject specialism and what was expected from an applicant. I wanted to look in detail at the selection process, the use of paperwork, portfolio and interviews, in an attempt to really delve into the practice of how decisions were made and articulated. The pilot observations and interviews had opened up a multitude of questions. Building on what had emerged from these areas of work, as well as what was turning up in the reading of the 647 application forms - discussed in detail in the following section - I wondered if there might be trusted sources, schools, courses, colleagues, that gave selectors confidence in an applicant? Was there, perhaps, a shared idea of a *good* portfolio and how decisions were negotiated? Were there specific networks that applicants had to know and understand in order to navigate through the process successfully? Were there routes of information to help applicants through the process? How were applicants scored? Were the criteria for measurement the same across

specialisms and selectors? Did selectors bring something to the process? Did this affect the outcome in different ways? What did applicants bring to the process, how did they affect decisions? Although these initial interviews and observations had been limited in quantity, they gave a much more realistic and practical sense of what had to be done in terms of organisation and preparation. The experience of piloting also led me to question the rigidity of my initial fixedness on causality and forms of capital as explanation for in/exclusion, as the responses to the visual work and the person hinted at potentially more diverse and shifting factors.

TROUBLING THE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

BOUNDED FIELDS

How we speak and write tells us more about our own inscribed selves, about the way that language writes us, than about the 'object' of our gaze. The trick is to see the will to power in our work as clearly as we see the will to truth (Lather, 1991:119).

My crossing from visual art practice into other areas and forms of research had not been easy. From the very early stages I was unsure of how my experiences and ways of knowing fitted into the kinds of knowledge and approaches that I was now encountering. I have already talked about some of my personal crossings, the early move into Higher Education and the arts, and shifting from studio based practice into areas of development and education. I was faced now with more shifts; from visual arts and education into the social sciences; from a known and familiar art school context to a university setting. Neither of these may sound like particularly spectacular shifts, however, the latter



BARRIERS TO SPEAKING

BARRIERS TO LISTENING

BARRIERS TO SEEING

BARRIERS TO FEELING

BARRIERS TO DOING

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especially, was a fairly painful one; each reaffirmed my own sense of difference and in/exclusion. I had been used to being on the other side of the learning experience, involved in teaching. As a learner, amidst new spaces, kinds of knowledge, and processes, I felt more vulnerable than I could ever have anticipated. It presented trouble with how and where I fitted into these new experiences (Drawing 2).

My visual art background meant that I came to know things through making, often through a starting point of material and process. Cutting, welding and fabricating sheets of steel, pushing clay into forms to be transformed through other material transitions; soaking and stretching paper to draw upon; preparing dark and light grounds for etching marks into were all part of the visual, sensory ways of working that I was familiar with. In the language of the context I was now part of, my *knowing* was more ontological, coming to something firstly through being and feeling. Artist, Mona Hatoum (Archer, 1997) suggests that “the body is the axis of our perceptions” and “we relate to the world through our senses” (8). In the case of her own artwork, how we first experience is physically: “meaning, connotation and associations come after the initial physical experience” (Ibid.). Hatoum’s work is multi sensorial, stimulating all of our senses and helping us find ourselves *in* the work rather than *outside* of it. As well as how we experience the work itself, Ehrenzweig (1971), suggests that the very nature of making art is about being in the process, where thinking reacts to and with material, whatever that material might be.

Epistemology, a word I had rarely heard spoken, let alone used myself, was much less easy for me to find a way through. How knowledge was validated and determined

subject positions seemed overwhelming. I could not make sense of how, or why, any one discipline, field or genre would set itself in opposition to the other. It suggested limitations, bounded fields and polarisations of research, “violent hierarchies [...] in which one term gets the upper hand by dismissing its opposite as secondary, improper, marginal, false or frivolous” (Derrida, In Stronach and MacLure, 1997:5). I worried that I had shifted into an area of “guardians of orthodoxy [...] permanent boundaries and unquestionable canons” (Lather, 1991:xvi). Yet I also recognised something of that in what Becker (1996) has described as the “hermetic” nature of the visual arts (87). I saw it in myself too, in the earlier and more fixed ideas that I had often brought to an explanation of situations. My personal background and professional work in education and community development more naturally prodded me towards the radical, often emancipatory stance of writers and educators such as hooks (1990, 1994a, 1994b), Giroux (1983) and Friere (1993). However my growing questioning of the seemingly universalising claims around community transformation and in particular the arts as change agents (Landry and Bianchini, 1995; PAT 10, 1999), simultaneously made me want to take those positions apart.

Rogoff (1998) warns that even amidst the apparent limitlessness of postmodernism, there is still the danger that we fail to “break down the barriers of permissible and territorialized knowledge” and instead “simply redraw them along another formalized set of lines” (23). Eagleton (2000) reaffirms this in his suggestion that postmodernism's abandonment of belief in “radical mass movements” in favour of “at first glance [...] alluring diversity” is also “exclusivist”, shutting out “the enemies of pluralism” (42). A

system without apparent limits is likely to undergo “crisis”; and what happens when the “system inflates to a point where” there “no longer seems a system at all” but instead, “a mere host of random particulars” (Ibid:72-73). Eagleton proposes that “the more vividly particularised the world becomes, the more drearily uniform it grows” (Ibid:73) and, “ironically” is often “unified by antagonism to others” (Ibid:42). Both Eagleton (2000) and Rogoff (1998) suggest that we cannot keep rolling over any alternatives to ourselves, otherwise we reach the point of expansion, where we “implode” (Eagleton, 2000:72). What happens then? Where do we go next? We need difference in order to recognise ourselves and yet have to be constantly awake to the realisation that desire for diversity does not mean that exclusions disappear, they may only become more particularised. “Specificity” can “liberate”, however can also “imprison” (Rogoff, 1998:24). Despite questions, the possibilities of the *post* created a space within which to grapple with these complexities.

Writing of artists' crossings into other modes of practice, particularly social science research conventions, Gray (1998) suggests that this newness of involvement led artists and designers to borrow or adapt existing methodologies. Rather than adapt or make other methods part of my experience, I wanted to “reach the point of a certain exteriority” (Derrida, In Stronach and MacLure, 1997:3) in “relation to the space that is protected, closed off, by disciplinary institutions” (Stronach and MacLure, 1997:3). To do this, I needed to “question the assumptions which a discipline or field takes to be self evident” (Ibid.) and “choose *not* to choose between them, nor to work to transcend them [...] but instead to complicate the relations *between* them” (Ibid:5; original emphasis).

Ontological and epistemological barriers were not something I could overcome by “ceasing to be myself”, or through others “reduplicating” what “I am feeling” (Eagleton, 2000:49).

To believe this is to assume I am in perfect possession of my own experience, luminously transparent to myself [...]. But I am not in fact in full possession of my own experience; I can sometimes be quite mistaken about what I am feeling, let alone thinking; you might quite often understand me better than I can myself (Ibid:49).

Who I was and where I had come from, had to also enfold into these new research contexts. My trouble with epistemology and its relation to ontology, as well as my closer attachment to the latter and desire for crossings and exchange, signals something of the methodological dilemmas - troubling experiences - felt even before I set foot into the research context. The sense of purpose and desire to be active in bringing about change was and is still with me. However, it sits alongside growing recognition as Lather (1991) suggests, that the “means necessary for change” requires some “housecleaning” (xvii) - a hard look at ourselves. This implies a reconsideration of empowerment not as “something done ‘to’ or ‘for’ someone”, but as a “process” we all undertake on and for ourselves (Ibid:4). It is a “coming into sense” of our situations through questioning, to develop new relationships with our own contexts. (Ibid.). Reflexivity was central to this approach. This does not mean “vanity ethnography” (Van Maanen, In Lather, 1991:150), or “emotional strip tease” of the kind that Fusco (2001:xiv) rallies against, where interest in the under-represented, excluded or marginalised, encourages voyeuristic, confessional

autobiographies³⁰. It does mean attendance to the “operations” of our “own production and organisation of meaning”, how our own “specificity” profoundly shapes “the process and product of inquiry” (Lather, 1991:124). Such a way forward may allow “the burden of specificity” to shift from the material being looked at to the “historical specificity of he/she/they doing the studying” (Rogoff, 1998:24). This is not another either/or proposition, nor was it to fall “prey to endless anecdotal and autobiographical ruminating” of “experience as a basis for knowledge”, but a means of reading experience through other kinds of “cultural narratives” (Ibid.). It has forced questions about ideas and forms of validity, rigour, truth, certainty, ethics and “the social relations that produce the research itself” (Lather, 1991:67).

BEING IN THE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

The essence and starting point of coming to know is not a subjectivity we can explicitly account for, but is of a direct participatory nature one cannot account for (Heshusius, 1994:17).

Practicalities and unknowns

Despite my participation in Research Methods Training Courses, and immersion in what felt like a muddle of methodological texts, nothing really prepared me for *being in* the research experience. The diversity of literature on research methods was confusing and seemed to shift abruptly from the descriptive (Robson, 1993), to more critical and

³⁰ Fusco's (2001) angry condemnation of this kind of representation, likened to the “narcissism of talk-show confessionals” (Ibid:xvi) reinforces the discussion developed in Chapter Two where media images represented people one-dimensionally.

analytical writings (Denzin, 1997; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Coffey, 1999). Writers such as Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) and Burton (2000) told me clearly what I was doing: mixed methods, an essentially qualitative case study, using multiple approaches and data sources, with a quantitative bolstering. Yet that simple explanation could not have felt more distant from the complexities of what went on inside it all.

At the very onset of heading into the research context, a feeling of trouble had begun. The realities of how to organise time, negotiate and work with so many people on the ground presented huge concerns. If things went awry, I could not just pick it up again; I would have completely missed the two-week long 'window' of selection. I had prepared as much as I could, trying to consider and cover every eventuality. I had piloted observations; undertaken discussions and interviews on the process; organised written agreements; inspected the space where selection happened; tested recordings; labelled portfolios to be tracked; memo'd all staff involved, and then memo'd them again; followed up with telephone calls; even gone to visit departments with gentle reminders of what was happening. However, as the time drew closer for the observations to begin, my sense of concern over the level of constant attention that would be necessary to keep on top of this and all of the things that could go wrong grew larger.

Through the detailed reading of all 647 application forms, I had identified 51 applicants to track plus a list of reserves in case some did not materialise into portfolio submissions³¹. Those selected to be tracked came from a diverse range of backgrounds in

³¹ This wasn't unusual. A number of applications were submitted that never materialised into final applications at portfolio stage - there is interesting potential to explore the reasons behind these 'No Submissions'. Other unforeseen elements occurred, such as selectors not noticing the 'tracked' labels on portfolios and proceeding without me. The reserves came into play in these situations too.

terms of geographical spread, social class, age, entry routes, ethnicity, nationality, levels of educational attainment and art experience. This had been critical, as it avoided a marginal focus on how only the *under-represented* were discussed, and widened the context for discussion of potential across a range of experience³². I had hoped that such a diverse group of people would enable a deeper understanding of the kinds of qualities and attributes that appeared (un)desirable for acceptance to fine art and design education. These detailed discussions would take place across ten selection groups and involve more than twenty different selectors, which would allow the processes of selection to be explored across a gamut of disciplines and individuals. In addition to the tracking of individual applicants as they were discussed through the process, I also planned to try a version of Spradley's (1979:165-168) triadic contrast. This would encourage selectors to reflect back on their own decision-making of all the tracked applicants. I hoped that this would create the specific opportunity to explore similarities and differences, through how applicants were discussed "relative to one another" (Schwartz and Webb, 2002:4)³³. The aim was that this in turn would butt neatly against

³² In order not to interfere with the Registry's access to these forms, I'd spent weekends locked away in the Registry Offices. I'd tried reading through the forms as I found them - the order in which they had arrived - however the information was overwhelming and difficult to keep track of. I decided to sort all of the forms by departmental choices and read each one individually. When read as a cohort of applications to specific departments the information became more manageable. This also ensured I selected a breadth of people to track within each departmental area, as well as across the range of applicants.

³³ My version was loosely based on Spradley's approach of using a triadic technique in his interviewing. Spradley offered up three terms and asked participants which two were the same and which was different. This operated on the rationale that *different* might also imply similarities and could tease open the meaning and relations of particular ideas. However, I'd fallen into the very trap that Spradley warned of, where the participant response might be a question that you immediately offered up your own examples to. I'd managed to temper this at times and at others had felt so unsure when selectors asked questions about the triadic that I'd fumbled and became over explanatory.

investigations of *if* and *how* any established criteria were applied across individuals, departments or schools (Ibid.).

I still panicked about the practicalities. I would have to be present and ready to substitute reserve cases. I also knew to expect that some applicants would shift from their first choice department through to their second and possibly, their third choice departments³⁴. I would have to be aware of their movement through the process in order to make arrangements to be at these second time around discussions. This didn't take account of the occasional referrals that selectors themselves brought to my attention and encouraged me to sit in on. I knew that this was a working situation, it was a tight time frame and made up of other people's processes; this made it potentially more unpredictable and I worried at the prospect of keeping a handle on it all. As the observations drew to an end, I had to juggle it all again in the organisation and agreement of presence at the interviews of those tracked applicants who made it through to the next stage³⁵. On the surface, this sounded straightforward; however, I had to fit into the scheduling of some 45 interviews across ten different subject areas, all set up in terms of an agreed time frame and staff availability. The turn around was at high speed and again I had to work closely with the Registry to discuss and agree the protocol for my presence and try to ensure no dual scheduling. The reality of this latter aspect was that there was often no space between interviews, and the schedule was complicated

³⁴ This move to third choice discussion didn't happen with any of the applicants tracked and most were reviewed only by their first choice selection teams.

³⁵ I wanted to follow applicants the whole way through and get a sense of the purpose of interviews within the process and also the effect on the outcome of entry/non entry.

further by overruns, latecomers and no shows³⁶.

In parallel to this I had to come to terms with the quantitative work proposed. I had already read through 647 student application forms and selected those to track. I had drawn up drafts and redrafts of variables arising from the information on the application forms. However, before any analysis, I had to work out firstly how to purchase costly SPSS³⁷, then, learn how to use it. This of course did not take account of the even more unknown learning curve that engagement with quantitative methods and analysis demanded. My rationale for this mixed methods approach had been clear. Firstly, to explore qualitatively the detailed progress of selected applicants through discussion of portfolios, paperwork and interviews. Secondly, to gain a more panoramic picture of the progress of all applicants in relation to diverse background variables, as they were edited into and out of the selection process. However, worries were again magnified when I realised that as applicants were rejected their portfolios were moved on to their second choice college along with all of the paperwork. If I was to undertake the quantitative work, in order to keep the data intact I would have to keep on top of the progress of all applicants and not only those tracked. I had to know who was moving where and when,

³⁶ While I was present at interviews, recording of these events was through written notes only. Tape recording would have required further levels of agreement and could have been awkward and intrusive for applicants. As the focus of the study was on the portfolio review, presence at interviews was a bonus in widening understanding of the overall process. Also, some applicants, such as international candidates, were telephoned and despite my presence during some of these calls, this proved difficult to record in detail. Telephone interviews were already different by their very nature. We tried speakerphone to allow audible access, however, that made conversation awkward. In the end, these interviews were not detailed enough to write up.

³⁷ Statistical Programme for Social Science (SPSS), which assists with the quantitative analysis of data.

in order to duplicate all of the information before it too moved on with the visual work³⁸.

It was possibly only my *not knowing* that allowed me to push so naively forward.

On the first day of selection, equipped with areas and issues identified from the pilot observations, interviews and literature, such as *watch the use of paperwork, prompt selectors to speak out loud, look for forms of capital/networks*, I went down to the selection space feeling pretty anxious. What if I couldn't do this? If no one participated? Once in amongst it all, however, the momentum of the process began to run itself, taking me with it. I would end one observation with a group and shift immediately to another, with rarely even a little time to make notes of questions arising, let alone worry. Evenings were spent in reflection, listening back over the day's recordings, identifying areas I needed to work on, such as prompting descriptions of the work as reminders of what was being discussed. I had to consider other kinds of questions I should ask and be more aware of gestures and actions that linked to the silences. There were a lot of unknowns that I could never have planned for, which had to be responded to now in order to feed into the process.

Multiple Selves

This, however, had been only one level of *trouble*; it also unexpectedly changed shape in the research process. I felt my own in/exclusion, I was strangely part of and at

³⁸ This area - and many others - could not have happened without the tremendous support of the Registry, ensuring as much as possible that I didn't miss cases and also arranging to have all the necessary duplication undertaken for me. There is no way the data would have been so intact without this support - on a very pragmatic level; physically I couldn't have been present at the observations and also at the photocopier!

the same time outside of the selection process. I became aware of my multiple selves (Peshkin, 1988, 2000) and felt like I inhabited different people and was seen differently, depending on who was involved in the looking. At different times and all at once or not at all, I was a researcher, artist, educator, student, friend, colleague, and stranger. I sometimes felt comfortable and at others unsure and unconfident of who I was or felt I needed to be in those different spaces. This was the highly emotional, “bodily engagement” that Schostak (2002:2) had spoken of, and these were feelings that I had not fully anticipated.

Peshkin's (1988, 2000) advice had been to put those selves out there, in order to manage, check and control. However, this left so many questions. If we resist the influence of values and emotions, do we cut ourselves off from the real “feeling/knowing?” (Needleman, In Heshusius, 1994:18). By managing and restraining subjectivities, do we really have the research process under control and is this what we should aim for? By trying to manage and control subjectivity, perhaps a more “participatory mode of consciousness” (Heshusius, 1994:15) would be repressed and consequently what we might come to understand about ourselves and others would also be restricted. This idea of “participatory consciousness” as being and knowing places an emphasis on how we come to know (Ibid:17). Heshusius suggests that we may often focus on what we find once we have “reached” something, accounting for the process of how we got there (Ibid:18). However, “can we let go of something” (Ibid.), what we know or think we know, in order to reach some place else?



Figure 15

Frida Kahlo's painting *The Two Fridas* (Figure 15) makes visual these ideas of multiple selves and emotional entanglement. In this image, two identical Frida's hold hands like some mirror image, one dressed in a Mexican Tehuana costume, the other in a white, European wedding dress. *The Two Fridas* straddle different cultures; attached and detached from the space around them, they are at once the same person and two different people (Herrera, 1992). In the process, I constantly found myself trying to read and make sense of different situations, people, and relational dynamics and, sometimes self-consciously at others unconsciously, shift my sense of self in order to fit in. This wasn't the careful and clear "impression management" of Hammersley and Atkinson (In Holliday, 2002:166), where presence in terms of behaviour, manner and "personal appearance" are monitored in a "professional way", to improve how we "fit in" (Holliday, 2002:166-167). This was closer to Spivak's (1990a) suggestion that we inhabit multiple subject positions and "one is not just one thing" (60). It was a discomfort and recognition of the difficulty of knowing yourself.

The Problems of Looking

Troubles shifted again, when the effects of different kinds of looking began to surface. The power relations of the gaze are well documented: Foucault's (1991, 1994) disciplining panopticon of power and surveillance and the hearing and speaking gaze of the observer on the observed; Hall's (1996a, 1996b) exploration of identity as "both outside and inside" (1996b:445), constructed largely by how others see and perceive you and Fine's (1998) writing against othering forcefully engage with the complexities and

consequences of research relations. In Chapter 2 I laid out the difficulties of media representations that named and fixed the socially excluded as other, most often in a space of dysfunctionality. These uncomfortable observations and feelings followed me through into the research; I watched as selectors voiced their constructions of others, recognised my own complicity in those processes and felt the looking upon myself. My sense of the authority of the research relation, in particular my looking at others, as well as the arising self-doubt I often felt, led to complicated and often uncomfortable experiences. What to do in those moments when selectors asked what I thought? Am I a researcher, interested colleague or friend? How then should I act? What to do when tensions and disagreements emerged, especially when my being there may have provoked them? Or when selectors' approaches and decisions troubled me? Did I intervene, feed back? Did I do nothing, as any detached observer would do? My shifts in who I was amongst different selectors meant I found myself sometimes reacting to, with and against their actions or conversely, not reacting at all to things that sparked considerable emotion. It was a complex and complicating realisation of what being in the research experience gave rise to. I had not been prepared for this myriad of feelings. Every action I took was a cause for reflection and concern, as I tried to adjust my actions from group to group, and figure out my own route through the endless trouble.

I was strangely part of and at the same time outside of the selection process. It was a strange in-between state; a splitting of gazes (Lacan, 1991; Merleau-Ponty, 1986). It had felt almost cinematic being there in that space, with selectors looking at visual work and me looking at them looking and all of these gazes at some point turned back on myself. I

was *apart* from their looking, and at the same time often *part* of it; my mind was making decisions and responding to the work before me, as well as to their responses. This was “a switch from the panoptic mechanism of surveillance” (Baudrillard, 1994:29) to one in which “the distinction between the passive and the active is abolished” (Ibid.). I had not fully anticipated the dilemma of looking at other people's practices. I had read applicants' statements, seen their photographs and now, listened to them being discussed by others. I felt like I knew many of them, to the point where I passed some in the street and involuntarily said 'hello', then, embarrassed by their look of non recognition, remembered that they did not know me. Fordham (In Coffey, 1999:140), suggests that the difficulties of watching and being watched, causes us to become “implicated and [...] ‘over implicated’ in a network of relationships”. Rather than any one-way surveillance and absence of self-interrogation legitimised by claims of objectivity, Fine (1998) argues that we need to address our collusion through surveillance upon ourselves. This is a project of reflexivity that engages with *what* and *who* we look at, as well as *how* we look and its effects on our sense of who we are, how we both shape and are shaped by our actions.

Gomez-Peña's border crossings (1996, 2000) square up very directly to these ideas, in particular through his exploration of the Mexico/USA relationship. In his ethno-techno performances, through characters such as *El Mexterminator* or *El Cybervato*, Gomez-Peña constructs the fear and mocking of the *other* and Latino Culture more specifically (Gomez-Peña and Sifuentes, 1996). The image *Please Don't Discover Me* shows particularly poignantly the effects of this looking upon our sense of who we are

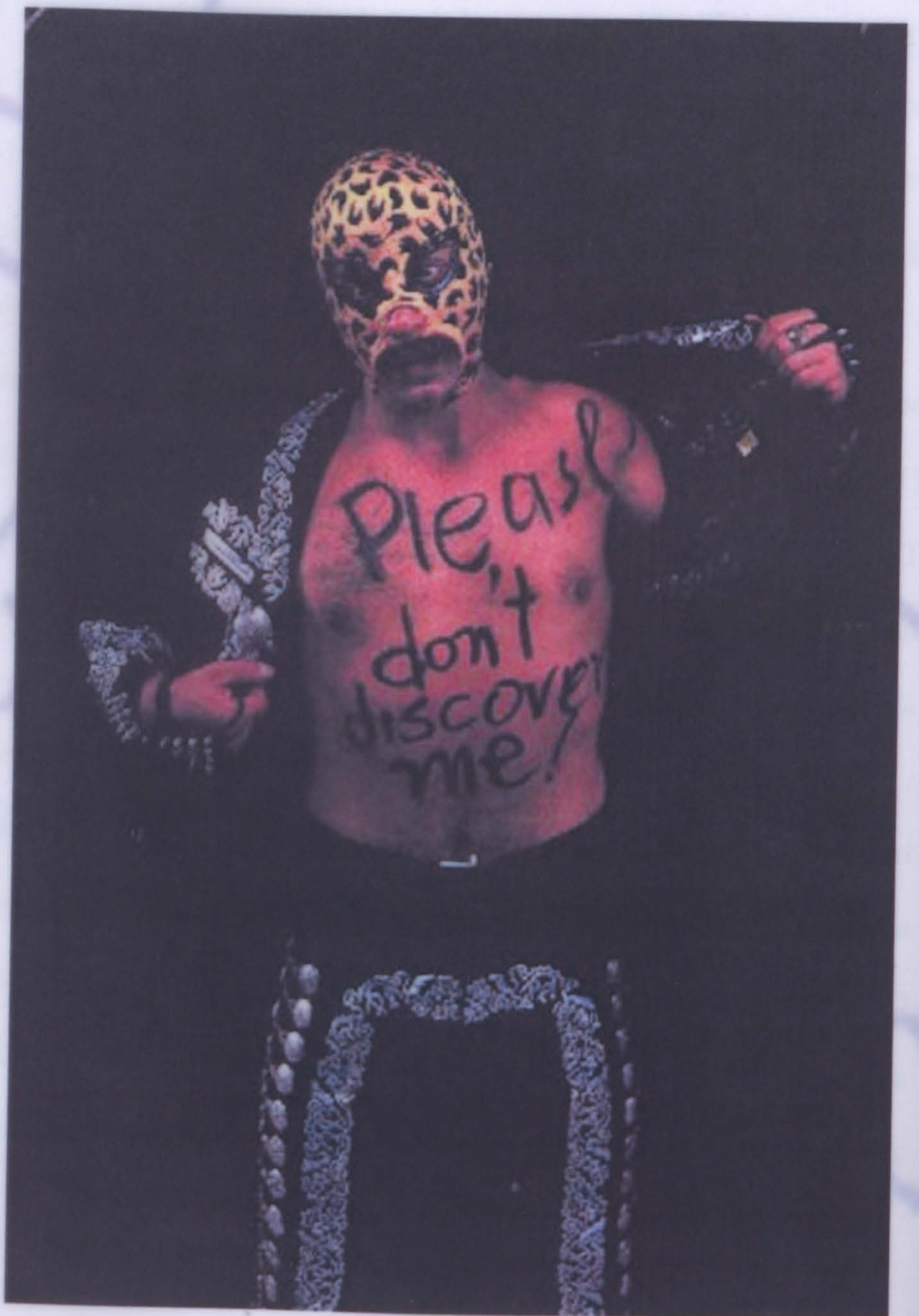


Figure 16

(Figure 16). Dressed as a hybrid mariachi-cum-wrestler, Gomez-Peña tears open his jacket to reveal the words “please don't discover me” scrawled across his chest (Gomez-Peña, 1996:31). There is a layer of humour that meets us in reading this and all of these strange caricature-like constructions of Mexicanness; then a discomfort as the joke is reflected back upon the viewer. Gomez-Peña's taunting portrayal of the anxiety over the *other*, and how and what this constructs, stares us boldly in the face, inscribed upon his own body. The message is forceful: you may think you have *discovered* me, but I have always been here and this identity is not fixed, but shifts with each new spectator.

My worries about my insider/outsider relation to the applicants and selectors and the implications of my presence became a constant and central part of the trouble. Later on when I came to the writing of these experiences, I would feel the fullness of what these concerns with looking and representation would come to mean.

Truth and the problem of the *real*

Reality it seems is a text, subject to multiple interpretations, multiple readings, multiple uses (Apple, 1991:vii).

The relations of power within the research process, as well as the authority of the construction of knowledge, presented difficulties. Now, the troubling of ideas of truth, validity and certainty also entered the experience. Stronach and MacLure's (1997) disappointment at the impossibility of “certainty, validity, illumination, generality” (4-5) was not, as they suggest, “a choice and an inevitability” (Ibid:5) for me, but a growing source of trouble. I had always had the hope and intent that the research could affect

change; now I wondered on what basis? What counted as true anymore? If I was so implicated in the process, what was I actually representing? What could be said about what happened? I thought that I had taken care about the ethics of the process, with discussions and letters of agreements (Celnick, 2000; Kent, 2000), however, I had not foreseen how what was being laid bare would snowball into such a profusion of ethics and emotions.

I recognised now how ethical felt: the potential risks that research presented to others, through what was made visible and my complicity in the construction of experience. I was not outside of it all, looking in; I was part of its making in ways I had not imagined. There was no one external *truth* or *reality* to be discovered; how could there be if experience was so complex and we are always so implicated in it? What was at stake in any consideration of *truth*, was relayed in Schostak's (2002) use of Baudrillard's (1994) simulacra. Schostak (2002:100) quotes extensively and I paraphrase here too in some detail³⁹. Baudrillard's (1994) troubling of the real is relayed through an invitation to attempt to set up a fake situation, a simulacra. "Organise a fake holdup"(20) suggests Baudrillard, but let everyone know that it's fake:

Verify that your weapons are harmless, [...] take the most trustworthy hostage [...] demand a ransom [...] make it so that the operation creates as much commotion as possible - in short remain close to the 'truth', in order to test the reaction of the apparatus to the perfect simulacrum.

³⁹ Schostak provided the initial insight to Baudrillard's text, and I have focused in on precisely the same story as used by him. However, it opened up an invitation to read Baudrillard's (1994) simulacra and simulation, hence referenced directly.

“You won't be able to do it” he warns (Ibid.) The network of the artificial will become bound up in the real; “a policeman will really fire on sight”, someone will “faint” and “die of a heart attack”. Like it or not, “you will immediately find yourself once again [...] in the real” (Ibid.). Schostak (2002) suggests that this explains the “interrelationship between methodology” - how we look, analyse and represent the real - “and the Real [...] 'realities' of social organization” (100). We can set up rules, however, the world is unpredictable; people act and react to what they perceive “as real” (Ibid.). My presence in the selection experience as both insider and outsider meant that the confusion of the *real* became heightened, at times it felt staged, an appearance of the *real*. How could I know how people were really reacting to being looked at? What effects did I have? What of those silences I was so sure were thoughtful and pensive moments, were they 'real'? What was being opened up? What might happen as a consequence of my representation of this reality? This kind of confusion of the real felt, as Baudrillard (1994) suggests, “more dangerous” (Ibid.). My presence might only “disturb the order of things”, however, the reaction to me could “attack the reality principle itself” (Ibid.). I struggled with how to represent my/this confusion fairly and with all its ambiguities and uncertainties.

In Fusco and Gomez-Peña's (1996) performance, *Two Undiscovered Amerindians* these dilemmas are relayed visually. Performing as hybrid Americans and Indians or *Amerindians* from the fictional island of Guatinaui, Gomez-Peña and Fusco spent three days in a cage, in a number of large cities, simulating the real. They were taken to the bathroom on leashes, inviting passers-by to feed them through the bars, or pay to have

their photographs taken with the *exhibits*. The performance makes poignant the effects of our participation in the simulacra. In doing what they invite you to do, you participate in those very acts of subjection and objectification that they want to bring to attention. In not participating you reveal your discomfort and/or lack of concern with what is laid before you. The potency of the exoticism of the other is reinforced by the difficulty of discriminating between where the simulacra and the real begin and end. Despite things becoming more staged and whimsical, according to Gomez-Peña (1996), a large portion “of our audience believed that the exhibit was real”, that these were really authentic natives in a cage, yet “did not feel compelled to do anything about it” (98).

The need to be aware of and declare the influence of our subject positions no longer seemed enough (Holliday, 2002). This suggested that once you said it, you could put it aside. If truth was always at odds and “reality [...] subject to multiple interpretations, multiple readings, multiple uses” (Apple, 1991:vii), then how uncertainty was represented was paramount. I had to be prepared to open myself up to the same kinds of risks that others were being asked to do; lay open my mistakes and misjudgements; question my own processes and practices. Too much reflexivity might be seen to descend into narcissism. However, if there “is no ‘the truth’, ‘a truth’”, if “truth is not one thing, or even a system” but an “increasing complexity” (Rich, In Lather, 1991:51), then I had to take that chance in reflecting the trouble back onto myself.

TROUBLING DATA

How can language, which regularly falls apart, secure meaning and truth? [...] Data that escaped language [...] exploded all over my study - data that were uncodable, excessive, out-of-control, out-of-category (St. Pierre, 1997:179).

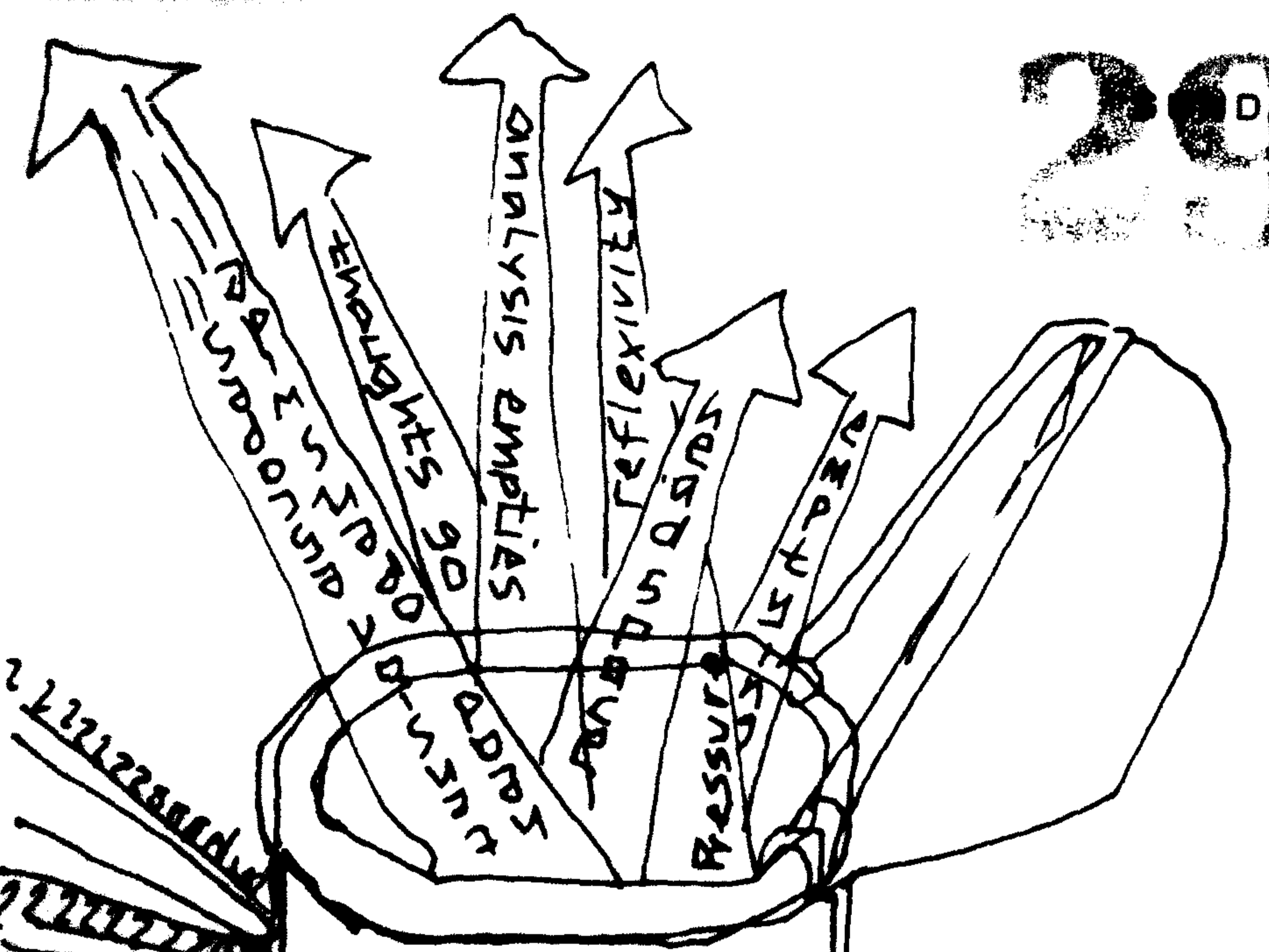
Writing of her own difficulties with the research experience, and methodology in particular, St. Pierre (1997) reveals how she felt troubled by and began to *trouble* her data. Her difficulties arose as a consequence of trying to work to what she felt to be the “ruthlessly linear nature of the narrative of knowledge production in research methodology” (179). It made it all sound straightforward:

Employ methods, such as interviewing and participant observation, which produce data [...] code, categorize, analyze and interpret [...] finally from that analysis and interpretation [...] develop theories of knowledge (Ibid:179-180).

“What happens” she asks “when this linear process is interrupted because the researcher enters this narrative in the middle?” (Ibid:180). In her case the data had appeared first and she moved backwards and forwards to identify the method, then how to convey the ways in which that data produced and linked to particular kinds of knowledge (Ibid). Despite her attempts to “overlay the linear narrative of methodology” on her own practice “it never fit (*sic*)” (Ibid.).

While Denzin (1997) and Coffey and Atkinson (1996) provided guiding ideas about analysis, no amount of advice in qualitative methods books I had explored to that point gave me a sense of the oncoming struggle. Citing a wide range of writers, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) offered up analytical devices of “themes, clusters, categories”, “data

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reduction”, and “connections and patterns” (7-8). I found myself shifting back to their earlier questions about what analysis meant. Did it mean the “procedures of organization and retrieval”, management, organisation, indexing, coding, sorting, manipulating, or did it mean “speculation and interpretation”? (Ibid:6) Was it the “unique rather than regularities of incidence or pattern” that was sought? (Ibid:7) While they voiced complexity and stressed there was no “single right or most appropriate way” (Ibid:6), the examples signalled the stark difference in approaches and harked back to the binarisms and polarisations between fields and disciplines. To add to the confusion, they also illustrated how all the bases could be covered, suggesting that analysis could be “cyclical” and “reflexive”, “comprehensive and systematic but not rigid” where “data are segmented and divided into meaningful units” but with “connection to the whole” (Ibid:10).

I empathised with St. Pierre's (1997) frustration. It seemed that “*methodolatry* [...] a preoccupation with selecting and defending methods to the exclusion of the [...] story” (Janesick, In Holliday, 2002:22; original emphasis), rang loud and clear. My own experience was tinged more with insecurity, however, felt equally out of control (Drawing 3). If the confusion of methods literature on data analysis told me anything, it was:

If data are the foundation on which knowledge rests, it is important to trouble the common-sense understanding of [...] research that aims to produce different knowledge and to produce knowledge differently (St. Pierre, 1997:175).

Time

Data presented trouble and as St. Pierre suggests, it also demanded that it be troubled. My own dilemmas began with the transcriptions of the 51 first choice observations, which extended to 61 when charted through the looking of other, mostly second choice departments, or collegial referrals. On top of this I had nine, fairly lengthy triadic discussions that took place across all but one of the departments, the reasons for which are explained in the selection story. Finally I had a larger school-wide triadic reflection on five of the applicants, which took a slightly different format from the others. This had come about due to feedback from selectors themselves. During the process one selector had suggested that it might be of interest to bring a wider group together and look at visual work from different departments. This was organised and in the first instance took place without the paperwork, which allowed an opportunity to explore how much selectors were able to discern about an applicant only from the visual material. This added up to some 75 observations each lasting anywhere between six to 25 minutes long. In the earlier pilot studies I had listened to the recordings and made notes on what seemed like the key areas, usually linked to Bourdieu's (1996) ideas on reproduction and forms of capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1998). However, as I listened to this mass of observations, typed up the transcripts and then finally read them on the page, it all seemed much more complex and at the same time emptier and distant from what I had experienced.

After the initial nervousness, *being in* the selection process had become exciting. It had been pacy and revealing and I was conscious of the gap opening up between those

transcript			
A	B	C	D
1-2mins	1-2mins	2-4mins	2-4mins
<p>S1 See this is interesting case...one of the things after you do it for a while, sometimes you can, you get an indication the minute you crack the folder. See something now...all that's here, it looks like just a, a insignificant little sketch, just put on top of, of things but...he did put it there. It's one of the first things you see and that drawing, both...slight, slightly quirky, but they really do...show some ah sensibility already. So for a 1st year applicant that is not...similar, at all similar to the last folio which was looked at. Well see, I mean first of all the drawings are not this attempt to do an academic drawing for us or what they think is an academic drawing...right, what it is he's done a kind of expressive drawing and the first thing we see when we open the folio...which is, it's just an interesting thing I don't know if it amounts to much (When you say that word quirky, what do you mean?) S1 Well, alright, no, well, right away just open up the...the em, em, what I'd say rather than quirky is idiosyncratic, so it's</p>	<p>already developed an idiosyncratic drawing manner. Even if it's just manner, the point is that he thinks that's important. So that shows a critical awareness. He's already thinking art rather than straightforward applied, you know ah representation of something. He's already decided that he's thinking in terms of art, that means he's aware that drawing takes all kinds of different forms...and is, an' he, he's got the confidence to put that right at the top of his folio...an' that's the first thing we see, which are life drawings, drawings and...they've all got this kind of idiosyncraticity to them, so he's going to rely on them, now that could be...an attempt to cover up something but...but in this case they're not, they're not bad.</p>	<p>S1 just very straightforward stuff, so...so right away he's got my interest right...an' he's included enough stuff to...em show that he's actually interested in art...as opposed to...making pictures yah, hmmm, quite interesting stuff (How do you mean, sorry I don't understand, he's interested in art as opposed to making pictures?) S1 Well he understands that, em, there, it it looks to me like he understands that, the difference between say just photographic art just ordinary commercial representation for instance the kind of thing you'd see in commercial design...or ordinary photography or, or straightforward em ah recording of of reality through drawing. He thinks, well there's more to that, there the, there's expressiveness or something to be expressed to the way that the drawing is made and for a kid this age, let's just see what age he is...right he's only 19, so S2 For instance that is actually I presume a large painting that he's done S1 yah S2 is actually quite sophisticated</p>	<p>S1 yeah S2 to try and put together, you know it's obviously a dream like sequence, with huge differences in the scale of objects, quite an interesting...number of things all put together. You know it's quite interesting the way it's...constructed I mean that's quite sophisticated of somebody S1 These are not your normal run of S2 whose not been to art school S1 of unsophisticated 1st year applicant drawings these are S2 No S1 He's really quite aware (So this is quite different to what you would) S2 Yeah yeah (normally yes?) S1 it's a strong folio. (And there are a lot of photographs) S2 They're works obviously that he can't S1 So now we're thinking here's a 19 year old, same age as the last one, just coming out of high school or maybe even a foundation course, haven't even checked that yet and here's a kid with imagination and an awareness that art is...different...</p>
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3			
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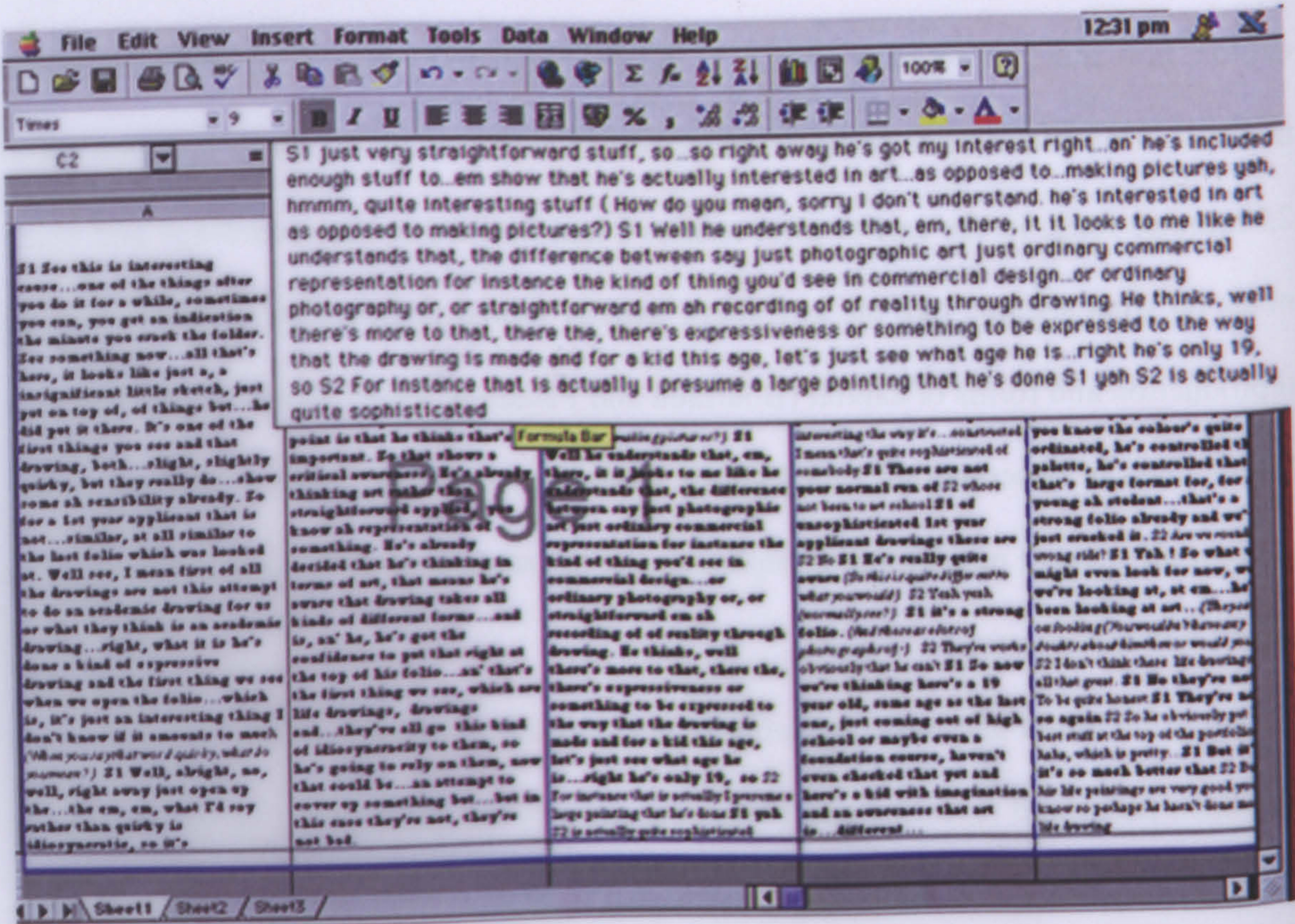


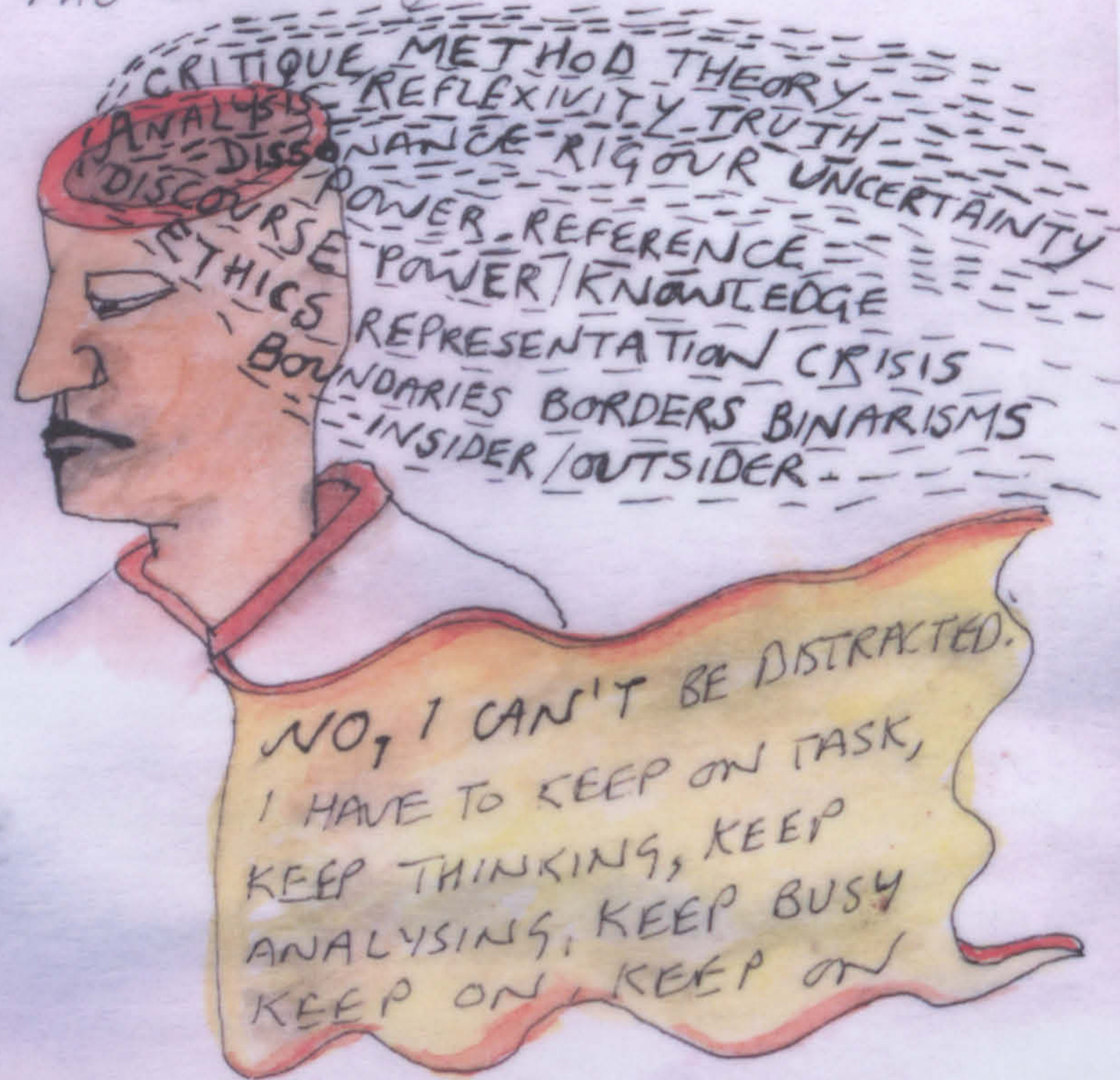
Figure 17

moments in time now past, and the experience I now found myself in. The format of representation of the dialogue, speaker's name and then text, didn't allow me to see the density of the discussion or its relation to time. Time seemed important. I could listen to a 25 minute recording with little conversation and a ten minute one cranked full of response. I began to work the transcripts via excel, into columns of time, allowing me to *see* the discussion (Figure 17); the density and sparseness of conversation laid out in verticals of 2 minute intervals⁴⁰. Suddenly it was visual. The bulk of words, writing and material felt more tangible, closer to what I was hearing in the recordings and remembering from the experience. In these column-like arrangements, the eye was invited to read down rather than across. I was already, without recognising it, getting involved in a consideration of how the reader reads the texts, something that would become a much more central part of the structure and layout of the thesis.

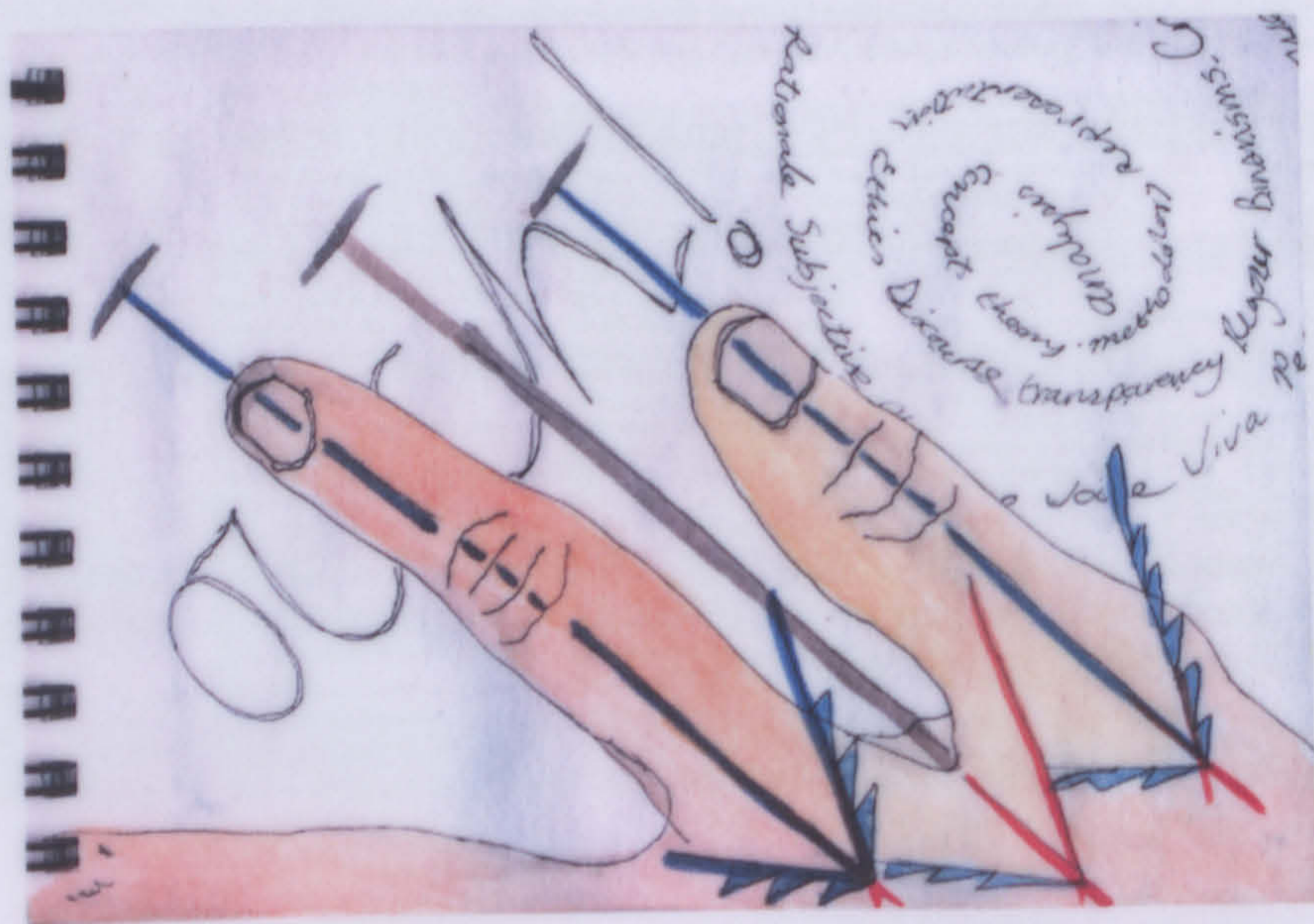
Time worked on other levels too. This “reading” and “rereading” of material (Coffey, 1999:138) is a re-engagement with past experience and after a lapse of time we see things that we “totally misunderstood”, “failed to see the import” and that now “astonished” (Wolf, In Coffey, 1999:138). I recognised this in my own approach, revisiting interviews and pilot observations that had set me off on the study. Looking back over these transcripts some two years later, these early words now offered up so many other ideas and issues in terms of where I now was. Likewise the mass of recordings and observation transcripts, listened and re-listened to, read and re-read over

⁴⁰ I had originally thought of using this more specifically, looking at relations between decisions and time across departmental areas. However, as I developed the case studies, the richness of discussion and processes of looking/interaction became a stronger focus.

Nobody mentions the health issues of doing a PhD. It takes your head over



Then one day you wake up with a sore neck, that develops into a searing, red hot, jaggling, stabbing, electrify pain that shoots from the tip of your finger up your arm everytime you have a thought... ouch



time, took the “relationship [...] to a different level”, full of discovery and rediscovery (Coffey, 1999:139). Reflecting on the nature of this “emotional investment” over such a long period, Coffey describes how for some researchers this cannot be readily disentangled from the sense of personal growth that is both influenced by the research and also shapes its development and outcome (Ibid.)⁴¹. This had resonance with my own sense of attachment to the process and the impossibility of detaching the learning self from any understanding, analysis or representation of the research.

Classification and Coding

As these transcripts grew in number, the columns of text became more complex. There were so many different speakers, shifts in tone and communication through silence and gesture. I began to relay these differences visually, using bold, italics, underlines, then colour to distinguish between one and another. The stories were becoming increasingly visual as I played with the means of representation. My earlier tentativeness began to loosen as I learned about the material as I would have approached any new medium or process, by playing with it, moving it around and forming different kinds of relationships. I began to approach the data as I would the making of a drawing or three-dimensional work, as a physical entity. I shifted, sorted and re-sorted the transcripts into dense bundles, laid out on the floor. They were moved around by departments, applicants' choices, incidents, characteristics and attributes, such as “attention grabbers”, “curiosities”, “teachable”, “(im)maturity”, “competent”, “skilled”,

⁴¹ On a whole other level, time had also affected me physically and mentally (Drawing 4). It was as if my mind was conspiring with my body to tell me to pull back and not see time condensing but opening up.

“pedestrian”, “no-hoppers”; by how selectors affected applicants' chances and applicants influenced selectors' responses. None of these sat separately or statically. If there was any pattern, it was dynamic and criss-crossing, as relationships overlapped with one another, shooting between very different kinds of applicants' and selectors' approaches.

This was the classification and coding, themes, clusters and categories I had read about. However, it felt in danger of fixing a process that was shifting and difficult to pin down. Was I creating yet another hierarchy of information? More technologies of knowledge? (Foucault, 1972b, 1990). I had already struggled with the visibility of knowledge in the literature review, and the “reference and footnote games” that gave “authority by association” (Van Maanen, In Lather, 1991:8)⁴². Now it seemed that “to put into categories” was also “an act of power” (Lather 1991:125), and one in which:

The category systems we devise to ‘explain’ empirical ‘findings’ are reinscribed [...] as strategies of legitimacy where exactitude and certainty deny the unthought in any thought (Ibid.).

There was a risk of constraint and evading how “data escape, exceed and complicate rather than [...] impose a specific direction of meaning on the unfolding narrative” (Ibid). My temptation to empathise with some applicants, naturally drew me towards a “direct subject-relation” (Stanley, 1992:34), putting myself in their place, and diverted attention from how individuals were processed through selection. And it was these very

⁴² My struggle with this visibility and authority through association was deep-rooted. I learned early on at school to disguise knowledge rather than make it visible, so as not to appear *too clever*. Not succeeding at this had you singled out as a swot or worse, a snob. It took some time before I could see this approach as anything other than a disruption to the process of reading and allow it to become a way to overlap and “weave” different voices into the narrative (Lather, 1991:9).

actions of how people were moved through the process, the ambiguities and shifts, which kept the stories alive and moving. Lather (1991) foregrounds this tension “between letting the data speak for itself and using abstracted categories” by asking how we might explain experience without “violating” other people's “reality?” (Acker et al, In Lather, 1991:67).

It was a complexity that led me to draw on notes and recollections made on the day and during the longer length of the study. The more I listened to the recordings, worked on the columns of transcriptions and moved the material around, the fuller they became; they reached the point where they could no longer contain the narrative. I began to *write* the applicants *through* the process rather than *into* a framework of categories and themes. The storying of their movement through, into and out of, became a way of coming to the analysis.

ETHNOSTATISTICS

If the approach to analysis within the qualitative material was difficult to reconcile, then the quantitative work presented even greater difficulties. I had been very conscious from the beginning of the study that the insight to the selection process through observations would be intense and in-depth. However, I also wanted to capture further understanding of all of the applicants. The use of quantitative methods would enable this, and also fulfilled a desire to take yet another kind of viewpoint on the process and gain other kinds of understanding of what went on. I recognised that this fitted into the layered aims of “triangulation [...] multiple data sources, methods and theoretical

schemes” (Lather, 1991:66). However, it was also an approach that linked to the many personal crossings that had influenced and underscored the study to date.

Yet the paradox was that the “quantifying enthusiasm” (McCloskey, In Gephart, 1988:8) and proliferation of the use of statistics had been the basis of much of my earlier questioning. Statistics and performance indicators often seemed to be the end-state of measuring success (or lack of it) across an array of areas and had often appeared to offer an overly generalised picture. Yet there was a powerful belief or faith in numbers, that rendered, classified and formed people and processes into different kinds of taxonomy (Foucault, 1991). Hacking (1990) has described this as an “avalanche of printed numbers” (3) and a “taming of chance”(Ibid:8); an obsession with moral analysis where every action becomes “consequent upon being able to enumerate and evaluate” (Hacking, In Culpitt, 1999:66). My interest in quantitative work had been to attend to these very questions. I wanted to look at the potential for other kinds of statistics about participation and in/exclusion that would hopefully raise questions about those that already existed. I hoped to generate a more complex statistical look at what went on within an institution's processes of selection, in particular the kinds of applicants who applied and the stages in which they were edited in or out. Yet in doing so, I was also now involved in the creation of even more numbers.

As I worked through the applicants' paperwork, my code book grew quickly to some 130 variables. All five pages of the 647 application forms had been read, coded, then entered on to SPSS. These application forms had not been used before for this kind of analysis, so few codes, other than for ethnicity and course information sources existed,

which meant that I had to establish new codes for all other areas⁴³. Once entered into SPSS, much of this data was re-coded more than once (Kinner and Gray, 2000). Postcodes and local authorities were entered, then re-coded to link with Gibb et al's (1998) deprivation indices. Applicants' ages were inputted, then again new codes were developed that separated them into mature and non-mature applicants. Parental and applicant occupations were entered and then new codes for social class were created, with each occupation painstakingly classified in accordance with the *Classification of occupations 1980* (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, 1980)⁴⁴. Using the *Education authorities' directory* (1997), a code for every Secondary School (State, Independent and Self-Governing), Further Education College and Higher Education institution in Scotland was devised and entered. Once inputted, these were then re-coded in line with Leaver Destinations and local and national entry rates to Higher Education (Scottish Office, 1999b), as well as designated target schools, such as GOALS in the West of Scotland.

Other diverse entry routes were explored, as were qualifications and attainment,

⁴³ The existing codes were drawn directly from those set up by HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) as required areas for monitoring. The final number of inputted cases dropped from 647 to 633. A small number of additional cases formed by second choice applicants refused by other colleges were originally examined and coded, however, these forms were slightly different and demanded other kinds of coding which became confusing. Also, while these second choice college applicants were looked at, it was rarely by a selection team and mainly by the admissions officer, which reinforced the anomaly, hence the decision not to include in the final statistical work. Additionally, 14 of the original 647 submitted forms disappeared during the course of the selection process. Despite considerable looking, these were thought most likely to be 'no submissions', or refused applicants whose forms were forwarded on prior to duplicating.

⁴⁴ In this classification, social class is configured as I, professional, II, Intermediate, IIIM Skilled manual, IINM Skilled non manual, IV Semi skilled, V Unskilled. UCAS shifted in 2002 to a new socio economic classification that replaces occupation in terms of skill level with wider ranging variables that relate to employment conditions and relations (See Archer, 2003:9). I've opted to use occupation, as this was the format used by organisations such as UCAS at the start of the study.

artistic experiences, added classes, portfolio scores; even referees' and selectors' comments were initially coded. It had been a hugely time-consuming undertaking, and one that demanded *playing* with the software and data, exploring their possibilities.

In trying to understand how to do all of this, I had worked with difficulty through Basic System User's Guides (SPSS Inc, 1994a; Norusis, 1994) and Syntax Reference Guides (SPSS Inc, 1994b). Two concentrated months of an MSc level course much later on in my studies, practising and reading around 'descriptive' and 'inferential statistics' (Gayle, 2000a, 2000b) only allowed me to scrape the surface of what all of this really meant. I panicked at the coding of everything approach I had initially taken. However, it was only through this kind of exploration that I was able to take hold, edit and form the material into more manageable and, I hoped, meaningful variables through which to explore possible institutional effects on the progress of all applicants. Finally, some 50 variables were settled on that allowed applicants' personal, familial, and educational background to be cross-correlated with their movement through the process aligned to portfolio scores, interviews and entry rates⁴⁵.

Univariate and bivariate analysis of all of these variables was undertaken and each cross-referral was tested on strength of association to help understand individual and institutional effects on progress, in particular at what stage applicants were mobilised

⁴⁵ As I learned about SPSS and quantitative possibilities I had to come to terms with the realism of what was possible in the time frame. (I had originally planned to do follow up interviews with those tracked applicants who got in. At the very outset I had also planned to go out into communities and interview non participants in Higher Education, working within Rabb et al's (1998) spatial borders between high and low participation). It was only after my shift of institution and a different kind of advice and support that realism about what areas of work actually entailed became much more concrete. One of my supervisor's had echoed Phillips and Pugh's (1998) *How to get a PhD* advice on problems with over ambition and reminded me 'that this was only a PhD' - things could go beyond it.

into or out of the institution. More complex multi-variate work was carried out on specific variables that signalled significance at the bivariate level, and this allowed individual factors to be explored in much more in-depth ways. All of this enabled a broader picture of all applicants in terms of their background and progression, which added further dimensions to the detailed selection narratives. I had grown more comfortable with moving the data around, simplifying and also making variables more complex. Despite the clear rationale and level of care in considering, working and reworking the data, as well as my sense of 'play' with the material, I still struggled with the textual crossings between the qualitative and quantitative. They each served a clear purpose, and yet encouraged a very different language in their explanation.

Gephart's (1988) ethnostatistics offered another way of thinking about and questioning statistics. He suggests attention to the "qualitative aspects of [...] statistical analysis [...] as sources of insight into the social processes that underlay" their production (11). Gephart emphasises the selectivity at work in the collection and coding processes, where "not every act that is countable gets counted" (Ibid:18). There was a need to question the selectivity of my own coding and what it rendered visible. In order to explore other kinds of meaning, "alternative and broader forms of variables" had to be developed (Ibid:63). I realised that the *missing* and *not significant*, rather than only the "levels of significance, or specific coefficients" could be where the story lay (Ibid:64).

Just as I had come to see writing as part of the qualitative analysis, I realised too that quantitative observations and the story of their making as well as their meaning offered a space where "textuality" could balance the scientific (Ibid:66). This complexity within

and between the qualitative and quantitative, their relationship and difference, became a way of considering how to open up the “boundary between the ‘not yet’ and the ‘no longer’” (Blumenberg, In Lather, 1991:87). As my understanding and confidence shifted and developed through the process, so too did the complications and excitement of how to render and experiment with forms of representation.

WRITING STORIES

MAKING CHOICES

I have never written anything other than fictions. It seems plausible to me to make [...] discourse arouse, ‘fabricate something’, which does not yet exist, [...] to fiction something (Foucault, In Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1986:204).

While there had been a considerable concentration of literature on methodology, particularly modes of design and analysis, I had found fewer critical texts that questioned processes of writing and representation. Lather (1991) proposes that the “crisis of representation [...] is, in essence, an uncertainty about what constitutes an adequate depiction of social reality” (91). However, it seemed more than this; it was also, as Emihovich (1995) suggests, a realisation that *how* we choose to render experience visible is bound up and influenced by a history that gives authority and validity to particular approaches. It was a “double crisis of representation and legitimation” (Denzin, 1997:234).

As I moved through the writing, it became clear that it was not only a question of what research stories I chose to tell and why that mattered, but also how and through what means I chose to tell them. A questioning of the ways in which we choose to

“communicate” and make “meaning [...] through language” also became critical to engage with (Emihovich, 1995:37). I hope in this area of writing to extend the trouble of the previous section by laying open the questions that I increasingly asked myself about writing. How and why did I choose - or not - particular ways of writing or rendering research? What kinds of writing did I respond to and how did these relate to the kinds of stories I might tell? In attempting to address these issues I have the added hope that this acts as a transition into the case studies and aids understanding of the rationale for their selection, structure and organisation.

THE SPOKEN AND WRITTEN

As I tried to render the voices of selectors into a format that could be read, the space between the spoken and written became an increasing difficulty. Discussing the difference between the written and spoken, Spivak (1990b) comments on the shifts in power within contexts of speaking, such as lectures, interviews and teaching and the movement of authority again, through the transition into the written. While acknowledging the codes of speech, it is the unpredictability of response, interaction, and questioning within these spoken contexts that seem to present an invitation for ideas to drift and alter. However, their written form can “bind”; words become a means of “diagnosis” of the author (Ibid:36-37). These concerns are echoed in Foucault's (1972a, 1972b) work on language, where hesitancy over the spoken word and its evolution into the written is beautifully charted:

At the moment of speaking, I would like to have perceived a nameless voice, long proceeding me, leaving me merely to enmesh myself in it, [...] lodge myself, when no one was looking, in its interstices as if it had paused an instant, in suspense to beckon me. There would have been no beginnings: instead speech would proceed from me, while I stood in its path - a slender gap - the point of its possible disappearance (1972a:215).

The idea that language and meaning could become suspended is disrupted by Foucault's observation that discourse will always fall "within the established order of things [...] a place has been set aside for it" (Ibid:216). These concerns have relevance for the fate of both the "spoken object" as well as the "written" and I felt a sense of unease at the potential forms of reappearance of other people's - selectors' - words "destined for oblivion", and now fixed through my own writing (Ibid.).

RULES AND REGULATIONS

The imagination is [...] an instrument for producing reality and [...] the source of creation is always, in the last instance reality (García Márquez, In hooks, 1991:55).

Emihovich (1995) extends these ideas further by exploring how we choose to fix ourselves through styles and forms of writing, suggesting that the ways in which we opt to display meaning "shapes" our "identity as scholars" (37). These are choices that we make and are linked to *where*, *how* and *what* we want to be seen as part of. Emihovich argues that conventions of form in writing are "part of the socialization process" of the learner and their induction into disciplines, developing "a sense of what is appropriate" (Ibid.). It is through these very conventions that exclusions arise, as they are often

distant from how, as individuals, we come to know, render or communicate meaning⁴⁶. She describes this as a kind of “programmed writing” (Ibid:42), where “literacy is severed from imagination” (Rose, In Emihovich, 1995:42). hooks (1991) also speaks of the authority and exclusions of writing conventions, suggesting that oral traditions, vernacular language and visual shifts such as the use of imagery or changes in typography, can challenge the ways that we “read and think” (57). hooks recognises that these choices might also suggest the need to “possess a language of access” (Ibid.), but proposes that “to address more intimately is not to exclude; rather, it alters the terms of inclusion”; readers have to “shift locations and grapple with language” (Ibid:56). Conventional ways or expectations of knowing and seeing are challenged once notions of what something “should be or do” are put aside (Ibid:57). “Imagination” is what allows us to enter into those places that may “in no way resemble where we are coming from” (Ibid:57-58).

As I continued to struggle with my own crossings into new and other conventions, these felt like big and difficult questions. Writing, just like modes of research and analysis, seemed guided by rules and regulations, governing how and what was taught and the kinds of ideas that the learner was socialised into. I wondered, like Spivak

⁴⁶ I hadn't really been brought up around books and reading but in the middle of two brothers and four sisters, was used to listening to and telling stories. One of my motivations for undertaking a PhD had been the pleasure I'd grown to take in reading and writing stories. Yet I remember clearly at my PhD induction (at my former institution) having the rationale for enrolment described by someone as 'the route into academia, research and teaching'. In response to the question directed to me (and others) of 'why a PhD?' I'd naively voiced that I'd registered because I wanted to write (worse than this, I suggested I wanted to write like authors I loved to read, such as García Márquez and Fuentes). I was looked at strangely and asked the question again, like I hadn't understood it the first time round. Research training reminded me constantly that writing was usually geared in a direction or style - most often at odds with forms of writing and narrative that I actually liked to read. Bibliographic software even helped you adapt what you'd written into the diverse citation conventions of particular styles and journals - all of which was new to me.

(1989), who decides on those “great works [...] elevated to that status at the expense of shutting a lot of people out” (46)⁴⁷.

Jenny Brownrigg et al’s (2002) *Romantic vanguard* is an approach to reading and representation that seemed to address some of these contentions. As part of a visual arts residency in an area being regenerated in the north of the city of Glasgow, Brownrigg took the reading and writing of romantic fiction as a basis for engagement with a group of women in the community. Over a period of some five or six months they began to share their pleasures in romantic novels by reading together. Jenny invited a well known Mills and Boon’s⁴⁸ author to run a workshop on writing romantic fiction and over several months they worked together to develop their own romance about the redevelopment of the area. Constructed out of interviews, memories, collaborative sketches and images, they developed a story/script in which key characters, “artist Martha Blane [...] chosen to collaborate on the design of a city park” and “award-winning architect, Josh Melville” are reluctantly flung together and a spark inducing romantic “duel” entails (Brownrigg et al, 2002:2).

The resulting work does not fit anticipated formats of research reporting, the methodology is not overtly transparent and there are no explicit conclusions. However, *Romantic vanguard* is what Van Maanen (In Lather, 1991:8) calls a “readerly text”; its

⁴⁷ I remember during an English class at school being asked by the teacher what books we were reading. A friend of one of my older sisters had given me “The Queen’s Confessions” about the life of Marie-Antoinette. I hadn’t realised that it was a romanticised semi-fiction and had thought it was ‘real’. At 14 it was the longest, smallest font size book I’d ever read, and it was dismissed by the teacher as a bit of a joke. We were all well used to these reactions, so that was no problem, but we had never thought to question why Victoria Holt didn’t form part of the accepted texts or why it didn’t matter that something about it had captured me. None of that was deemed important; instead, we all read Browning’s *My Last Duchess*.

⁴⁸ Mills and Boon are one of the largest and most popular publishers of romantic fiction in the world.

And the Head Purser at last made a complete rightabout turn in his chair.

From his secret pocket, which he did not mind showing to these people, Karl hauled out his passport, which he opened and laid on the table. The Head Purser seemed to flick it aside with a certain familiarity.

"It's all true, and if it were not for the fact that he had known you, I should have made a red face of me."

"It's all true, and if it were not for the fact that he had known you, I should have made a red face of me."

"It's all true, and if it were not for the fact that he had known you, I should have made a red face of me."



Then from the next room came a sound of hand-clapping. "Someone has been listening!" cried Karl, taken back. "Mack," said Clara softly. And already he heard Mack shouting: "Karl Rossmann, Karl Rossmann!"

Karl swung both feet over the piano stool and opened the door. He saw Mack half sitting and half reclining in a double bed with the blankets loosely flung over his legs. The canopy of blue silk was the sole and somewhat school-ornament of the bed. Mack was quite roughly fashioning a shirt with only a cap and a pair of shorts, which he had thrown over his shoulders, with his legs stretched quite taut. But Mack's eyes were closed, and everything else sank into complete unconsciousness. Clara sat up in the bed post and had eyes for Mack.

"Hallo," said Mack, and he held out his hand to Karl. "Very well; up to now I've only used your talent for my own amusement. I'm as bad at the piano as you are."

"But I guessed it," said Mack, "and so Clara had to lure you out here from New York, or else I would never have heard your playing. It's certainly amateurish enough, and even in these two airs, which have been set very simply and which you have practised a good deal, you made one or two mistakes; but all the same it pleased me greatly, quite apart from the fact that I never despise players of any kind. But won't you sit



billowed mightily in the houses one saw larks high in the air, and the swallows, darting not very far above the heads of the seafarers.

There was much that interested Karl in his home, and he could not decide whether it was worth the trouble of leaving New York and going to a place where New York had the sea, which meant the opportunity to return at any moment to his own country. And when he stood still and said to his two companions that he would not go back to New York after all, and when Delamarche made as if to drive him on, he refused to be driven and protested that it was his business to decide for himself. The Italian man had to intervene and explain that Butterford was a much finer place than New York, and both had to coax him patiently for a while before he would go on again. And even then he would not have consented had he not told himself that it would probably be better for him to reach a place where it would not be so easy to think of returning home. He would certainly work and push his fortune all the better there, if he were not hindered by idle thoughts of home.

And now it was he who led the two others, and they were so delighted by his enthusiasm that, without even being asked, they carried the box in turns and Karl simply could not make out in what way he had caused them such happiness. They now came to rising country, and when they stopped here and there they could see on looking back the panorama of New York and its harbour, extending more and more spaciouly below them. The bridge connecting New York with Brooklyn hung delicately over the East River, and if one half-shut one's eyes it seemed to tremble. It appeared to be quite bare of traffic, and beneath it stretched a smooth empty tongue of water. Both the huge cities seemed to stand there empty and

checked skirt, which had come all the way from Pomerania, her legs thrown wide, almost covered by the round plank atop of her, while people came running from the side and a man shouted down angrily from the top of the wall.

It was late when Therese finished her story. She had told it with a wealth of detail unusual for her, and notably at quite unimportant passages, such as when she described the scaffolding poles each rising to heaven of itself. She had been compelled to stop now and then with tears in her eyes. The most trifling circumstance of that morning was stamped exactly on her memory after more than ten years, not because the sight of her mother on the half-finished house wall was the last living memory of her mother, but because she had to bring it still more vividly before her friends, she tried to return to it again after she had ended her story, but then she faltered, put her face in her hands and said to another girl:

Still, they had merry hours too in Therese's room. On his first visit Karl had seen a book of commercial correspondence lying there and he had picked it up to read it. They arranged at the same time that Karl should write out the exercises in the book and bring them to Therese, who had already studied them as far as her own work required, for correction. Now Karl lay for some nights in his bed in the dormitory with cotton wool in his ears, slipping into every conceivable posture to relax himself, and he took the book and scribbled the exercises in a little notebook with a fountain pen which the Manageress had given him in reward for drawing up methodically and writing out neatly a long inventory of hers. He managed to turn to his advantage most of the distracting interruptions of the other girls, actually asking them for advice on small points of the English language, so that they grew tired of it and left him in peace. Often he was amazed that the

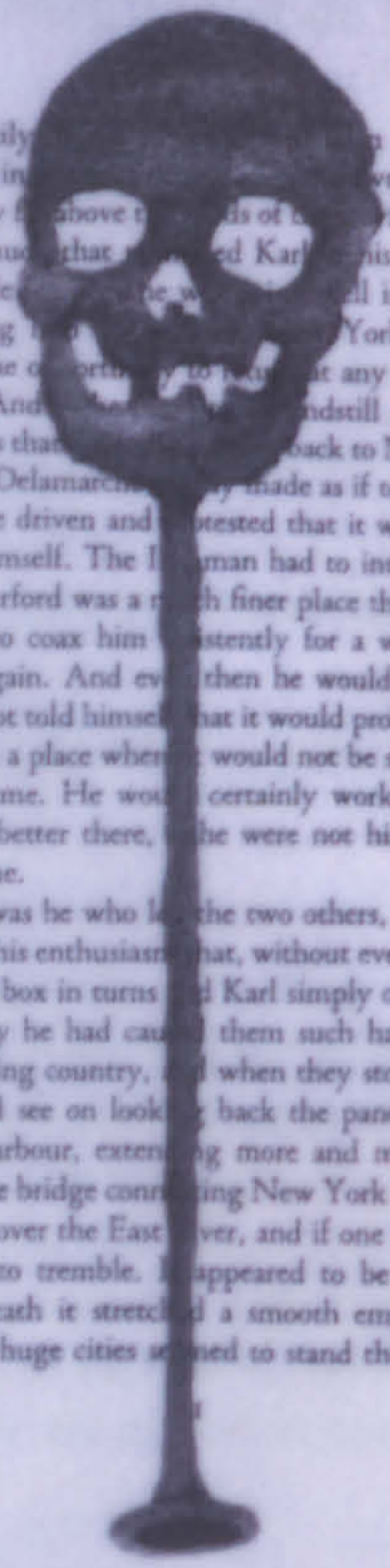


Figure 18

style and appearance bring the reader right inside the communities of Blackhill and Royston where the residency was based. It cleverly and playfully confronts what it feels like to be regenerated again and again. Through the genre of romance, it pokes fun at the tradition of so many community projects, where the hero or heroine come from outside and make everything good.

Tim Rollins' (Wallace, 1989) collaborative approach to art and education also shows how "making [...] is the pedagogy" (Rollins, In Wallace, 1989:39) and allows other means of representation and reading to "open up a text to multiple audiences" (hooks, 1991:56). As a teacher in the South Bronx of New York City, Rollins began work with a group of young people who were resistant to traditional forms of teaching and literacy and labelled by school authorities with terms such as "learning disabled" and "emotionally handicapped" (Wallace, 1989:39). As Rollins tried to shift the means of engagement with texts by reading aloud to the class, one student drew on the pages of a book. It proved to be a "breakthrough in methodology" (Ibid.). Rollins explains, he "couldn't read a word of the book [...] but [...] boom! there it was - all in an image", the "essence" of the text (Rollins, In Wallace:Ibid.). These visual and discursive strategies became the approach through which to re-contextualise the works of writers such as Joyce, Kafka, Thoreau, Deleuze and Guattari (Figure 18). As they were situated alongside an eclectic bibliography of Marvel comics, X-Men, Dr Seuss and Malcolm-X, the meaning of the texts were deconstructed, their "codes" broken down, "accessed and transformed" through their "mediation within other cultural experiences and language" (Dean, 2002:242). This is an approach that places the "destruction and [...] construction

of the text [...] in a precarious balance” (Wallace, 1989:39) and led to the establishment of a critical pedagogical collaboration, Tim Rollins + K.O.S⁴⁹, that has metamorphosed and developed over the past 20 years.

As I tried to work the material I had into themes and concepts, it felt empty and removed from the more visual and sensory nature of experience and I found myself drawing again on my own processes of making. Writing became a means of construction; blocking in words, sentences, paragraphs, shifting them around, knocking things back. Just like with any material or medium, I had to work through it in order to understand its possibilities and limitations. In addition to the work of artists, I became aware that this crisis had given rise to a wide range of alternative approaches to writing and representation in research. “Dual field texts” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:86-87) offered up a storying of what was being looked at, and what it felt like to look. Writers positioned themselves autobiographically through stories, with personal memory constructed as a narrative in which to locate the research (Ibid.). Transgressive “sixth moments” (Lincoln, In Denzin, 1997:250), “ethnodramas”, “ethnopoetry” (Coffey 1999:150-151) and “dada data” (Clifford, In Lather, 1991:125), showed that the writing could become more “fragmentary”, “complex” forms of “textuality” (Denzin, 1997: 236). What these other approaches offered was ways of working that did not turn the story into a “story analyzed” (Denzin, 1997:249). Nor did they “sacrifice meaning for analytic rigor”, or only “hear and read [...] from within a set of predetermined [...] categories” (Ibid). They recovered the stories as they were told (Ibid.), suggesting that

⁴⁹ Tim Rollins+K.O.S – Kids of Survival began in 1982 and over the years, while those who make up the group have changed, the ethos of long-term involvement, mentoring and support remains a constant.

these were “worlds of experience held together by the most fragile of social and cultural logics” and both reader and writer are situated in these worlds, “stirring it up” (Ibid:267).

Yet despite the excitement, these approaches also seemed further down the academic pecking order and I struggled to feel confident about other ways of writing. It still appeared that the *new* was the object of contestation, particularly over ideas of validity, reliability, objectivity and even “how to read” (Ibid:253). Although there was encouragement, such insights to other kinds of approaches seemed designed to give:

Confidence of sorts to those - particularly research students - who wish to experiment [...] but who feel constrained by [...] received traditions of practice and examination (Clough, 2002:5).

The *new* was still couched in warnings: “It is the form you experiment with when you have tenure” (Emihovich, 1995:41)⁵⁰. The tensions between what appeared to be accepted conventions, forms and expectations of style and finding a way of writing that was mine persisted. The issues of authority I worried about did not go away because

⁵⁰ At the time that I was struggling with writing, I gave a seminar to MPhil students in a school of art and design. As most were entering their final stages of writing up, I thought it'd be useful to think about writing. Each student was asked to bring along two short pieces of writing that they could read aloud to the group. One was to be a piece of writing in any style, fiction/non-fiction, the choice had been wide open to them. It had to be a way of rendering and communicating ideas textually that interested them and that they *really* liked. The other piece was to be something from their own research. As each person read their short pieces aloud the differences between the kinds of writing that they enjoyed reading and how they themselves wrote seemed phenomenal, as had their apparent relationship to the texts. They had taken pleasure in reading aloud other people's stories, however, when it came to their writing, most of them became awkward, quiet spoken, distant from their own words. They had engaged enthusiastically with why, how and what other writers were doing, however, when it came to their own work, emotions went and different subjects seemed rendered in similar ways and styles, detached from these diverse personalities. They concluded that while the data was their own, the ways of rendering were not. They were writing *for* an examiner, and in their eyes that meant they had to demonstrate knowledge, straightforwardly and factually. In this shift of discipline, they felt compelled to follow the conventions as they felt they were set. Writing was an end product influenced by perceived rules and regulations.

there were new ways of writing “about” or “with” (Coffey, 1999:152). They helped to question boundaries but could not remove the troubles (Ibid.). I still struggled over how to do justice to the uncertainty I felt; not do damage to all those people who had been so open and how to render faithfully, when I was no longer sure what faithful was.

THINKING THROUGH NARRATIVE AND FICTION

Data might be better conceived as the material for telling a story where the challenge becomes to [...] vivify interpretation as opposed to ‘support’ or ‘prove’ (Lather, 1991: 91).

Writers such as Clough (1999, 2002) Eisner (2002), Clandinin and Connelly (2000) reinforce the idea that writing research can become a form of fiction. While acknowledging that the word “*Story* carries a connotation of falsehood or misrepresentation” (Polkingthorne, 1995:7; original emphasis), and a presumed “power to lead people dangerously astray” (Ibid:9), at its simplest, stories are “narratives that combine a succession of incidents into a unified episode” (Ibid:7). Eisner (2002) takes the word fiction back to its Latin root from *fictio* to make, and in doing so reclaims its potential as an act of assemblage. It becomes a way of writing in which diverse elements such as biography, autobiography, histories, case studies and memory, work together towards the “unraveling of an incomplete situation” (Polkingthorne, 1995:7). Thinking and writing through narrative offered a way of constructing a story out of events and incidents, rather than the converse of distilling themes and common elements from stories (Ibid:12). This was a way of working that seemed to offer synthesis, “rather than

a separation” (Ibid:15), where fact and fiction, writing and analysis overlapped⁵¹.

All of the areas that had troubled me, such as context, relationships and interaction, particularly my own role and influence, now became even more central considerations. A focus on the particular characteristics of actions as they moved from “case to case instead of from case to generalization”, encouraged the distinctiveness and emotions of events and relations to be evoked (Ibid:11). It was not only *what* was said, but also *how* it was said, the *effects* of writing. Just as writers like Heshusius (1994) had been concerned that emotions and subjectivity seemed lost from analysis, it seemed that narrative and fiction tried to make space for the tactility of words and language, to deal with the “powerful impression” of story (Emihovich, 1995:39).

Questions of certainty, truth and validity also became even more contentious to me. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) propose that if we enter into experience already in the “midst” of something, then surely as we write, we can also progress “in this same spirit”, “concluding [...] in the midst of [...] telling, reliving and retelling” (20). Uncertainty still felt uncomfortable, however, the temporality of these moments in time was part of my own recognition that meaning too changes as time passes: “Interpretations [...] can always be otherwise” and “tentativeness” is part of understanding that “other possibilities” and explanations will always be possible (Ibid:31). This paved the way for a more “fluid inquiry” (Schwab, In Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:121), less “governed

⁵¹ I'd already felt a sense of my own distance and separation through language. I'd felt it inside of academia and then once I'd acclimatised to that context, the shift between the spaces and locations I'd grown up and worked in and where I was now, became more apparent. At a 2002 Scottish Arts Council Social Inclusion Conference, I'd been asked to give a keynote presentation on art and inclusion to a very diverse audience of community members, artists, administrators, academics and activists. The language I'd used had felt too academic and I'd been (self)-conscious of my distance from those that I used to converse with ease. It was a gap and a discomfort that I knew I wanted to address.

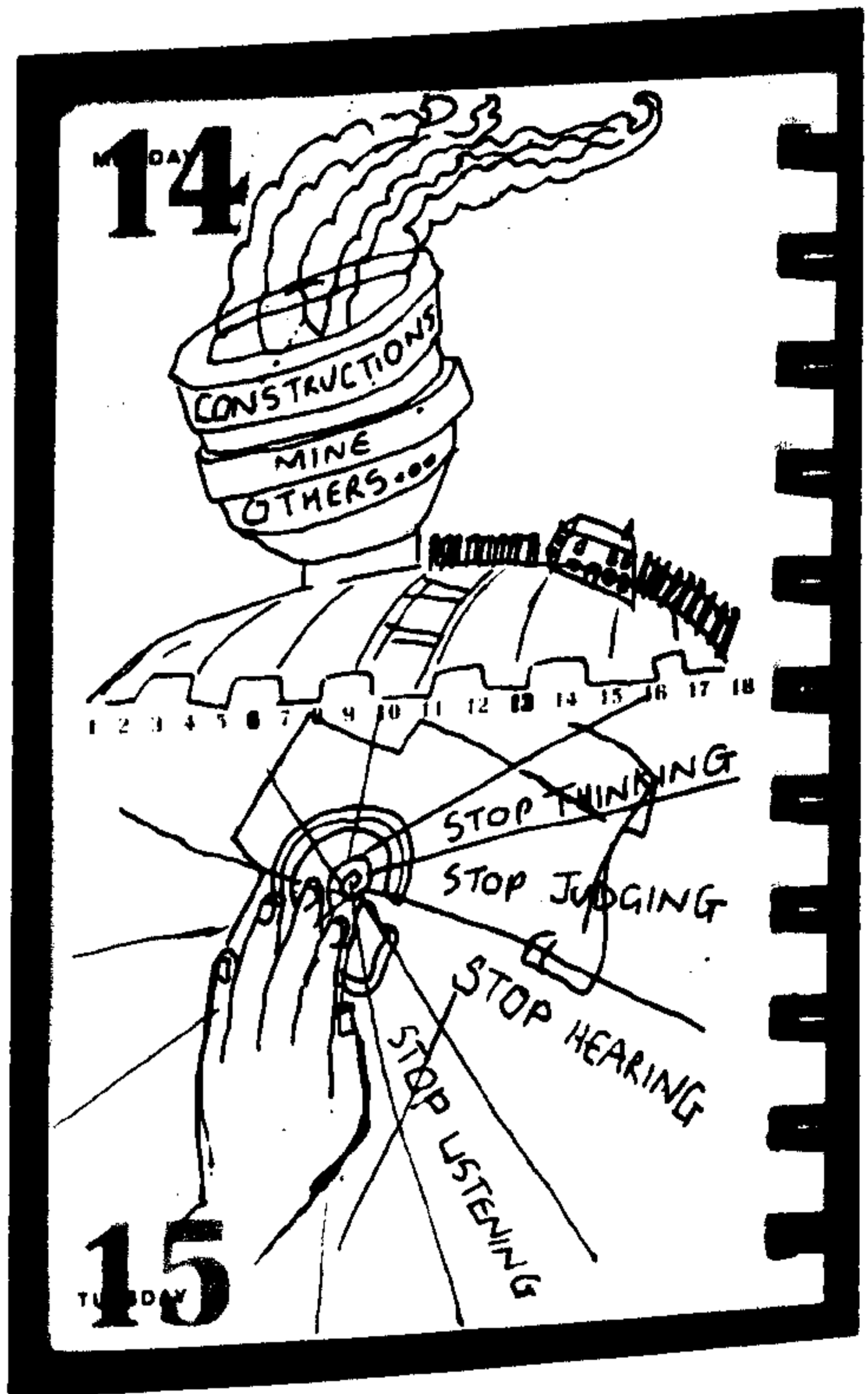
by theories, methodological tactics and strategies”, but which opened up other kinds of understanding through the very means of engagement and production (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:121). What might be learned about selection lay in how knowledge and processes - selectors' and my own - were, in this context, “narratively composed, embodied” in each individual and “expressed in practice” (Ibid:124). It was a situation of “*becoming*”, in which “people, places and things” were constantly shifting, “moving forward” (Ibid:145; original emphasis).

When I thought about how to understand, evoke or vivify experience within a perspective of time, “fact and fiction” became “muddled” and “factuality and truthfulness” a puzzlement (Ibid:179). García Márquez (1993) writes that in this context, “true memories” may seem like “phantoms”, while “false memories” are so convincing that they replace reality (xii). Far from an “anything goes” approach (Huber, In Denzin, 1997:253), this way of working throws us back even more on our “own ethical resources” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:171). “Storytelling rights” within research (Hymes and Cazden, In Emihovich, 1995:42), require other ways of thinking about issues of reliability and validity. Barone (1995) argues - quite radically - that “some stories deserve their own space” (72) and that the “conversation between writer, reader and characters” (Ibid.) should be “trusted [...] left unaccompanied by critique or theory” (Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995:2). Perhaps as Grumet (In Blumenfield-Jones, 1995), suggests, it is “Fidelity rather than truth” (26) that “sorts winks from twitches” (Geertz, In Holliday, 2002:80) and stems from feelings of “verisimilitude”, “emotional intimacy”

(Denzin, 1997:253), and “textual self-consciousness” (Van Maanen, In Lather, 1991:150).

All of these writers and artists not only question the means of representation, but also the relationship to the reader. The “act of reading” is not separated from the “readable text” (Denzin, 1997:237), meaning changes along with the reader, rather than being anchored in a “fixed text” (Ibid). The hope then in writing is to tell “a story that retrieves inquiry as a ‘way’ that is always already beginning, always already ‘on the way’” (Spanos, In Lather, 1991:151)

Case Studies



INTRODUCTION

The case studies of nine different selections that follow are very much a product of these *troubles* and were also part of the means of coming to see and understand them. Each case takes you through the process of selection more or less as I ventured into it, almost a chronology of the experience. As such, they also deliberately trace out something of my own learning as I moved through the process and shifted from group to group.

To help with the way through these multiple characters, plots and subplots, each case has a visual map of the applicants' routes. These pinpoint the juncture at which the discussions occur and also show where each applicant ends up. The space where these selection discussions took place is the same throughout. It was a large, almost L-shaped, open-plan room in which a series of long tables had been set up. These ran in a straight line and in parallel to a wall of windows on the right-hand side. They then angled to the left and peppered around the space, filling in gaps where discussions could take place. The portfolios were organised by specialism and located in purpose-built racks against the walls that covered about half of the room. Selectors came from a wide range of disciplines and representatives from most of the departments took part in the discussions that follow. There was a mix of males and females, a gamut of ages and different kinds of relations to the selection process. Some selectors were full-time members of staff, others were part-time; some were present throughout all of the selections, while others came and went. There were those with a lot of experience and others who were completely new to the process. All of the selectors were white. These distinctions added

to the complexity and shifts in what was looked for and how the looking was done.

The organisation of the writing is similarly structured throughout; each case has a brief introduction, then shifts into the dialogue of decision-making and ends with reflections on what seemed to happen during the process. I worried about consistency in representation, that perhaps in trying for cohesion I might sacrifice the messiness that I felt in the experience. As a consequence, in the hope of maintaining some sense of how complex the whole thing seemed at times, each story often includes elements that do not appear in another. In several of the cases, where it compounds the troubling, I draw on fragments from the triadic. In one, I detail the interview and in another give a more sketched insight. One of the cases shifts more complexly through a number of selection groups. The degree of my own part in it all also changes in register, amplifying and dissipating depending on the level of emotional entanglement I felt. As Lather and Smithies (1997) point out, this is “not [...] planned confusion” but part of a “breakdown of [...] confidence of the ability/warrant to tell [...] stories in uncomplicated, non-messy ways” (xvi). All of these cases, I hope, highlight something of the movement in the data and in my own and selectors' responses. The style of writing of each case takes a narrative format, however, not to the extent of the fictions of writers such as Clough (1999, 2002), where a single story is constructed out of a number of different sources and incidents. Each of these selection stories takes place in the same context. Each one is unique and could stand alone. There are different sets and combinations of actors, each rendering their own plot and selected because of what they open up and add to a questioning and understanding of the processes of selection. However, they have been

considered in such a way that as a whole, they try to take the reader through an experience of selection, in particular, the shifts and ambiguities.

Conscious that these conversations were unusual, precisely because of their free-flowing and responsive nature, I had not wanted to overly manipulate “the appearance and ordering of words and texts” (Coffey, 1999:151-152). I wanted to try and journey through each selection from beginning to end, in an attempt to recapture something of the drama and interaction of each event. They were, as most conversations are, quite stumbling, rambling, as people thought on their feet and tried to articulate decisions out loud. This was an influential factor in the construction of the writing. I have opted to use the data to allow the voices of each character - including my own - to unfold as closely as possible to how the experience, and my part within it, appeared to me. The data and the process were often troubling. I was sometimes uncomfortable with what I saw, how I saw others and also saw myself. The crisis of legitimisation is strong because the material was so direct and that made it even more fraught with difficulties and second-guessing. These stories try to engage with that sense of fallibility, my own clumsiness and insecurity as I found myself “getting out of [...] and getting in the way” (Lather and Smithies, 1997:xiv).

Part of the analysis is in the selection of the stories themselves. There were and are lots of other stories to tell, perhaps more dramatic ones, involving decisions on applications with a £100 note in the portfolio or respected familial art connections. However, I did not feel that any of these could be told without the speakers and applicants being recognised or recognising themselves. The open nature of the

discussions and unprecedented access offered made avoidance of recognition an even more important factor. Pseudonyms are used throughout and no selectors, departments or applicants are identified. Where information or processes that are very specific to particular disciplines and applicants are mentioned, the words have been altered to avoid possible identification of candidates, selectors or specialisms. These alterations appear in curved brackets and are flagged up again in the introductory paragraphs to each case. On occasions, for the sake of flow and when not relevant to the text, some words have been removed and this is indicated by square brackets [...]. Where references are made to more generic processes that could apply to a gamut of areas, these remain intact. I realise that these changes potentially dilute the distinctiveness of approaches within particular disciplines, however, in terms of anonymity, it was a necessary tactic, and with the exception of these few exclusions, the dynamic is maintained as closely as possible. I have also tried to keep the pace of the conversation intact and signal pauses and moments where speech trails off with visual spacing ... rather than in words. This felt more natural and closer to the narrative as well as the styles of writing that had influenced my own approach.

I had considered trying to get feedback from all of the selectors on each of the texts. However, the variations that might have emerged from such a range of speakers made this potentially at odds with the very openness that these discussions sought to evoke⁵². Lather (1991) suggests that this kind of “face validity” (67) where analysis is refined in

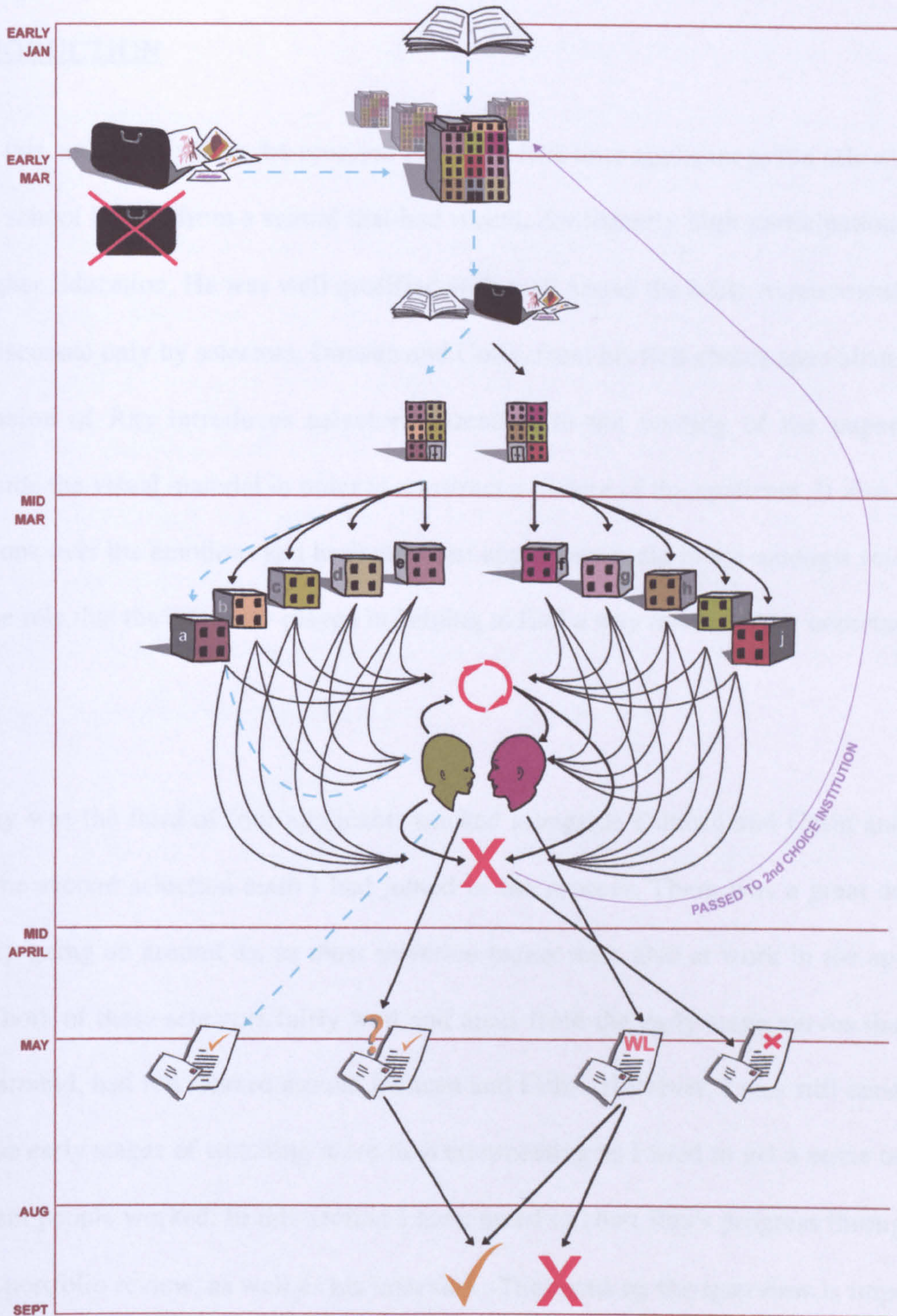
⁵² I passed the texts on to two colleagues who had knowledge of the process and neither had recognised anyone. I also discussed these issues with them and while they also felt that departmental anonymity was a kind of loss, they had recognised the concerns and understood the reasons for such an approach.

“light of [...] reactions” (Kidder, In Lather, 1991:68), can be as problematic as more alienating approaches. The kinds of violence to other people's narratives that Lather speaks of also lie in the avoidance and sanitisation of speech. “Catalytic validity” (Brown and Tandom, In Lather, 1991:68), is what Lather proposes should, as importantly, be added to the mix. It forces questions about channelling impact, “self-understanding and [...] determination” (Lather, 1991:68). What does this research do? What does it open up? How does it have effect in practice? It is an accountability that confronts transparency and makes all of our decisions and troubling public (Ibid.).

Clough (1999) asks that his stories are read aloud and for me this was the key way that I was able to begin to make sense of the material. I had to speak it in order to render it in a form of “language” that “favors the drama of dialogue” (429). De Certeau (In Denzin, 1997) suggests that “text only has meaning through its readers; it changes with them” (237). There should always be space for the “reader” to be a “novelist”, “to dream and be elsewhere”; to engage in the kind of reading that “produces gardens that miniaturize and collate the world” (Ibid.). Whether or not any of this is finally read out loud, I hope that the writing creates enough space for different kinds of questioning to come to bear on what and how things are said and might be read. Denzin (1997) suggests that critics of other approaches to research and writing claim that such practitioners create crisis; if they left well alone “there would be no crisis of representation or of legitimation” (234). The struggle to find a way of working that feels like *my own* has been a real maker of crisis and a cause of constant concern. I know that this has everything to do with my questioning of my own abilities and confidence in

crossing over into such an unknown area of making work. I hope that in trying to “trouble the easily understood and [...] taken-for-granted” (Lather and Smithies, 1997:xvi), that I have at least managed to engage with some of the “limits as well as the possibilities of knowing” (Ibid:xvi).

RAY



APPLICATION FORM	SPECIALIST GROUPS	CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE
INSTITUTION	REJECTION	UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE
PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION	REFERRAL	ACCEPTANCE
NO SUBMISSION	INTERVIEW	APPLICANT ROUTE
SPECIALIST SCHOOLS	WL WAITING LIST	

INTRODUCTION

In this section I explore the progress of Ray, a first time applicant to the school. Ray was a school leaver, from a school that had recent, consistently high participation rates in Higher Education. He was well qualified with well above the basic requirements and was discussed only by selectors, Duncan and Colin, from his first choice specialism. The discussion of Ray introduces selectors' attention to the reading of the paperwork alongside the visual material in order to construct a picture of the applicant. It also raises questions over the emotions and hesitancy that applicants could incite amongst selectors and the role that the interview played in helping to find a way through their uncertainty.

RAY

Ray was the third of four applicants tracked alongside Duncan and Colin and was only the second selection team I had joined in the process. There was a great deal of activity going on around us, as most selection teams were also at work in the space. I knew both of these selectors fairly well and apart from the early stage nerves that still hung around, had felt relaxed around Duncan and Colin. However, I was still conscious in these early stages of watching more than commenting as I tried to get a sense of how different people worked. In this section I have opted to chart Ray's progress through the initial portfolio review, as well as his interview. The focus on the interview is important as it plays a critical part in influencing the outcome of Ray's application. As well as offering some wider insight to the various areas of the selection process, it adds another layer of understanding to the kinds of decision-making used by Duncan and Colin. The

triadic is not detailed on this occasion as the dialogue focused very little on Ray. Both selectors read aloud a lot of detail from Ray's application form, and concerned at Ray's identification through the very specific nature of this information, I have summarised some areas of dialogue. Where references are made to very specialist areas of activity or names of people and places, these have been substituted with more generic terms.

The overall discussion is of interest as it highlights the apparent intensity of looking amongst and between both selectors and in particular the careful reading of the paperwork and visual material. Duncan and Colin appear very fixed on the task throughout the review. It also shows how someone like Ray, regarded to have very borderline work, scored at a 2-3, was given the *chance* of an interview and how the breadth of Ray as a person won through.

**“A WEE BIT ALL OVER THE PLACE... BUT THERE'S INTENSE
COMMITMENT TOO - REAL CONVICTION”**

Colin and Duncan both searched for Ray's application form with some difficulty⁵³. “Okay” said Colin as he finally dug out the paperwork. As he did this, Colin also laid out a blank sheet of paper alongside the applicant's form. “Do you want to know what this is?” he asked, then explained: “Pre-interview notes from the folios and we go through the folio again and I can look at these notes to remind myself.” Colin had tried

⁵³ The forms were sorted into books for each selection team, however, were not in any alphabetical/numerical order. These had to be monitored and re-ordered as decisions were made and applicants were either edited into or out of the process, passed on to second choice selection groups or indeed second choice institutions. This often made it difficult to find specific applicants.

from the start to be helpful and explain things, volunteering information, and sometimes finding himself on the more brusque end of Duncan's, "hurry up [...] we've gotta hurry".

They both read Ray's form together and Duncan was first to read aloud: "Okay. Ray Harris. 18 years of age...mmmhmmm." "Slightly above average in the qualifications" said Colin. "Yeah" agreed Duncan: "straight from school...that's quite good isn't it? Art, English, History." "Yeah, yeah..." agreed Colin. "Second choice (Department B)" noted Colin with reference to the second of Ray's three choices of specialist area of study.

They each read together and in silence. Finally Colin smiled and said softly, "Hah". "What's he saying?" I asked. Colin read directly from Ray's statement, revealing something of Ray's interests in the visual arts as a means of self discovery and "self exploration". Duncan smiled and picked up the thread seamlessly, reading aloud more elements from Ray's statement that reinforced the emotional place that art held for him. They each carried on reviewing the application form together in silence. Then Duncan read aloud from the form again: "Studying contemporary and traditional artists...attended life-drawing classes." "He's a voracious reader..." added Colin, carrying on from Duncan. Each sounded curious about Ray as they spoke and relayed the breadth of areas and interests that Ray signalled about himself. As they spoke, each other's words rolled one on top of the other, each picking up where the other ended. "That's quite good, quite broad" concluded Colin. "He's actually em -" began Duncan. "A young man" said Colin, "18". They flicked through the pages to the references. "Schoolteachers" noted Colin, then added, "(School A)? Where is that?" "I think it's (Town B)" I replied. "(Town B)" confirmed Colin as he read the name of the town

directly from the form.

Duncan listed a long line of qualities stated by Ray's referees: "Conscientious...high standards, mature...excellent attendance, punctuality." There was a long pause as they each read together in silence then, still reading from the references again spoke an array of qualities out loud. Duncan added: "Has a strong desire to express himself visually...mmmm." "That's all kind of...okay" said Colin. "Yeah" agreed Duncan. "Okay-ish" added Colin. "That's a high recommendation actually...good reference" said Duncan assuredly.

They shifted from the paperwork to the portfolio and started to look through the sketchbooks that formed part of the submission. "Vesalius" commented Duncan with reference to an image in the sketchbook and the influence of this 16th century artist on Ray's work. "Yeah" agreed Colin, then added quickly and questioningly: "Is it? Oh it could be." They looked on in silence, then Duncan sighed: "History paintings...all round about...certain sense of disorganisation actually...whohhh." "That's relatively skilful that proportionally, not a good drawing but it's quite well handled...Jenny Saville" added Colin as he made reference to the work and influence of another artist, this time a contemporary painter. Duncan agreed: "In terms of actually...mmm, seeing" he paused and then, in response to another page, said softly, "oh god".

They seemed to flick slowly through the pages before Duncan commented: "You know there is evidence of him investigating other artists...drawing from other artists...which is a...see again". Duncan pointed to a page in the sketchbook showing the influence of yet another artist, belonging to a very different era and style. "Which

isn't...often done these days” added Duncan. “Mmmhmmm” said Colin. They looked slowly and quietly. “Wonder if this is something he's encouraged to do in school or if he's done it on his own?” asked Duncan. “Have you had anyone from (this school) before?” I asked them. “No” they both replied each after the other. Colin carried on: “I don't recognise, Fiona. I think that's why I didn't recognise the school name...it's just kind of, I'm kinda, I'm curious to see in here.” Colin tapped the folio and they shifted their attention from the sketchbooks to the main body of work in the portfolio.

They opened the portfolio and flicked through some sheets. Duncan spoke first: “Actually...the drawing isn't really very good is it?” “It's kind of lively but bitty”, said Colin. “Yeah yeah” agreed Duncan. They looked silently, then Duncan commented on the subject matter: “I wonder if this is a subject he's taken up himself [...] or is it again, is it a part of a course...module?” They seemed to ponder each page. “Pheeeewwwwww” Duncan sighed softly as he read aloud the emotional themes in Ray's work. They sounded unsure, like this was a struggle. “What's your feelings?” I asked them. “I think he's...” began Duncan and then he stopped and looked in silence. I wasn't sure whether they had been drawn to the work or pulled away from it. “Jenny Saville” said Colin, again mentioning this artist's influence. He carried on: “It kind of looks like he's picking on styles and kind of...you know not copying.” “Mimicking” suggested Duncan. Colin continued:

Mimicking a wee bit which is okay - ahah, but it looks like he's doing it without you know, some structure being set in place for drawing before he does it, so it's a wee bit superficial... maybe if he was taught more about drawing...he would do okay...

Colin's voice had grown softer as he spoke and then finally trailed off. Duncan "mmmm" as though in agreement. They had each seemed very engaged in looking. "Oh that's...kind of interesting" said Colin faintly to Duncan, then added almost immediately, "that's not". They flicked slowly over a few more pages before Colin seemed to conclude: "I think it's a bit all over the place." "Mmmmm" Duncan seemed to agree, then came back quickly:

I mean it's interesting that he specifically mentions that in his statement that he's interested in contemporary and traditional, as he says artists and it's actually coming out in his study you know.

Both of them appeared fixed on the portfolio as they spoke, hardly looking up from the work at all. "Literary references...aphorisms and quotations" said Colin reading from notes written on the sheets of work. They paused, looked and read. Then, Duncan came in quickly: "Well that's supporting his interest in reading too...I mean that is interesting isn't it?...that he actually brings that stuff to the folio - it's unusual mmm?" He looked at us both briefly, paused and looked again at the work as he continued: "I mean...these seem to be much better than his drawings...in terms of articulation, seeing, observation, again proportion."

They looked on a little further and Duncan added: "God it's obsessive...hahhmmm." He sighed and smiled one after the other then asked: "Wonder why he's not applied to (Department B)? Mmm?" "Does it say anything in his statement about why he's interested in this department?" I asked. Duncan replied quickly: "No it didn't in fact I noticed that when we were reading through it that em he didn't especially mention it all

you know.” They looked on at the work silently and seemed thoughtful. “What do you think?” I asked them. “Not very good. The drawings are much better here than the paintings are -” began Colin. Duncan “mmmd”. Colin carried on:

It's like, he can't really handle paint, but the ideas are quite interesting and I think well maybe the ideas and that are kind of overwhelmed by the fact that they're not well handled in paint.

There was a short pause as they looked, then Colin stressed his uncertainty: “Not, not 100% certain.” Then as they looked a little further he added: “Although that's quite good.” Duncan offered an explanation: “Do you know, it actually almost indicates that when he's not involved in the emotional expression you know of these obsessive ideas - you know that actually this... and this -” Duncan pointed to two different works, paused a little then continued: “You know...are more interesting drawings - you know...more skilful...but when he gets into the subject that really gets him, you know, going he's...haaaah.” Duncan breathed out a sigh that seemed to reinforce his uncertainty.

“Do you get many applicants applying straight from school?” I asked them. “It's about 50/50 I think” said Colin. “Yeah, at the moment” suggested Duncan. They looked on a little further, then Colin seemed to pause suddenly and looked to me as he asked: “Would you not know that from going through the forms?” I explained that I planned to work on this kind of information during the quantitative side of things. Colin already seemed distant, eyes focused on the portfolio as he “mmmd” and nodded to me and they each carried on looking. A long “pheewww” emanated from Duncan as they flicked slowly through the sheets of work. Finally Colin said: “My gut feeling is no. Objectively

I just feel a lot of it's...kind of immature." This had been said very quietly. "Is there anything that you see as positive in it?" I asked them. "In the sketchbooks" replied Colin quickly, then paused before he added: "Quite lively - but em...kind of a wee bit all over the place." "Yeah" agreed Duncan and added:

But there's intense commitment too - real conviction...about what he's doing. Em...for me it's the overall quality of...well the ideas are very repetitive you know as we saw...it either, is images from existing artworks, well known traditional artworks...or this angst...and...

Duncan's voice trailed off. They carried on looking and Colin added: "You see there are things...like that." He pointed to a work, paused as though to sort out his thoughts, then explained:

It's like he just, he hasn't developed critical ability yet - you find quite interesting things like that in the sketchbook, which are individual, which are his idea, then you go through the paintings and the paintings you know they're kind of stylistic, they're following another idea in painting, which I'm not sure is his...they're just overly stylistic and he's doing lots of them, probably just to impress us about the fact that he's committed - he doesn't know how to paint though.

"See I don't think that really matters" said Duncan. "No" agreed Colin. "I think it's a better -" began Duncan. Colin interrupted: "You know if, I just wondered -" "It's a better handling of the figure" concluded Duncan. Colin looked at the work and tried to describe what he meant:

Here you know if he starts to do things like that - maybe he didn't get support with that, so he kinda moves on to that, he gets kinda support in that, and this is relatively impressive, but I just think these drawings are better.

“But look at that” said Duncan quickly as he turned the page to another work. “That’s much better” he continued, then sighed a soft “haah.” They flicked through slowly.

Duncan tried to articulate his thinking about Ray’s work:

You know what, I think when he’s drawing objectively - well you know with - I’m sure this is a self portrait - mmm?...em he handles the image so much better than the invented you know...image. I’m kind of 50/50 on this em...about risking an interview.

“I don’t think it’s a risk to do an interview” said Colin. “Mmm?” asked Duncan. “I don’t think it’s a risk to do an interview” Colin said again, this time a little louder. “What is it that interests you about it Duncan?” I asked. Duncan replied quickly:

Em...the conviction, the commitment...his breadth of interests, you know, are interesting...the music, the poetry you know...and...the references which are actually very good and very high.

This part of the conversation had been full of fluctuations as they attempted to reason the why of things. As they looked, each appeared engaged with one another in response to their thoughts and comments. They continued to flick slowly back and forth through the work. Colin came in:

I would agree with that. What kind of puts me off slightly is how he uses these references and his critical ability in using them...his critical awareness in using them...but yeah...I mean I would, I wouldn’t have any problems with interviewing...it’s not...it’s a 2-3 for me.

This was a borderline measure⁵⁴. I was interested in the idea of the risk, or gamble of interview that Ray had seemed to present. Despite the questions over Ray's skill and critical ability, his conviction, obsession and breadth seemed to win over. There was a long silence. "An' in terms of interviewing somebody like this -" I began. Duncan "mmmd". "What would you be hoping the interview might explain?" I continued. Duncan "phewd" a long sigh. "If you already feel the commitment's...", I added, words fading away. Duncan filled the space with a questioning, "I know". Colin sounded more certain:

You know it's borderline for me, and I think my bottom line comment is that there's a kind of naivety, kind of an immaturity [...] a kind of stylistic thing just now [...] in a manner of expressionism - he's not actually understanding what expressionism is about. But there's a level of skill there and there's a level of commitment I agree with Duncan. So what I would look for in the interview is to find out if...the work that's there is a product of his current education in the way he's been dealt with. I'd be looking to find out what kind of person he was, and if actually he's more mature than his work represents him and I would try and find that at the interview, because maybe you'd find actually quite a mature personality and then from that you'd say well there's enough skill there...you have the maturity of personality that you could learn through our course. So that, that would be what I'd be looking for in the interview...but in terms of the work you know it's kind of borderline. But you know you might get the guy in for interview and just, he might be quite sophisticated, he's just not having that supported through his current education.

Duncan had "yeahd" and "mmmd" throughout. They looked a little more in silence, then closed the portfolio.

⁵⁴ As noted previously, portfolios were scored from 1-4. 1 was the lowest and 4 the highest. However, there was no set score at which to interview or not. An interview seemed to depend very much on the overall standard of applications, selectors' level of interest as well as the number of applicants applying.

INTERVIEWING RAY: “SHAKY”, “NERVOUS” AND “TERRIFIED”

The interview took place in the same space as the portfolio review. This time the tables used for the portfolios were ringed on one side by selectors, in this case Duncan and Colin, with a seat opposite for applicants. All of the selection teams conducted their interviews in the same large space, with tables set up fairly close to one another. At any one time there could be several different interviews being conducted in the same open space. The number of interviewers varied, however, there was always at least two and in most areas those selectors involved in portfolio selection also conducted interviews to enable consistency⁵⁵. Conscious that my presence added to these numbers, I had sat slightly to the side, notebook on my lap and had limited the note-taking, concerned not to compound any feeling amongst applicants that they were being *looked at*⁵⁶.

Both Duncan and Colin read over the personal notes they had made during the portfolio review. Then Colin invited Ray in from the waiting room. Ray came into the space and appeared very nervous. In my notes I had written “shaky”, “very nervous”. He was, as concluded by Colin a little later, “terrified”. Colin and Duncan introduced themselves and me and explained who I was. They asked Ray if he was okay with my sitting in on the process and gave him a clear option of saying no, however, Ray said “yes”.

⁵⁵ This wasn't the case across all selection teams and in one area in particular, interview teams often shifted around.

⁵⁶ A deal of discussion with staff had preceded my attendance at interviews. We had tried to establish the least obtrusive way of being in attendance and considered a number of options, including writing to all of the applicants in advance to ask permission and placing flyers about the research in the interview waiting area. However, it was decided that this might confuse things and make a potentially anxious day even more so. In the end, each interview team explained who I was, that I had no part in the decision-making and asked for applicants' approval on the day.

After the introductions Colin asked Ray: “Why art?” This had been a fairly standard question across interviews. As many other applicants had done, Ray replied: “It's always been there as an interest.” Colin then asked Ray more specifically “Why?” this particular specialism. Ray explained that he had come to the *Open Day*⁵⁷ and gone around the department and seen what students there were doing. He had felt it looked “less limiting” and it had a “good feel to the atmosphere”.

The questions became more specific to the specialism, when Ray was asked about the difference between this, his first choice department and another. This had related to the portfolio selection, and their wondering about why Ray had not applied to (Department B). Ray seemed to struggle a little to put his thoughts into words and then answered: “The work needed to be placed some where” and it was “not just a focus on the work but on atmosphere.” Although Ray had answered, he sounded nervous, like he looked for some confirmation of whether he was right or wrong. Duncan appeared to take the pressure off a little by talking about a specific project that was run by this department. He outlined some examples of work that had come out of the course and Ray seemed to listen intently. He still looked nervous, waiting for the next question to come. The question came from Colin. He wanted to know about an image in Ray's sketchbook by another artist, and asked him who the artist was. Ray either did not know or could not remember the name and his face seemed to go red. However, he came back with what he did know, and explained why he had chosen it and what attracted him to it.

⁵⁷ Like other Higher Education Institutions, this is one day in the year when the institution and its departments open up to visitors, normally potential applicants. This is a chance to see around the School, speak with staff and students and get a feel for what the institution has to offer.

The questions expanded on artists' work by asking Ray what exhibitions he had seen. Ray replied that he "hadn't seen many", however, he had "gone to galleries around (the city)". He spoke about two artists whose work he liked, both of them contemporary Scottish artists and while he seemed to struggle a little, kept going and talked about one of the artist's "treatment of someone who's fat - taking something stereotypically ugly and making it beautiful". Colin continued this thread and asked him about critical evaluation in school, whether they looked at and critiqued artists' work. Again this related back to questions that had arisen from the portfolio. Ray replied "yes" and that he had enjoyed that area. He understood that he needed "to see other people's work to inform himself", however, also hadn't wanted to get into a "style".

This led neatly into a question about the *style* they had felt was apparent in Ray's work. He was asked about the work of a German artist, from the early 20th century and whether there was a difference between that artist's work and one of the contemporary artists that Ray had mentioned previously. Ray hadn't paused. He talked about the "anger" of the European artist's work and in this case, its closeness to the horrors of war, while the Scottish artist's work was located in "Feminism". He then tried to talk about a specific work, however, had fumbled a little. He paused, then added "this made art for him" and that was what he wanted in his own work.

The questions seemed to get tougher. "How do you bring that critical analysis into your own work?" asked Colin. Ray looked shaky to me and Colin reassured him that he "was doing really well". Duncan then mentioned exhibitions such as *The British Art Show* and others that were on at galleries in Glasgow, Dundee and London. "I haven't

seen them” said Ray “sorry”. He hadn't heard of the local gallery that Colin named and seemed to sound concerned that he didn't know. “Who do you read?” asked Duncan, steering the questions elsewhere. Ray reamed off writers and explained why he liked their work, then shifted into other interests, describing confidently what he liked and why.

The interview ended finally with a last question about whether *he* had any questions. Ray seemed to blush. He didn't. He “hadn't expected to have to ask anything” he replied and again came across as concerned sounding. Colin and Duncan thanked Ray and explained how long the decision-making took and when he might expect to hear the outcome. As soon as Ray had gone, Colin said immediately:

Not great. His critical evaluation was good, but I think the portfolio lacks skill. I wonder if he'd struggle on the skill level, but he was terrified there.

“Terrified” seemed to sum it up. I had been a bit surprised at Colin's response. They had concluded at the portfolio: “There's a level of skill there and there's a level of commitment.” The question they needed answered by the interview had been whether:

Maybe you'd find actually quite a mature personality and from that you'd say well there's enough skill there...you have the maturity of personality that you could learn through our course.

However, it now came back more specifically to his skill level. I had empathised with Ray. He had seemed so nervous, unlike other interviews I had sat through with applicants who had come very prepared and confident sounding. Both Duncan and Colin talked further. Ray had convinced them both that he was “more mature”, which had been

a key question they had been left with after the review of the portfolio. "I'm interested" said Duncan:

He has commitment and understanding. I believe he can do it. He seems a very disciplined character. I'd give him the benefit of the doubt. I'm convinced of him as an individual.

However Colin still wondered:

I just wonder if he did a preparation course he'd be able to handle First Year more comfortably...I'm concerned over his practical skills and ability...but, outside objectivity, I feel he has something that you'd want from an individual.

The interview had seemed hard going. Ray hadn't known all the answers. He had come across as very unrehearsed. However, as a person, Ray had convinced them both that he had the maturity to deal with the course. It seemed that it was Ray as an individual that had convinced them more than his work.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS

Duncan and Colin had worked closely together. The looking had seemed intense, with long silences as they examined and pondered Ray's work. When they spoke it related directly to what they saw; there had been few, if any, digressions. They had looked at the paperwork in detail before going into the portfolio and carefully recalled elements as they tried to meld what Ray said about himself with the references and visual work.

Ray's portfolio had been marked as borderline: "It's a 2-3 for me" said Colin. It had caused real consternation and fluctuation in their responses: "All round about...certain sense of disorganisation actually" Duncan had sighed, only to be countered by Colin's: "That's relatively skilful that proportionally, not a good drawing but it's quite well handled." Then Duncan's soft "oh god."

They had appeared to struggle to make sense of Ray's portfolio, and constantly wondered whether what they were looking at was a result of his education: "Wonder if this is something he's encouraged to do in school or if he's done it on his own?" Duncan had asked. Then a little later again: "I wonder if this is a subject he's taken up himself... or is it again, is it a part of a course...module?" The dialogue between Colin and Duncan, the shared kind of looking had allowed each to question and add to the other. They had seemed on task and serious and it was as if this too had influenced the outcome. They struggled and questioned. Could someone with such "lively but bitty" work, be limited by his current education, or was he directed by it? They had doubts. They had seemed to really wonder about Ray, however, the breadth of his interests and conviction held their attention enough to question whether they should "risk" an interview. On a more practical and organisational level, the numbers of applicants to certain areas might affect the amount of interviews that selectors could *risk*, but it seemed on this occasion that more than this had convinced them about Ray. He had made them curious. Based on the work alone it seemed risky, however, the reading of the visual and paperwork together hinted at qualities in the person that might be worth a chance.

Despite concerns, Ray had shown "intense commitment too [...] about what he's

doing". It was that "conviction, the commitment...his breadth of interests" that had held them, as well as the meld between what Ray said and what his work revealed. Ray had specifically mentioned interests in his statement and Colin and Duncan were interested that these were "actually coming out in his study". On this occasion, the search seemed bound up in an assemblage of both the person and the work. There was an anchored relationship between how Duncan and Colin read the paperwork and visual material and their decisions seemed to revolve around that anchor. However, it was only through interviewing Ray, meeting and talking with him, that they could "find out what kind of person he was", and whether he had the "maturity of personality" to "learn through our course".

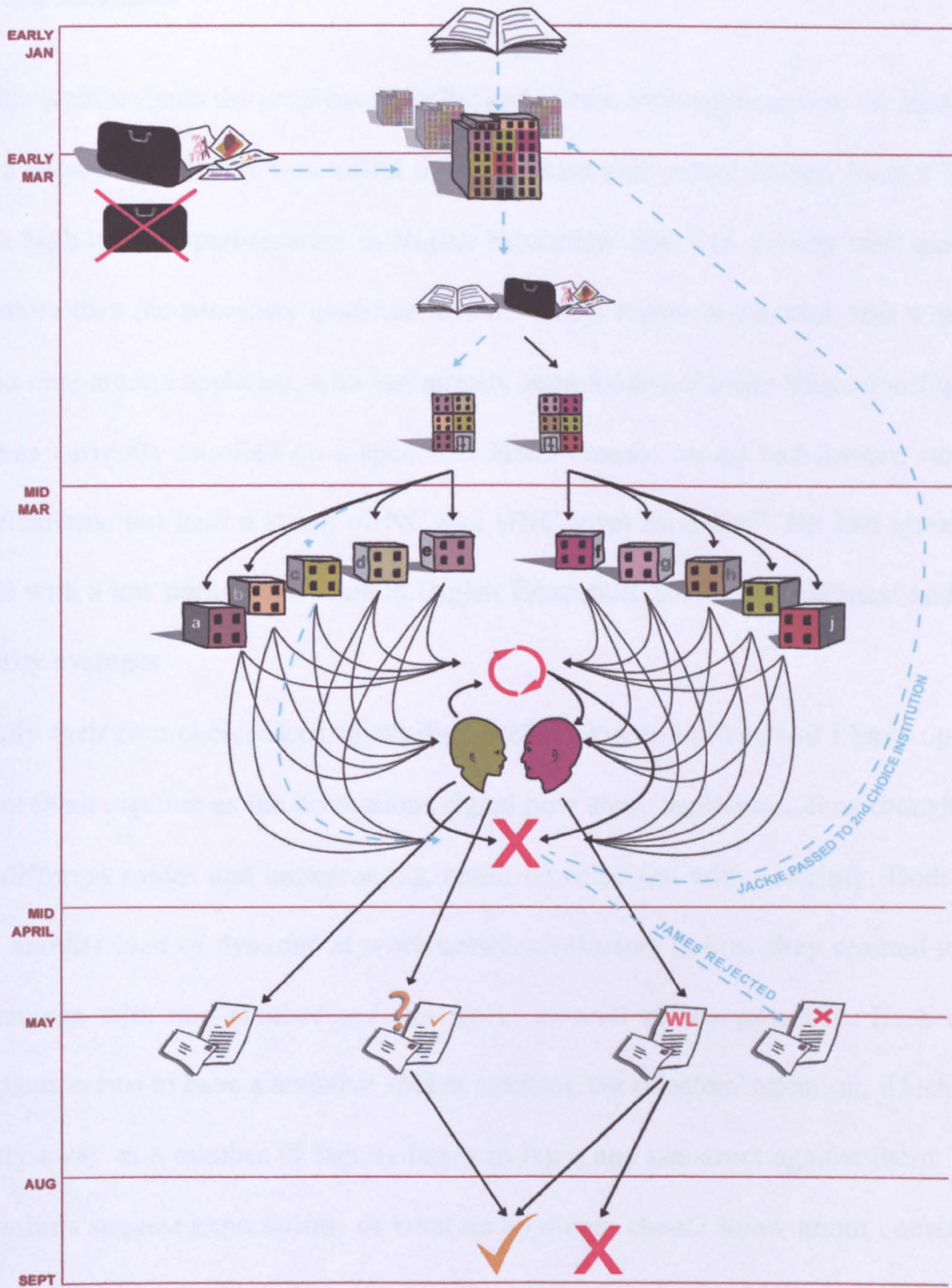
Other layers too, such as emotions and feelings had come into the decision-making. Uncertain about Ray, Colin had said: "My gut feeling is no. Objectively I just feel." To feel something "objectively" in your "gut" may seem contradictory, however, had been understood by both of them. In the face of uncertainty over an applicant, feelings and hunches about the person were what they had gone on. Duncan had a different kind of feeling, he had been "kind of 50/50 [...] about risking an interview". Colin, hadn't been "100%" either, however, it was he who suggested an interview wasn't a risk.

The looking at Ray signalled how uncertainty over the work could be questioned through the relationship between selectors and their processes of looking: how they used the paperwork as a means of understanding the person and whether what they saw seemed to fit with what the applicant and referees said. It suggested too that decision-making wasn't always a detached or rational process, it was emotional. Neither had been

convinced by Ray's work and the responses had fluctuated constantly. It was not skills, ideas and knowledge of contemporary or historical art or critical awareness that led to Ray's interview and acceptance, nor was it any particular declaration of interest in that subject area. They had noted a sense of disarray about the portfolio and its shift in themes and seemed to struggle to understand Ray's experience, background and education, to make sense of what they were looking at in relation to the person. Their interest had been made up from snippets of things, references, what Ray said, bits of visual work. Just enough to want to interview and while there had been those who came very prepared, almost rehearsed, for Ray, the whole experience, seemed unexpected.

The review of Ray and his work signalled that applicants and their portfolios did not need to be at the top end of the score sheet to make it through. If a candidate made it to interview, other qualities in the person could and did come into play in decision-making. Colin and Duncan's looking introduced the sense that the ability to take risks in selection and what constituted a risk might vary across selectors. They had gone on feelings about Ray and any conviction or certainty about him was not in his work foremost, but as a person: "I believe *he* can do it" Duncan had said, "I'd give *him* the benefit of the doubt, I'm convinced of *him* as an individual". Colin had gone with that too: "Outside objectivity, I feel he has something that you'd want from an individual." Ray's work was bound up in themes of emotions and it seemed that the decision on Ray was also emotional. The obsession and intensity that had both captured and concerned them were qualities in Ray himself, and it was this "something" that inspired their belief in him and led to Ray's entry.

JACKIE & JAMES



	APPLICATION FORM		SPECIALIST GROUPS		CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE
	INSTITUTION		REJECTION		UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE
	PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION		REFERRAL		ACCEPTANCE
	NO SUBMISSION		INTERVIEW		APPLICANT ROUTE
	SPECIALIST SCHOOLS		WL WAITING LIST		

INTRODUCTION

This section charts the progress of Jackie and James, both applicants to the same first choice department. Jackie was a first time applicant and school leaver, from a school with a high level of participation in Higher Education. She was already well qualified with more than the necessary qualifications for entry. James in contrast, was a mature, second time around applicant, who had already attended two Further Education Colleges and was currently enrolled on a specialist HND course. James had limited standard qualifications, but held a string of NC and HNC level modules⁸⁸. He had attended a school with a low participation rate in Higher Education, below both national and local authority averages.

Only their first choice department discussed Jackie and James and I have opted to present them together as the discussions signal how some applicants, even though from very different routes and backgrounds, could be ruled out with certainty. Both cases show another kind of dynamic at work between selectors in how they seemed to look and engage with one another and the work, as well as my presence. Each of the applicants seems to have a tentative shot at catching the selectors' attention, which drifts quickly away as a number of factors begin to layer and construct against them. These discussions suggest expectations of what an applicant should know about courses and what selectors are looking for - the kinds of things they should have done to equip

⁸⁸ (HND) Higher National Diploma. (HNC) Higher National Certificate. (NC) National Certificate. As noted previously, 'Standard' refers to Highers, 'O' Grades, 'A' Levels and GCSE's. Non standard qualifications includes modules that go towards qualifications such as (NC) (HNC).

themselves to make an application. The idea of visibility and forcefulness in how an applicant *comes to* selectors also becomes apparent in the decision-making.

In both cases, I take you through the main discussion before going into reflections on the process. I draw on elements from the triadic in these final reflections, which help reaffirm and assert how Jackie and James are viewed - the kind of *wanting* they are seen to have in comparison with others. During these discussions, a number of references were made to the specialist department and very specific subject area processes. Again, these have been altered and more generic terms used in place and shown in curved brackets.

JAMES

James was the first of four of the tracked applicants discussed by Jake and Eddie. I knew Jake quite well, however, Eddie was only known to me distantly and I was a bit unsure of what to expect. The discussion seems to begin fairly favourably then quickly shifts around, as the paperwork reveals more about James' background and raises expectations of what he should have done by this stage. As the discussion progresses it seems that everything that James says and does conspires against him and finally he is marked at a 1, the lowest and is rejected.

“VERY STAID, VERY PEDESTRIAN, VERY PREDICTABLE”

Eddie picked up James' application form and began reading aloud: “So basically, his personal statement's, not a lot to it. He's done (an FE course), but would like to do

something more creative.” He paused as he read and flicked through the pages of the form: “Mmm okay. Trying to see if there's any indication of him coming to the Open Day to know what we do.” He flicked through the pages and pronounced: “Personal statement, here we go.”

As Eddie read the statement, Jake looked at the work and commented: “This drawing looks...oldish...’98.” “It does” agreed Eddie as he glanced down at the work. “Competent though” added Jake. “There'd be no demand on the present course to do any” said Eddie. He looked on as Jake flicked through the work and then with what sounded like recognition said: “I've seen this before, this boy's come up to see us.” Jake looked at the work and then at Eddie: “Do you recognise that?” he said quizzically. “Yeah” said Eddie assuredly: “He's been up doing the Open Days or something, so he's done his research, and he's came and seen what the course is like.” Jake looked on through the work: “He's applied before, has he?” he said with what sounded like a mix of question and recollection. Eddie had James' application form in his hand and looked through it. “Does it say on his form?” I asked. “I've seen this before” said Jake sounding more convinced now as he looked at the work. Eddie flicked through the pages of the form until he got to the page he was looking for and replied: “Yeah we did. We int- ‘result of application unsuccessful’. In that case he hasn't come before, we've seen it at the previous portfolio.” “Right” gasped Jake, “I remember, I remember that (piece of work)”. “Yeah” said Eddie. He paused a few seconds and added: “Well that doesn't bode well.” They flicked on through James' portfolio. “How do you mean?” I asked, “because it looks like he's put the same work in, Eddie?” “Yeah. Yeah” he said quickly:

I mean I think if he's went with that before and he's been unsuccessful he should actually start...a year's a long time, he's on a (specialist) course so he's got plenty of access to make.

Eddie appeared to read the form more carefully and breathed in deeply as he read:

I mean I know the courses at (College A) well, and there's - it's a Full Time course, but there's still a lot of time like this place, they get a night late per week, so there's lots of time to do your own thing plus the course work.

“This is new, though” said Jake, his head down, bent over, almost touching the work as he looked. Eddie stood upright, looking down and across at the work and commented:

Yeah...but the other thing to look at is, even if it's new is it still competent, is it comparable to what we've seen as good portfolios are so far? It's not, I don't see this a high marker folio at all.

Eddie seemed to reach this conclusion quickly. Meanwhile, Jake flicked on through the work and sighed a short “hmmm”. I felt like the expectations had shifted with the realisation that this was a second application as well as Eddie's perception of the college that James attended. It appeared now that James had time “to do” his “own thing plus the course work”. I wondered how much Eddie actually knew about the course that James was on and asked:

You were saying you had some knowledge of the course, so would you be expecting there to be more (specialist) work in it then? What's the course he's coming from?

Eddie replied:

Well at (College A) he's on a (specialist) course em...it'd be interesting to see his own personal work, it might actually, not be too uninteresting to see the work he's doing on the course because sometimes that informs you as to how they're being educated, what they've learnt, how they perceive things [...]. I can't remember if he's actually come to see us, though I think he has as well as applying last year. I would expect him to have studied the course more to figure out what we do, what we might be looking for and to see if that's what he wants to do...because I agree with Jake, a lot of the stuff looks quite old.

Jake added to that: "And eh, you know there's, I recognise some of this more sort of finished work but I don't see much...new work. Unless this is new?" he said pointing to an image. "But if this is new it's not actually as strong as the previous work" said Eddie quickly. They carried on flicking through the portfolio. "It doesn't look very well developed" said Jake finally. Eddie was now reading the application form again, this time the reference section: "Bart Trainer" he said, reading aloud the name of one of James' referees, then added:

Jack Martin hasn't given him a reference. But Bart Trainer's reference it talks about 'during his time, a higher art pupil, James Rankin'. So I mean that's also interesting there's no contemporary reference.

He looked at Jake as he spoke and Jake "mmmd". "Both are (College B)" continued Eddie as he flicked through the paperwork:

An' he's at (College A) just now, he's finished (College B)... in '99...I'm inclined to think there's not a lot of motivation since the last time we seen him.

"Mmmm, well I can't see anything" agreed Jake. "And if we look at this compared to some of the kinda strong to medium portfolios it doesn't bode too well" said Eddie as he flicked and glanced through the paperwork. "So if he applied to you last year it would

have been (College B) he was applying from?" I asked. "Uh-huh, yep" said Eddie. "And that's where we'd have seen that (particular) work from" he said directly to Jake. Eddie carried on:

With that kind of contact if he's going for a second application, he should have figured out we're looking for personal projects, em what kind of things interests him. I think there's a broad spectrum over which you can do these things, but clearly he hasn't done that or picked that up.

Jake went along the same lines as Eddie now as he shifted the looking back and forth between James' earlier and later work: "I mean that's not a significant development is it at all from...this or that, it's, you feel in some ways that's more interesting." "Yeah I mean I think that plus this are much more interesting in terms of the dialogue that the picture unfolds" said Eddie who had also shifted between two different works and offered what he felt would be a more interesting juxtaposition. "Yeah" agreed Jake. They looked at the work and Jake added: "It's kind of much more you know it's kind of more pedestrian isn't it and..." I sensed James' chances slipping away. There was silence as they carried on looking and Eddie commented finally:

I don't get any real sense to why he wants to be here. He obviously knows what the course is by now, what we do, what we're looking for and I don't see any sense of what he's trying to do here.

Jake "mmmd" and added: "Yeah, there's no, there's not a lot of conviction there. He's not trying to convince us...to take him...doesn't seem a lot of effort." Eddie came back quickly: " 'Cause when he talks in his statement about...right" Eddie scanned James' statement and then read aloud:

‘Studying (specialist area) at (College A) but feel that I need a course that is more creative and more expressive.’ I’d like to know where that creativeness and expressiveness is in the portfolio. It seems very staid, very pedestrian, very predictable in a sense.

Jake “mmd” again as Eddie continued to scan and read aloud:

He talks about ‘the technology of today would allow me to take my ideas further than I have ever been able to in the past.’ But once more where is the reference to technology? This is very primitive technology he’s using...em...and I’d imagine (College A), which is better funded than here...as a technical college has great (specialist) facilities, I’d have expected him to have elbowed his way in and got use of it.

“Absolutely, yeah” agreed Jake. “I’ll put him 1-plus” said Jake in terms of the score.

“Yeah” agreed Eddie, “which meeeans...no interview”. The last two words sounded snipped and final. They zipped the portfolio closed⁵⁹.

JACKIE

Jackie was the second applicant tracked alongside Jake and Eddie. The discussion is of interest as her work seemed right on the cusp of catching their attention, particularly Jake’s. However, Eddie had a very different view and she ended up being marked at a 1, the lowest. The conversational dilemma over kinds of “obsession” and “oddness” shifts from curiosity to dismissal and raises questions about desired and undesired kinds of “odd”.

⁵⁹ There was no plus or minus category, however, selectors often wrote a plus sign or positioned the score between numbers.

**“THERE'S SOMETHING HERE ISN'T THERE? SOMETHING RATHER
ODD...EM...SSSSS...EM YOU KNOW KIND OF OBSESSIVE”**

As Jake looked through the portfolio, Eddie turned to him and asked: “Right, what's she like Jake?” Jake carried on flicking quickly through the portfolio as though nothing quite caught his attention, then paused a little before answering: “Pedestrian...drawing” he said in a drawn out tone. “Is twee a word for pedestrian?” said Eddie with a smile. Jake sighed and laughed at the same time as he replied: “Right, it's eh - has she got a second choice?” As if to answer his own question, he picked up Jackie's paperwork and began to look through it. Eddie flicked back through the portfolio and added: “Yeah being an illustrator for *People's Friend*.” Jake didn't respond and instead read aloud Jackie's choices: “(Department B) second choice.” “(Department B) second” repeated Eddie, then added “(Department D) third, looks like it”. Eddie now flicked through the paperwork and commented: “And that's another one that starts with that famous phrase ‘my childhood goal was to be an artist’. I wanted to be an astronaut to be quite honest” he joked. “You might be one yet” I grinned. “No. I'm a space cadet” he laughed.

Jake interrupted the joking with what sounded like a gasped: “That's weird isn't it?” as he looked at a sheet of drawings. Eddie looked over at the work: “Is this *People's Friend's* magazine? Her mother buys *People's Friend*. Did you ever see the pictures on the front of it?”⁶⁰ Eddie's voice sounded almost excited. “No” said Jake. His tone was

⁶⁰ I had been brought up around this magazine *The People's Friend*, my mum used to read it. When I was young, it had always seemed like the kind of magazine only a mum would read. It was full of cookery, romance and problem pages. The cover was always illustrated, to my own memory, with a painted landscape - never a photograph - with scenes of Scottish mountains and glens. They had been homely and cosy kinds of images.

difficult to make out and I wasn't sure whether this was genuine non-recognition or a similar vein of joking. It was early on in the looking and despite my uncertainty over what was happening, I decided to let the conversation run. "Hah, hah" laughed Eddie. "Chandeliers and..." Jake paused as he looked, then added, "cave entrances". He looked and sounded bemused. I thought back to Jake's earlier "weird" comment in relation to a previous applicant and asked him: "Is it strange interesting or strange not interesting?" "Eh strange interesting I think" said Jake quickly. "Oooh" replied Eddie "this is like Fox Muldaur territory for me, Jake"⁶¹. Eddie's expression seemed a mix of pain and laughter. Again Jake didn't seem to react and carried on flicking through the portfolio. "Okay" said Eddie, more serious sounding: "Pottery and batique" he added as he commented on the processes Jackie used in her work. "And we have a little head scarf here" he said, holding it up to let us both view it. I was unsure of the constant joking, if it was for me or if Eddie was like this all the time. There was a few moments silence as they both looked. They appeared to engage differently with the work. Jake seemed to look carefully while Eddie glanced, like his attention was geared more towards dealing with me.

"Actually it's quite competent batique" said Eddie. Jake flicked through the sheets of work and added: "Competent Japanese eh pottery." After a few seconds more silence, Eddie voiced: "Let's get a wee bit background on her." He picked up Jackie's forms and looked through them while Jake carried on looking at the work. "She's terribly neat" said Jake. His tone sounded emphatic and seemed to prompt Eddie to glance across again at

⁶¹ Fox Muldaur was a reference to the *X-Files*, a cult television programme about extra-terrestrials, which signalled another level of strangeness felt about the work.

the work: "That's a good quality for (this department), neat. Neat; being on time and not missing lectures." Eddie flicked quickly through Jackie's sketchbooks and added: "These are a bit, not so good" then shifted back to looking at her application form. "Well she says she spent her sixth year putting together her portfolio" he added as he read directly from her statement. Jake looked on at the work, and as he did, gave out a sigh. It had seemed tired sounding. Eddie continued to paraphrase and read aloud from Jackie's form: "She's been attending several evening classes including pottery workshops, ceramic classes and printing courses." He paused then continued listing areas monotonously:

And she enjoys working in the landscape and she's went to the National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh...she's enthusiastic about art history...but she says nothing about (this specialism).

The last comment switched tone, it was like Jackie had missed something important.

Eddie continued:

But what's quite interesting is when it says 'please indicate which specialist art and design subject you have in mind for this stage', she says, '[Department B]' first, '[Department C]', '[Department J]' and '[Department D]', so I'm kinna -

Jake "mmmd". "Looks like back door (Department B)" Eddie added. "Does that happen sometimes?" I asked. "Oh yeah" said Eddie assuredly, "you get a few ringers they think that em...I don't know why and I think it's more misinformation from - "I think it is" interrupted Jake. Eddie continued:

Their tutors...they tend to think...oh well you know (Department B's) hard to get into but you might get into (this specialism). But I mean we've got a lot of portfolios, [...] and that's not counting sometimes quite strong second choices that's directed our way.

Eddie's comments hinted that some applicants had knowledge, although perhaps confused, about the competitive nature of the selection process and were able to act strategically to find a way into the school through the "back door". However, Jackie's actual choices on the form had been clear and this specialism had been her first choice. The area that Eddie referred to was a more generic question about interests and applicants had often listed other areas.

They carried on looking through the work. "It's a bit *Take the High Road* this portfolio" said Eddie smiling. "Tah hah" laughed Jake. This made reference to a popular television programme, this time a Scottish soap opera based in a highland village⁶². "The new aesthetic of *Take the High Road*" said Eddie with a laugh. He paused with a smile, then added: "And there's Mrs Witchius from *Take the High Road*, haha, with the wee hat." It seemed that Eddie knew the programme himself and some of the characters. They flicked quickly through the work, which included some photographic images and I asked: "Is there anything going on in these photographs?" An elongated "Nnnoooo really" was the reply from Eddie: "They're very picture postcard...kind of calendar...I find the portfolio dull to be honest." Jake came back quickly: "I think there's something

⁶² Like *The People's Friend*, *Take the High Road* was also familiar to me, another family favourite. It was full of archetypal characters, such as village gossips and rich landlords, all set in a romantic highland landscape.

interesting there but I don't see that it's...I mean that's it...she's (done this) haha and somebody's said oh apply for (this specialism).”

The choice of specialism seemed to be brought into question again. They continued to flick through the work quickly and Eddie commented: “I mean she's in the landscape all the time, that seems to be what she's really into.” Jake “mmmd” as if in agreement. They each carried on looking, this time together, flicking quite quickly through the remaining portfolio. Jake came in again: “There's something there isn't there. Something rather odd...em...sssss...em you know kind of obsessive.” Jake had drawn air sharply in through his teeth as he spoke. It was like he found it difficult to pin down his thoughts on this portfolio. However, Eddie was clear: “Kind of Largs gallery of fine art though isn't it next to Nardinis... I mean it's...beach debris hahhhhh.”

Jake gave out another exhausted sounding sigh. Eddie appeared to flick casually through the sheets: “It's dull, Jake, it's truly dull...I mean it's obsessive in its lack of imagination.” “Tah, hahaha” laughed Jake. “I mean, if you spend that length of time on beaches there's some dead animals” said Eddie. “I mean I, I just, yeah...find it em, it's very suspect really to put (this specialism) as a first choice” said Jake. Eddie “yeahd” then added, “and certainly I don't think [Department B] would touch this...I don't think”. They continued to flick through and Jake added: “It's not developed, you know it's kind of all the same, it's not developing as we go through it.” “Yeah, it's like the pitch just doesn't change” said Eddie, then expanded on the idea of “pitch”: “This is like somebody sitting beside you in the pub going ‘mmmmmmm’. You can only take it for so long.” Jake “mmmd” again and added, “Nope”. “No” confirmed Eddie.

They had made so many references to this portfolio perhaps not being right for this specialism that I was curious whether this was what caused them to have questions:

So see even if there had been, like you were talking about, if there hadn't been, there isn't much (specialist process) in this one, would it be that, that was putting you off?

Jake responded quickly:

Well it'd be partly I mean, because eh it just feels as though, you know, just feel as though...there's a bit of (specialist process) in the portfolio but it's not developed and the drawing element doesn't develop either, so I think there's some, a mindset which is not creative or curious.

“It's almost robotic” added Eddie, then continued:

The (images) are probably shot from five foot something, or whatever the height is...now that could be interesting if it was part of a strategy but (they) just look like they're ready to take back and make a painting from them...you know I just...I...they're kind of chocolate box picture postcard type of images. The type of images you actually take when you go as a tourist somewhere and bring it back and say that's what it looked like.

Then unprompted, Eddie reinforced his observation: “You look at the sun, you know it's about 20 minutes to 30 minutes worth of work, the sun hasn't changed its angle.”

“That's right, yeah yeah yeah” agreed Jake. “You know that would be fine if it was a strategy and it was repeated again and worked and explored” continued Eddie. “Or actually appeared and influenced the drawings but -” suggested Jake. “Uh-huh” agreed Eddie: “Well that's what I mean. Those are bright sunny high contrast pictures, the drawings are this kind of dull, you know the tone doesn't move too much, sombre.” Jake

“mmmd”. The voices trailed off into silence as they flicked through to the end, then closed the portfolio.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS

I had worked with Eddie and Jake quite early on in the selection and was still very much in the thick of it all during these observations. As I moved from one selection team to another, initial questions shifted around and it was difficult to make sense of it all. Eddie and Jake had seemed to work as a team. Jake attended more to the portfolios, while Eddie focussed on the paperwork. I had sensed a difference in the ways that they worked and was unsure then and now whether my presence had affected that in some way. Jake had seemed more natural, while Eddie appeared a little more to *perform* the role of selector. Perhaps my lack of knowledge of Eddie led me to think this, but I had felt quite strongly at the time that perhaps his responses were geared more towards me.

I had noticed more about their processes of working than I had in the previous observations. In all cases, the paperwork was glanced at firstly, then looked at in more detail as they shifted through the portfolio and it always seemed to play a part in influencing their responses to the visual. This had been particularly so with James. The looking at James' work had begun optimistically. The initial recognition of seeing “this before” had been linked positively to the idea that “this boy's come up to see us”. James had been seen to come forward and made himself and his work known. All of that was good; he had “done his research”, came “and seen what the course is like”. However, that had changed when Jake hinted that this recognition was due to James' previous

application and this was confirmed by the paperwork. James' work had been reviewed the year before and he had been interviewed and then rejected. The initial, positive familiarity of the work now did not “bode well”.

James' paperwork began to work against him and became a vehicle for selectors to confirm their growing doubts. James' declaration of his own learning needs was seen as a lack. He had said that he wanted “a course that is more creative and more expressive”. However, Eddie had wanted to know “where that creativeness and expressiveness is in the portfolio”. James had hoped that “technology” would allow him to take his ideas further. However, again this was read negatively: “Where is the reference to technology?” Eddie asked of the work. It had seemed like evidence for not accepting was mounting up against James. Eddie hadn't known but “imagined” that James' current course would offer him more in the way of facilities than he would have on this programme that he was applying to. More than this, he would have expected him to have “elbowed his way in and got use of it”.

The expectations of that space of a year, particularly when linked to the presumed level of access available to James through his college course, seemed to work against him. James had not done what was expected; “to have studied the course more” and “figure what we do”, that they were looking for “personal projects”. The background information offered through the paperwork, led the assured sounding, “this boy's come up to see us”, to shift to a faint can't “actually remember”, “though I think he has” as the looking progressed. Either way it seemed that James had made a mistake. If he had not

visited the department, then the sense was that he should have. If he had, then he had got it wrong, as he hadn't figured out what was being looked for.

It seemed that James had not made himself visible in the right kinds of ways. He had not visited the School, or if he had, he was not conspicuous enough to be remembered. He had not done his research on what was expected by the course or been forceful enough in taking advantage of the opportunities that they imagined he had. James had not convinced them or given a sense of “why he wants to be here”. Jake had concluded: “There's no, there's not a lot of conviction there. He's not trying to convince us... to take him...doesn't seem a lot of effort.”

Jackie conversely, had prompted initial interest from Jake, who had seemed more intrigued by her work than Eddie. Jake found the work “strange interesting”, while Eddie felt that this strangeness resided in “Fox Muldaur territory”. Eddie read the work as “pedestrian” and “dull”, with a kind of monotony that verged on irritation, made evident in his analogy of the work being “robotic”, like someone sitting next to you going “mmmmmm”. Jackie's competency and neatness left question marks too. Jake had said “terribly neat” in a way that seemed to signal some kind of curiosity, while Eddie had made those qualities sound more flippant: “Neat. Neat, being on time and not missing lectures.” The deliberation over these ideas led them back to the paperwork to get “a wee bit of background on her”. However, again it seemed that the paperwork only confirmed their doubts. Eddie listed Jackie's experiences in a casual, almost monotonous tone that rendered attendance at evening classes, pottery workshops, ceramic classes and printing courses, as well as Jackie's pleasure in working in the landscape and enthusiasm

for art history as mundane. It was as though there was nothing special or exciting about what Jackie had said or done. The tone of Eddie and Jake's voices, along with the sighs had often come across as exhausted sounding; the "truly dull" taking its toll on them emotionally. To top it all, Jackie's failure to mention the specialist area in that long list had seemed like a big omission. Was she really interested in this department or was her interest in other subject areas just more evidence of her "back door" attempt at entry to the school? There was a clear presumption on Eddie's part that Jackie might have some kind of knowledge of the selection system that she was trying to use to her advantage.

Jake had seemed more curious about Jackie, there was something odd in her work that it seemed he could not quite put his finger on. However, this had changed as they looked through the portfolio, particularly with Eddie's observation that the soap opera and chocolate box cover images could have been interesting if performed strategically. If only Jackie had persuaded them of her awareness of how this kind of imagery could be made more convincingly "strange...interesting". While a more deliberate *mundane* might have been acceptable, the sense of Jackie's lack of intention seemed only to reinforce the negativity of the response.

The uncertainty that stemmed from Jake's there is "something here isn't there?...something rather odd...em...sssss...em you know kind of obsessive" had been countered by Eddie's very assured "it's obsessive" yes, but "in its lack of imagination". Jackie had not convinced them enough to want to interview her. The intent of the strangeness in Jackie's work and whether it was deliberate, or indeed if even Jackie was aware of it, all came into play in the final decision. The obsessive qualities that Jackie

showed in what she looked at and how she rendered the subject matter was not enough on this occasion. More than an obsession of interest that made you look and make images, it seemed a level of knowledge was required - quite a sophisticated level of knowledge - about how the “robotic”, “chocolate box” and “picture postcard” could transcend the literal and convince selectors of other kinds of understanding. I was conscious that in Ray's case selectors' uncertainty had led to an interview. They had wanted to see whether the emotions in the work, played out in the person. However, on this occasion that was not to happen; Jackie's strangeness seemed to lead to estrangement and her progress was stopped short.

Eddie and Jake's responses to Jackie and James' work were in sharp contrast to the other two applicants tracked with them and this had become very apparent during the triadic discussion. As with other areas, I had asked Eddie and Jake to reflect back on all of the applicants we had discussed, in order to explore how the decision-making might be reframed within a wider context. Initially I asked them to discuss Jackie and James alongside Liz, a slightly older applicant who had attended a portfolio preparation course and had been scored a very borderline 2. Then the combination of applicants was shifted to include May, a sixth form school leaver who had scored very highly. While Eddie suggested that these other two applicants had shown that: “They're the proper calibre and standard” and had “a hunger and interest and energy to go through art school”, he felt that:

The other two (Jackie and James) just don't fit any of those categories, they are not ready for art school. I don't think they've got the ambition or the energy yet em, their use of materials is kind of plodding, in some cases unimaginative.

Unlike the others who had some “spark” and were “out there doing something”, neither James nor Jackie was thought to be “ready to be here”, they did not “have the energy”. James had not “moved on very far and kinna, kinna, dull word comes to it” and “likewise for the woman, what's her face with the landscapes [...] I would probably stick both of them in the dull portfolio section”. Their non-readiness to be at art school was clearly part of the reasoning for rejection and this seemed to relate to both the person and the work. What the visual work signalled about them, in terms of motivation, commitment and energy also came into play. Neither James nor Jackie was seen to have any of those qualities, either as a person or in terms of their art work. Even when I switched the mix of applicants, the idea of James and Jackie as “the dulls” was reinforced. They did not show the “hunger and interest and energy to go through art school”. Neither of them had “fit any of those categories”, they were just “plodding” and often “unimaginative”.

I wondered what might have happened if Jackie had signalled some knowledge of postmodern pastiche or irony about her choice of subject matter; or if she had shown that she understood how to perform the repetitive and obsessive, in such a way that it was not read as “dull” but suggested another, more contemporary level of literacy in rendering the image. Would this - as with other applicants - have made a difference to her progress? She had not demonstrated a lot of artistic knowledge; she had not been able to play with selectors' responses and hold their attention. I wondered how and where an applicant might learn this or how you would decide that they were capable of learning this unless you spoke to them. Landscape was what surrounded Jackie and that was what

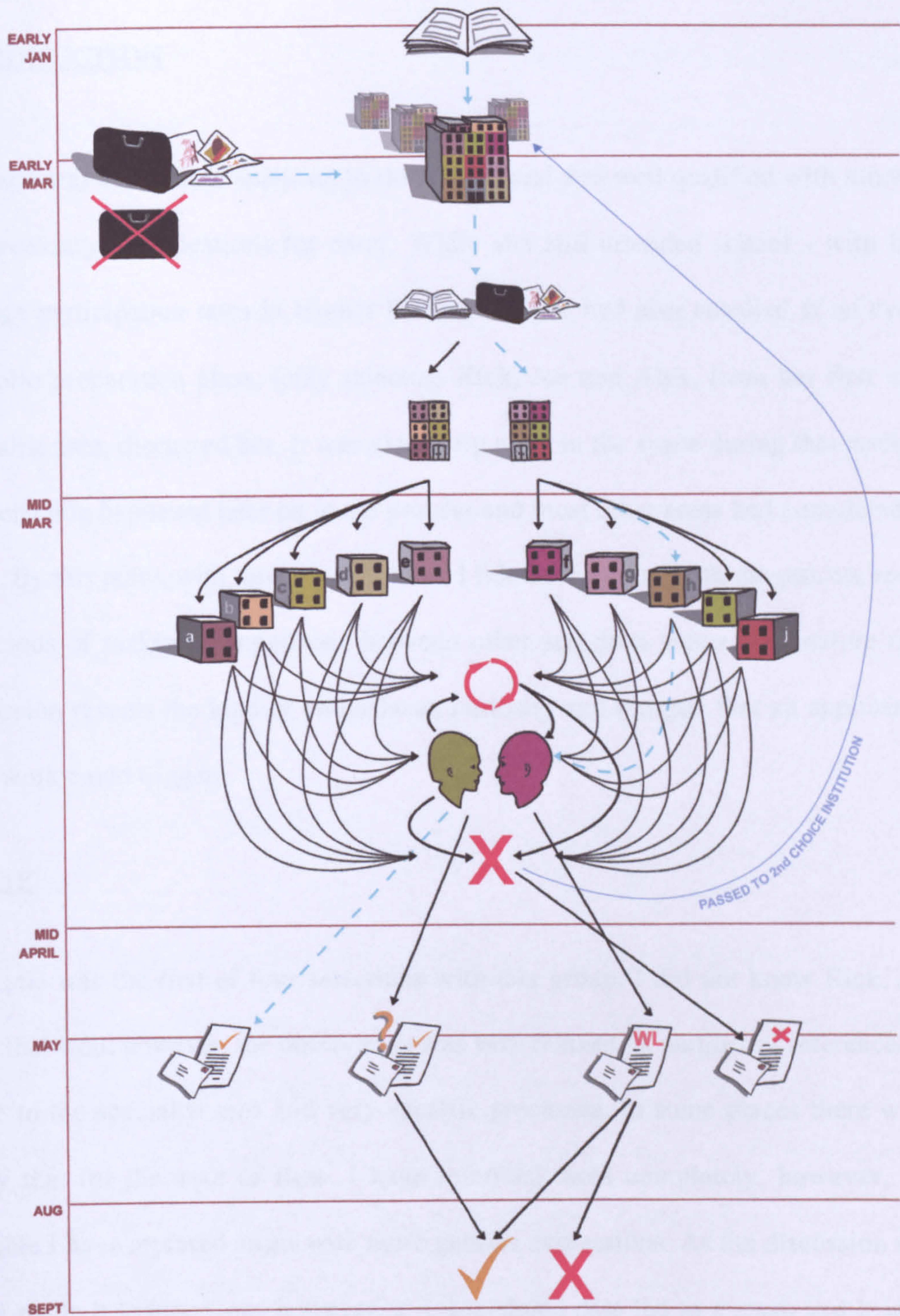
she was drawn to - her obsession. However, although her work had provoked discussion, neither Eddie nor Jake had been convinced enough to interview.

Jackie's experiences had not seemed to count for much, but had melted into the same kind of monotony with which Eddie had viewed the work. This was the same for James who had conveyed in his statement that he did not want to be in the experience that he was in; he wanted something else. Perhaps that may have explained the "lack of motivation" that they had read into the work. However, none of this came into deliberations. James' declaration of what he wanted, was seen as something that he should have countered by "elbowing" in. Neither his attendance at two colleges nor his previous application to the school was read as commitment. Indeed those experiences had set up other kinds of expectations of what James should know by now, what he should have found out and what should have been made visible in his application. James and Jackie, the visual work and their personalities, seemed bound together as dull, pedestrian and predictable. James had been close to entry the year before with his interview and had gone to another college after rejection. Paradoxically, his work became more distant from what selectors were looking for.

Neither James nor Jackie had sustained the attention of Jake and Eddie, through their work, what they said about themselves or what others said about them. Even the omission of a more contemporary reference for James had led Eddie to be "inclined to think there's not a lot of motivation". It seemed that everything construed against them both. I had felt an odd sense about the looking on this occasion, as if the job had been handled well and the *real* James and Jackie had been seen. Jackie and James had not

convinced that they were the *curious, learning, teaching yourself*, kind of people that Eddie and Jake seemed to be looking for. It had not been only the work that was “dull”, by association it seemed to extend to James and Jackie as people. They had not *come to* selectors through their visual or paperwork. Unlike other applicants who had shown that they really wanted “to go some place”, wanted “something desperately”, in Eddie's words, Jackie and James seemed only “to be waiting for it to come to them”.

KATIE



	APPLICATION FORM		SPECIALIST GROUPS		CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE
	INSTITUTION		REJECTION		UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE
	PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION		REFERRAL		ACCEPTANCE
	NO SUBMISSION		INTERVIEW		APPLICANT ROUTE
	SPECIALIST SCHOOLS		WL. WAITING LIST		

INTRODUCTION

Katie was a first time applicant to the school, and was well qualified with more than the necessary qualifications for entry. While she still attended school - with below average participation rates in Higher Education - she had also enrolled at an evening portfolio preparation class. Only selectors Rick, Joe and Alex, from her first choice specialist area, discussed her. It was extremely quiet in the space during this review, as this selection happened later on in the process and most other areas had completed their work. By this point, with time for reflection, I felt more in tune with the process and was conscious of making comparisons between other selection teams. The nature of this discussion reveals the kind of enthusiasm, curiosity and intrigue that an applicant and their work could trigger.

KATIE

Katie was the first of four selections with this group. I did not know Rick, Joe or Alex that well; however, the observation was very relaxed. A number of references were made to the specialist area and very specific processes. In some places there were so many that for the sake of flow, I have removed them completely, however, where possible I have replaced terms with more generic expressions. As the discussion shows, Katie made it to interview, however, a re-scheduled date led to a clash and it was not

possible to sit in on this part of Katie's progress⁶³. However, during the review, selectors discussed the function of the interview and again, the importance of the relationship between the visual work and the person was brought into play.

A strong discourse of certainty emerged in this discussion and there seemed no hesitation that Katie's work made her appear exactly the kind of person that would fit in; a conviction played out in Katie's high scoring portfolio mark of 4. I have opted to detail the triadic a little more as firstly it shows something of the kind of confusion caused, mostly down to my questioning, with this part of the process. Also, one of the selectors, Alex, who had been quiet during the main discussion, became more actively involved in the triadic. The discussion reveals the sureness selectors felt about Katie, in particular her distinctiveness, as she was constantly rendered as different to the others tracked.

“IT IS THAT SPARK OF UNIQUENESS I GUESS WHICH IS WHAT EVERYONE'S LOOKING FOR IN A PORTFOLIO”

Joe spent considerable time reading through the application form while Alex read over his shoulder and Rick flicked through the sketchbooks. “Talent and originality” said Alex as he read aloud snippets from Katie's reference. “Yes” agreed Joe, “these are good references. She's well qualified...and she's still at school, (X High School)”. Joe focussed on reading again, while Rick and Alex began to look at the portfolio. “Do you look for particular things in the forms?” I asked Joe, who had seemed quite engrossed in the paperwork. “We just, we check the references. We're less likely to read the statement

⁶³ I made a decision early on that I wouldn't leave any interview in the middle or join any when they had started, concerned at interruption or disruption to the applicant. Katie's interview had been re-scheduled at short notice and unfortunately it wasn't possible to do anything about this.

at this stage, em, it's the reference that's of interest" he replied. I was immediately curious about this as there had been conflicting ideas about the usefulness of references.

"Right" I said, "why would you be less likely to read the statement at this point?"

Well I think the reference is probably more important, it's objective as opposed to subjective which the statement's going to be and...I mean we skim across the statement but probably at the stage of going to interview that's where we'll read that carefully.

This was in contrast to how other areas had operated. While there had been different levels of engagement with the statement, few selectors had considered the references more important or any less subjective than the statement. "Also" added Rick:

There's a lot more written material in the folios themselves, you know within the sketchbook there's a lot more written comment by the student usually...coming out of the portfolio as well.

Joe still appeared very focussed on the form. I noticed he had paused on the qualifications page and asked: "Does it concern you whether they're qualified or not?"

So far they've all been pretty well qualified, em it, I suppose it would concern us if they were...greatly under-qualified, but usually at this stage they're always sitting something which would make them qualified, so in a sense it's not an issue. It's more of an issue for direct entry when they've completed their standard grade or their higher exams, at that stage they're on a National Certificate (NC) course or, so, so they possibly don't have a chance to become qualified. But I think when they mainly apply from schools, they're either in the process of upgrading their highers or they're already qualified and most of them are already quite well qualified.

Although an NC was a qualification that regularly appeared in applicants' forms, Joe's suggestion that people who possessed it "possibly don't have a chance to become

qualified”, introduced ideas on what counted – or not - as being qualified. I had felt that his response also seemed to suggest that there was a pattern to their applicants' educational experience and asked: “Do you know this school that she's coming from?” “I don't” said Joe. “No, we don't” added Rick, then continued: “There's some of them that we've been through that, they, we have known them...like (X or Y College) or whatever, we get people on a regular basis.” They flicked through the portfolio quietly. “Is there anything in particular that you're looking for in a portfolio?” I asked all three of them. Rick seemed to pick his words carefully to begin with and replied in some detail:

Well, I, I, I think... brea -, you know real breadth, I think in the folio and, and em a mind working really, it's not just...you know as we were saying earlier, it's not just comfort driving them, they're actually thinking and also [...] they're thinking through materials as well [...] a lot of them have been like that, there's quite a broad use of materials...in the books.

Joe picked up where Rick ended: “Also in terms of (specialist processes) we're not necessarily looking for...a level of sophistication, it is that business of potential”. Joe and Rick took turns to talk and flick through the sketchbooks. Alex stood beside them quietly, apparently looking at the work. Their actions seemed almost synchronised. “What's your response to the sketchbooks so far?” I asked them. Again Rick was the first to reply:

This one, this one's, this one's quite a strongish one, well this sketchbook especially is, given it's about, obviously it's on one topic, it's about tension em...and she's interpreting that quite broadly you know, from surface tension to...stitching...and eh using the body itself to actually hold things in place.

I was curious to know whether the nature of their course affected the level of interest.

“So when you're looking at these are you thinking about how this would work in terms of your course or in terms of the specialism?” I asked. Rick responded in detail:

Well we're trying to think is this someone who'll be happy if you like, [...] who'll sit within the department and who will actually cope em with [...] the huge variety of materials that they may be involved in over the course em...somebody who's actually, you know, conscious of how things go together...I mean it's not entirely, it's, it's much more analytical than that...

Rick flicked through the portfolio as he spoke and as he did so, Joe and Alex looked on at each page of work. Alex spoke for the first time and sounded tentative:

Not so sure about how the whole portfolio comes across [...] you know some of them have been awfully presented, em, jumbled sketchbooks that don't really seem to have an order or use within the folio. Repetition and things like that.

All of the heads were bowed down looking and again Rick volunteered a response:

See here's a very simple exercise [...] just taking an old...safety razor apart an' an'...figuring out how it works and how it hinges open and...you know, making these relationships and doing things like, beginning to think in (a specific way). So you're doing end views and side and top views and you know taking the thing apart.

I thought that Rick had sounded intrigued. “Would this be a fairly typical portfolio?” I asked them. “No, this isn't” replied Rick laughing “it's not haha, it's actually quite a good one, it's a bit, it's a bit...grotty, but it's an interesting -”. Rick had tussled gently at the corner of a drawing with his thumb and forefinger as he spoke. The specialist reference seemed once again to come to the fore. “I was just wondering when you were

talking about someone's approach to something, would that be an approach that people applying for this specialism might take?" I asked them. "It might well be" said Rick, then continued:

I mean we're looking for particular characters, I mean I think we do, when you meet them from other schools or even from other countries...people sort of tend to have a sort of similarity about them.

"But there's no formula" said Joe quickly. Rick agreed:

There's no, no formula. I mean this isn't like...the other ones we've actually...this is much looser and freer, I think...it's much more gutsy isn't it? There's no flowers and stuff.

Rick had smiled as he spoke. "Yeah there's a mixture -" began Joe. "Hah", Rick then carried on where he left off: "There's no temptation to get into flowers and embroidery too much." They all laughed quietly. "I mean that kind of approach we haven't seen anything -" observed Joe, cutting himself off. "This here?" I asked and pointed to the sheet of drawings. "Yes, this kinda -" began Joe. Rick interrupted:

We're also trying to look past, we're trying to look past the school as well because you can see in some of them, I mean their preparation for this has been dire...I mean really sssss.

Rick sucked air in and out through his teeth. I went back to Joe's comments. "See when you said this, this sort of thing we haven't seen, how did you mean?" Joe replied:

Well it's not consciously designed. I mean it could fit into probably any folio for a start. It could be, it could be another (area), could be a (Department C) portfolio eh, but it is about (a specific way of working), which is of interest to us em...this

is, whether we're going in the right direction or not I'm not sure - em but it's just of a curious nature you know, there's someone with a mind that is unusual.

“It's quirky isn't it” Rick chipped in. Joe carried on:

Compared to some of the more sort of very obvious [...] portfolios, so this person would be certainly, be of interest to us because they would fit into a group of...individuals rather than any kind of formula.

“I notice that word ‘quirky’ -” I said. “Yes” said Joe. “Uh-huh” added Rick, laughing.

“That's a word I've heard a lot, how do you use it, what does it mean to you?” “Well”

Rick replied:

I think it would mean sort of, if you like lateral-thinking, you know some, somebody's actually, they draw one thing or they're working in a sketchbook and suddenly they take off in...quite an unexpected direction...or, or will come back and eh it's almost a circular process, or a spiral process, so they keep coming back [...] to the topic in hand, but they've explored...sort of quite odd directions or odd materials or...things that you wouldn't think were particularly obvious at the time.

“Or curious solutions” said Joe. “Curious, yeah” agreed Rick. Joe continued with this train of thought:

It is that spark of uniqueness I guess which is what everyone's looking for in a portfolio you know, looking beyond what the school is teaching them and you know what they're actually teaching themselves.

As Joe spoke, Rick and Alex carried on looking through the portfolio. “What's that?” asked Rick, bending down to look more closely. “It's like a little woodcut” suggested Joe, “I think it was in a sketchbook”. “Is it skin?” said Rick quizzical sounding. He

touched it gently. There was silence as they all looked as though they were trying to figure it out. "I've seen these images somewhere else" said Rick. Alex inspected the work closely: "It's just blown-up skin on a photocopy" he said. "But you see" said Rick "to go from that sort of padded...foil stuff on top of, what's it on top of, is it a packet? A teabag?" He prodded the image and carried on: "See it's folded paper here. She's actually made this quilting see and to go from that to...a thick...sort of paint or latex or whatever."

Rick sounded enthusiastic as he struggled his way through a description of the work. "How do you mean? You can see the development or relationship?" I asked. "Well she's obviously making connections on her own" explained Joe. "See this is a huge blow-up of this" added Rick. He had searched through the sketchbook and found the other image. Rick went into detail about the work:

She's still working on this razor and she's taken a tiny section...of this safety razor and she's just tried to...interpret it or blow it up in various ways from this drawing...and there's a reason -"

"She can see the potential in the object in the drawing" said Joe. "This huge drawing" continued Rick:

I mean we've seen some huge drawings there's, there's no point in doing it at all, but to actually take this small object and play with the scale...is particularly interesting...and yeah certainly confident.

Rick flicked over to the next sheet of the portfolio and laughed. He sounded really curious now, and looked completely captivated. "Tah hah hah hahaha. That's a strange

thing, see, I mean that's - " Rick stopped and just looked smiling. "I know!" exclaimed Joe, "has that come out of her imagination or is it an object that she's observed?" It had not sounded like a direct question at all, more a kind of personal wondering. "But does it, is it an object she's made or does it matter?" Rick said smiling. "But it does make us curious about her hah" added Joe. "Hahah" laughed Rick, still smiling. "And the life drawings are quite strong as well" Joe added.

They seemed lured in by Katie's work and this in turn inspired a curiosity about her as a person. I drew back to Joe's comments on the drawing. "Does drawing concern you then?" I asked Joe. He smiled as he answered:

It concerns us when it's bad. I mean, yes. I mean drawing is fundamental and it's part of you know, what we hope to see in the sketchbooks as well eh, but it tends to jump out if it's bad.

Rick picked up the thread:

But the energy in those sketchbooks you see is enough, that, that we'd be worried if the drawing got in the way...of the ideas, you know, you couldn't see your way to a solution because your drawing was so crummy. Whereas she, she works directly in materials as well.

Rick seemed hooked. "Mmmm" agreed Joe. "I mean I think, that's a, that's a banker" said Rick. "That's quite a strong -" agreed Joe. "That's good, that's a strong one" affirmed Rick. "So if you were interviewing someone like this, what would you try to find out at the interview?" I asked them. While Alex sorted and zipped the portfolio closed, Joe and Rick responded one after the other. "We'd probably want to discuss some of those drawings" said Joe. "Hah" smiled Rick:

I suppose we'd try to get her to confirm our faith in her I suppose [...] you know because you can't, can't do much. I mean everybody's nervous in the interview and in the 20 minutes or whatever you've got...you're just trying to make sure that they're...they should be coherent as well, and somebody who's doing a folio like that I think should be, be, will come across as pretty coherent.

Rick raised the idea of a relation between the way that someone worked visually and the person. If the work was “coherent” then it seemed the expectation was that the person was also likely to have those qualities. This relation between the work and the person had appeared in other areas. Likewise, the interview had seemed to be an opportunity for selectors to test out the person in relation to the work and again it became the stated purpose of Katie's interview. Alex closed and lifted the portfolio off to the side. “What school was that Joe?” asked Rick. “That was eh...” he looked back at the form “(X High School)”. “Where is that?” said Rick blankly. “I presume it's in (X)... that's where she's from” concluded Joe. “But it's not one you're familiar with then?” I asked. “No” Joe said quietly. Rick still sounded enthused:

I mean I don't recognise the character of, you know if that's, if that's the influence of the school then tremendous...very energetic department if they're producing that...quantity of work and they're not obsessed by mounting everything and getting it...twee.

As with other areas, I asked Joe, Rick and Alex to take part in the triadic and reflect on all of the applicants we had looked at. Katie was viewed amongst three others: Lana, a mature applicant who had been out of education for some time and was scored at a 3; Brian, again mature, however, a more recent school leaver who had attended two Further Education colleges and was scored at 1-plus; Carla, another school applicant, who was

scored between a 2 and a 3. At times I had been a little unsure of myself during the triadic and, as with other areas began muddled sounding in my explanation and my attempts to be more explicit only seemed to confuse things more. While Alex had been quiet in some of the earlier observations, he now became much more voluble. "Before I leave, could I ask you something?" I said to all three of them:

In terms of the four portfolios, if I was to ask you to, for example, separate them out into two bundles for me - you can split them three and one or two and two, whatever - how would you split them and why? What would be your reasons?

"In terms of -?" said Rick hesitantly. "What do you mean by two bundles? Potential yes or potential no?" asked Joe. "Yeah hah" laughed Rick, "well you've picked..." he started, then trailed off. "You tell me why you would split them" I said. "But I don't understand the criteria for two bundles and not four" said Joe, "one of four hah bundles of one hah" he laughed gently. "Well" I tried again, "just so that you have to have made some discrimination -" "You mean two bundles, yes or no?" said Rick cutting me off. "So you're asking us to find the criteria and then put them in the groups" said Alex. "Yeah" I said, then I tried to explain what would come next: "So you might have decided, based on as you say, yes's and no's and that would be two and then I'll ask you to -" "So you're analysing us! Hah!" laughed Alex. "Hahaha it feels like it doesn't it!" said Joe. "I think what you've done em" said Rick:

Whether it's accidental or not, but you've picked a really quite a good spectrum... of eh folios there. You know you've got one very good one, an extremely good one (Katie's). There's two in the middle which are sort of competent (Lana and Carla), and we would certainly -

Rick had tapped the table as he spoke, when Alex interrupted: "They've got different strengths, haven't they? So, going back to the original question we'd put three groups wouldn't we?" "There'd be three groups" agreed Rick, "there's one dead ringer (Katie) -" "One. Two. One" said Alex with ease. Rick carried on:

Yeah there's two that we would like to talk to - an' you know previously we never did interviews if you remember, we never interviewed anybody, so they got in on the strength of the portfolios. Now it's em...now it's much more interesting 'cause we actually do get to meet the people before.

He paused, then continued: "There's one very strong that would have got in...before the interview system, that student (Katie) probably would have, probably just got an offer without meeting them haha." I wanted to try and get them to be more specific about these qualities and asked:

If you were thinking about the why of these strengths then, is there anything in particular that you recall, that would let you take away the words very good, competent or weak and describe what these mean?

Alex again came in quickly: "Well the one that we're accepting is looking for potential and things, and is prepared to take risks - "Is hugely creative" emphasised Rick. "And had made the majority of things work" continued Alex, "but there are also things in the portfolio that didn't work and I think that's important as well that -" he stopped and looked to his colleagues. "Yeah" agreed Rick. "You know that you take chances with things" continued Alex: "The [...] considerations were very strong. The observational drawing was again strong, but it was varied. It was varied scale, it was varied media...interesting, em so -" Rick made the final comment:

Yeah, although it may well have been, you know somewhere at the back of that, the art department or the school may have been pulling the strings a little bit... they didn't have to pull them too hard...you know, it's one of these things you know that 2 and 2 made 9. Whereas the other ones were doing the, they were competent and they were reasonably talented, but they have put their eggs in one basket.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS

The discussion of Katie added again to the complexity of attempts to understand the processes of decision-making, the why and the how of gaining entry or not. Rick, Joe and Alex had appeared careful in their looking at the paperwork, and had unusually foregrounded the reference as most important: "It's objective as opposed to subjective which the statement's going to be." They hadn't tried to piece together and puzzle all the pieces of paperwork with the visual work at this stage. Indeed what Katie said about herself was not of interest at this point, that was skimmed across and "probably at the stage of going to interview, that's where we'll read that carefully". It was what others said about her and what the visual work communicated that they looked to. While they had been quick to stress that there was "no formula" a number of qualities in the work marked Katie's work out as different and desirable. It was "looser and freer...much more gutsy...no flowers and stuff" and she hadn't been obsessed "by mounting everything and getting it...twee." Katie's portfolio had not been "too consciously designed" in fact it had been "a bit grotty", however, it had signalled "curious solutions" and a "spark of uniqueness...which is what everyone's looking for in a portfolio".

Even when they considered the influence of Katie's educational experience, they concluded that if Katie's school had an effect and "the art department" had "been pulling

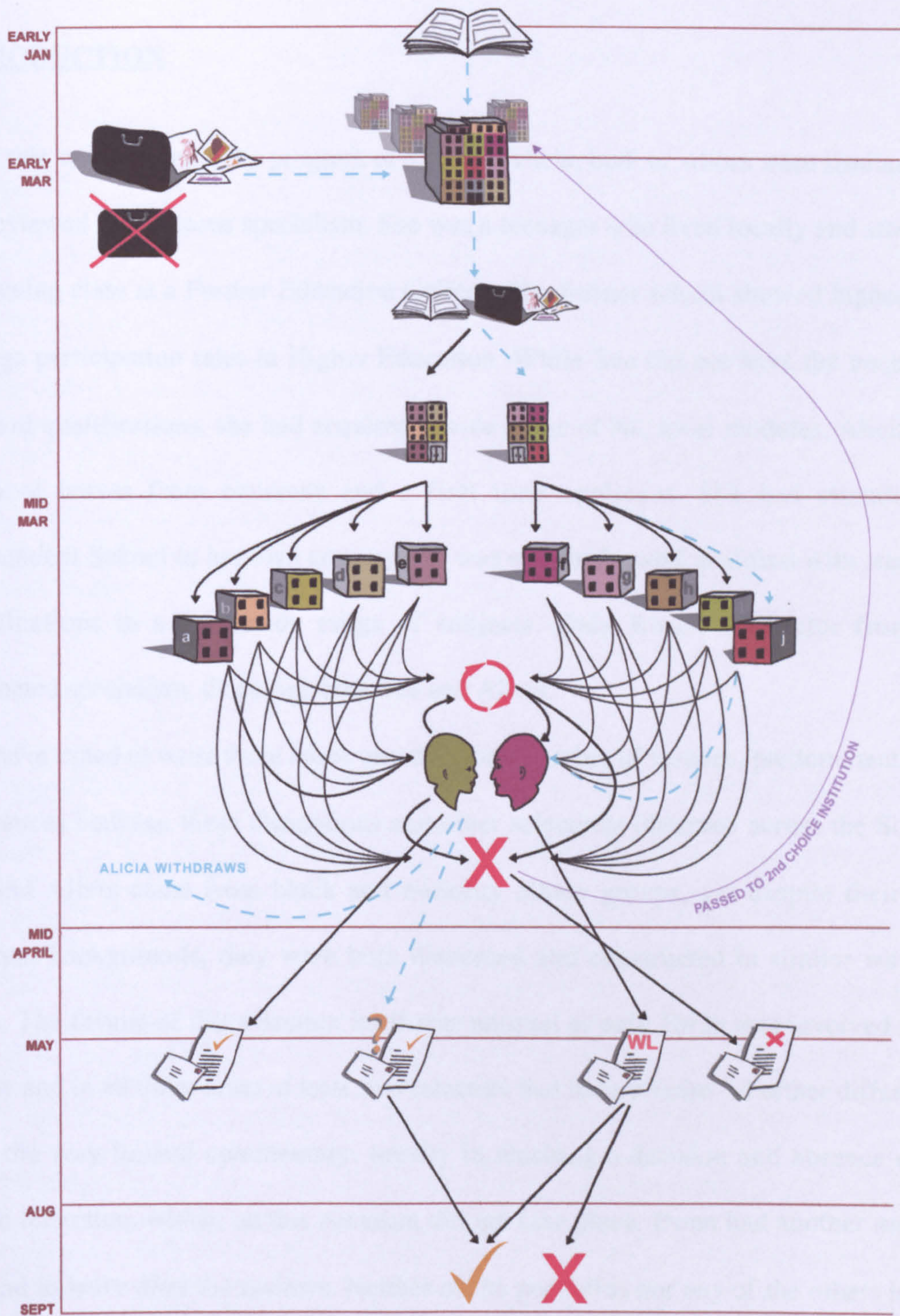
the strings a little bit...they didn't have to pull them too hard". Katie herself was "looking for potential and things" and was "prepared to take risks". Katie's risk taking seemed influential in the review and was pitched at just the right level, as in selectors' minds "a bit of chaos" though "not mess" was "quite healthy". Right from the beginning Katie's work had signalled to them that she did things differently; in her processes "2 and 2" had often "made 9", and this willingness to try new things out meant that there were areas of the portfolio "that didn't work". In this instance, the qualities in the work were reflected back on to the person. Katie's work had not come across as rigid or fixed but was seen as going beyond what and how she might have been taught. These sought-after qualities were also expected to play out in the person and the presumption with Katie was that they would. The interview would be an opportunity to "confirm our faith in her [...] and somebody who's doing a folio like that I think [...] will come across as pretty coherent".

Katie was unique amongst the applicants tracked with these selectors in provoking such a response. Their discussion of the work made her sound just right for the department, the course and the institution. Her work had a level of agency that convinced Rick, Joe and Alex. They were so sure of what she would be like from the visual work, that the interview was thought of as no more than a faith confirming opportunity and she was someone who in the old system would have made it through without an interview. Her work suggested that she could learn in ways that they seemed to want, capable of teaching herself, taking the teaching and making it her own. The response to Katie's work had been bound up in very particular kinds of assertions such

as “quirky”, “lateral thinking”, “suddenly” taking off in “unexpected” or “odd directions”, “curious” and “uniqueness”. The nature of Katie's work seemed to leave no doubts about Katie the person; her qualities convinced them on all levels. While Katie really got hold of and held their attention, they also made clear that there was “no formula” to what they were looking for; because this was how Katie did it, did not mean that was the only way.

The decision-making seemed to happen with ease, with all in agreement and with no struggle or contention. They had seemed engaged with the looking and that had been down to the nature of Katie's work. It had inspired such curiosity at times that they had to get up close to inspect, touch and try and work out how things had been done. They had seemed captivated, constantly taken by surprise at the routes and solutions that Katie's work offered, even those that had not worked. The balance involved in getting and holding on to selectors' attention seemed so finely tuned; too much of the same no matter how good, could be too formulaic, too set, too staid; too risky and maybe you would come across as too difficult, un-teachable. Katie somehow had that balance. In that “business of potential” that selectors looked for, she had prompted certainty, they were sure of her fitting in, of her teachability as well as her ability to teach herself. Like some other applicants who had sparked that same sureness of response from selectors - those who were in the “exact place”, a “dead cert” or would be “a pig in a pigsty” - Katie too was a “banker” and a “dead ringer”.

SUE & ALICIA



	APPLICATION FORM		SPECIALIST GROUPS		CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE
	INSTITUTION		REJECTION		UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE
	PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION		REFERRAL		ACCEPTANCE
	NO SUBMISSION		INTERVIEW		APPLICANT ROUTE
	SPECIALIST SCHOOLS		WL WAITING LIST		

INTRODUCTION

In this section I track the progress of Sue and Alicia, both of whom were similar ages and reviewed by the same specialism. Sue was a teenager who lived locally and attended an evening class at a Further Education College. Her former school showed higher than average participation rates in Higher Education. While Sue did not have the necessary standard qualifications, she had acquired a wide range of NC level modules. Alicia was a school leaver from overseas and a first time applicant. She had attended an Independent School in her own country and was extremely well qualified with standard qualifications in a very wide range of subjects. Only Ewan, a selector from the designated specialism, discussed both Sue and Alicia.

I have opted to write these cases together for a number of reasons, predominantly the differences between these discussions and other selections observed across the School. Sue and Alicia came from black and minority ethnic groups, yet despite their very different backgrounds, they were both discussed and constructed in similar ways by Ewan. The format of this selection itself was unusual as only Ewan was involved in the review and in all other areas at least two selectors had been present⁶⁴. Further differences were the very limited commentary, brevity in reaching a decision and absence of the triadic reflection, which, on this occasion did not take place. Ewan had another meeting and had to leave after the reviews. Neither of the portfolios nor any of the others looked at with Ewan was scored, so it was not possible to gauge where Ewan positioned Sue

⁶⁴ On this occasion disruption due to strike action had interfered with some scheduling and consequently only Ewan had been able to attend on this day.

and Alicia in relation to others. Also, while both applicants made it through to the interview stage, Alicia withdrew her application and only Sue progressed. Sue's interview was conducted by two different selectors and was extremely short. I have opted to use some details from my notes in the final reflections, to give a sense of what happened and this provides some sharp contrast to the approach taken with Ray.

The nature of the discussions reveals my awkwardness around Ewan, a particular discomfort that had not arisen until this observation. They also open up the very direct and pronounced ways in which Ewan's presumed knowledge, cultural constructions and expectations played a key part in his decision-making.

SUE

Sue was the second of seven observations with Ewan who I did not know at all prior to selection. My familiarity with selectors had different effects: sometimes it had allowed me to slot into the process almost too comfortably, with colleagues inviting my comment; at other times there had been a little natural awkwardness that soon faded as the process progressed. On this occasion, however, Ewan and I had no anchor, no knowledge at all of one another. This selection happened much later on and while I felt more confident about the process as a whole, the space was unusually empty. Apart from two other selectors from another specialism also at work in a different part of the room, there was only Ewan and me. During the discussion Ewan rarely spoke and responses were often limited. Coupled with the silence and emptiness of the space I felt particularly awkward. A number of references were made throughout to Sue's ethnic

origin quite specifically and with consideration to the very small number of applicants from this ethnicity, where possible these have been altered to a more generic term. I had seen and heard a lot during the past week of observations and was conscious of reflecting and adjusting my process, however, none of this really prepared me for working with Ewan and his directness of response.

“SHE SEEMS A MORE CONFIDENT MARK MAKER THAN MANY PEOPLE [...] PARTICULARLY FROM HER ETHNIC BACKGROUND. HER WORK ISN'T SORT OF CLICHÉD”

Ewan began to read through Sue's application form. He took a great deal of time and appeared to read with some care, in silence. After a few moments he looked up and said: “Would you be offended if I made my mind up and did this retrospectively?” “How d'you mean, sorry?” I asked. “Sometimes I dither” he replied laughing. I joined in with the laughter, conscious of behaving self-consciously politely: “Well do you want me to pause while you read that Ewan? That's probably better.” Ewan replied with a simple “yes” and proceeded to read again in silence for several minutes, before he pointed to the qualifications section of the form and asked: “Do you know what this is?” I explained what little I knew about Sue's array of modules. This had not seemed an unusual question, as selectors had sometimes been unsure of non-standard qualifications or their equivalency. “I think...if I'm right, the equivalent of a Higher English is Communications 4.” He nodded and continued to look in silence, then said quietly: “19.” There was a long silence. “Is that young or - ?” I said hesitantly trying to get him to speak. “Slightly older than some” he replied, then dropped back into silence as he

read through the paperwork and at the same time flicked through Sue's portfolio.

Finally, unprompted, the quiet broke: "Right. Surprising. Sometimes you flip through and you think...hah oh dear, hahaha." Ewan's laugh was soft. "You mean you can get a sense quite quickly?" I asked. He stopped laughing and carried on: "And sometimes, you feel, I don't know what it is eh..." Ewan's voice trailed off. I could see that he was reading Sue's statement and looking at the work, but was unsure which had prompted the response and what he meant by it. "What was her statement suggesting or saying?" I asked. Ewan replied, unusually in some detail, as he continued to flick through the portfolio:

Em... she...used the words 'design' consistently...which is not usual. People normally, well First Year would refer to...art...eh...and I get the impression that, particularly somebody coming from (her specific ethnic) background, I'm impressed that she do so and that em...drawing is...her mark making is not the prototypically (ethnic) if you know what I mean.

He laughed as he spoke. "No I don't, sorry" I replied awkwardly and with another polite sounding laugh. Ewan continued in the same vein: "Hahaha sometimes they are hahahahah." "Oh I see" I said smiling with him. However, I hadn't seen. I had felt awkward. "You mean, you mean in terms of -" Ewan's laugh grew louder: "(Stylistic) clichés" he interrupted with a laugh. "Ah, okay, right. And, and hers, hers isn't like that?" I asked. "No" he said quietly and more serious sounding. "No. I mean I think the drawings are quite promising." He paused for a few moments then added: "My...(specialist area) colleagues may disagree with me but...given her background I would not hesitate to give her a place even though I haven't seen the whole portfolio."

Ewan had seemed sure and clear at the end. In a very short time and without viewing the entire portfolio, he had decided that Sue should have a place. It seemed that Sue's background was a large part of the rationale, however, I was unsure if I had understood things clearly. Despite his use of the word "promising" the work had not seemed any stronger than some other applicants to different specialisms who had not been selected. Outside of Sue's ethnicity and the presumed relation and impact on her work, I could not understand the logic for his decision. I thought again that maybe I had missed something and perhaps an aspect of her work was particularly suited to a specific medium or way of working provided by the course. "When you were saying 'promising', are you thinking about in terms of a particular area that your department or course offers?" I asked. "No" he replied, "no, no" he added quickly, then paused before a final "no." Ewan carried on, "I, I predict she might go towards (a specialist process) but, who can tell..." he laughed softly and continued: "I may be way wrong there...she might become a multi media freak hahaha."

I felt really awkward around the laughter and tried to steer the conversation to the work: "Does this look like course work or does it -" Ewan interrupted: "Difficult" he said, again soft spoken, though slightly raised. "Given" he paused, then continued: "the slightly unconventional background, I'd be mildly surprised. There's no reference. But there is art and design...in there...so it could well be...well she's at FE." I was not sure about Sue's "unconventional background". There had seemed little unconventional about her experiences. She was local, had left school and attended a Further Education College. This was not uncommon, in fact it had seemed fairly standard. I was still unsure

about Ewan's views on Sue's work and what it was about her that really interested him. He had carried on looking in silence. "Is there anything about this that strikes you as being particularly strong or anything that strikes you as a weakness or -?" I asked.

Ewan seemed to ponder: "Em...well she...she seems a more confident mark maker than many people." He paused again then added: "Eh particularly from her ethnic background. Her work isn't sort of clichéd as they...you know it doesn't sound a very pc thing to say but, hahaha." I thought he had sounded awkward at first, speaking tentatively, then his laugh took over and I was unsure again. "No, but obviously it's part of something that you've picked up on when you look at portfolios -" I began. "Hahaha, yes, yes" he said his laughter dropping off. Ewan had brought it back again to Sue's background and in particular her ethnicity. Even though I had an idea of the limited numbers of applicants from different ethnic groups, I was curious to know Ewan's understanding. "D'you get quite a lot of applicants from other than Glasgow, or Scottish, or other ethnicity?" I asked. Ewan's tone shifted, more serious sounding:

Eh, I, I'm not an authority, I haven't done this for long...but I get the impression not very many. I have to say...[...] I was rather shocked at the complexion of the students. Hah, I mean...in terms of pigmentation.

Ewan's voice was short and gasped sounding. I did not know what to say or how to respond to his expressions. In my awkwardness, I just agreed and moved on quickly: "Yeah, I, I know, it's something that seems to be...evident across the school. So is this someone you'd be interested in interviewing?" "Oh definitely" Ewan replied quickly and assuredly. "Yeah?" I repeated. "Yes" he confirmed and moved on to the next applicant.

ALICIA

Alicia was fifth in the line of seven applicants tracked with Ewan. The commentary on Alicia was even more limited than that of Sue's. However, again it illustrated the part that Ewan's expectations played in decision-making. This time the rationale for acceptance was bound up in assumptions about the work, ability and opportunity based on Ewan's knowledge of where Alicia came from. Ewan's expectations of Alicia seemed tinged with an odd mix of empathy juxtaposed with almost colonial overtones. The discussion took place in the same space, however, in the absence of the other selection team.

**“I’VE SEEN A LOT OF PORTFOLIOS FROM NON EUROPEAN COUNTRIES
AND I’D HAVE NO DIFFICULTY OFFERING THIS LADY A PLACE”**

Ewan began again by reading the paperwork and appeared concentrated. He took a deep breath and commented:

Something one has to have an eye to with overseas students, particularly from (these) countries is whether they would...be able to pay the fees if one offered them a place and I suspect from the parental occupation that would be possible.

He had sounded helpful, as though he had been informing me of something very practical. He quickly returned to the form and spent several minutes reading in total silence. Finally I asked: “Are you quite interested Ewan in anything in this statement, how it relates back to work experience or -?” I had asked this question as Ewan had

appeared to show interest in this area with other applicants and felt I was struggling to get the conversation going. Ewan spoke as he read:

Eh yes, she refers to work experience and also...an A level course, I'm just checking...em she writes very well, particularly as somebody who, presumably English is her second language. It's not to say that somebody hasn't helped her write this but... it sounds like her.

He smiled and gave a short sighed laugh “hah”, then continued:

Eh I'm impressed by, I mean I know (where she comes from) a little bit hah em...she seems to be taking full advantage of the limited opportunities available to somebody in that part of the world...and has quite a mature perception of what she wants to do in this year.

He paused and read aloud from Alicia's statement: “She also refers to working on a school magazine and...eh...performing [...] poetry in English.” Ewan flicked through the pages of the form and again read in silence, then added: “And she has... something of a social conscience.” “What does she say that -?” I asked quickly. Ewan interrupted: “In terms of charity work with children eh”, he paused and flicked the page again, then paused and added: “Eh...I'm not expecting her portfolio to be...ravishing hahaha.” “This is a small package that you're opening up” I said. “I expect it to be some slides” said Ewan, and then once inside the tightly wrapped package noted: “There's a list here of...of 11 images...and some photographs of sketchbook work.” It all seemed painfully slow. He looked at the photographs and slides silently, then added: “Which are not outstanding...but by local...terms I would say are very...credible.”

“Do you mean her local terms?” I asked. “Yeah” he replied. He paused again as he looked more closely at the slides and finally observed: “The work appears to be all... drawing and painting which doesn't surprise me at all...some of the drawing is quite strong”. He offered the slide sheet to me: “Yeah” I said squinting to see the work as I held it up to the light from the window, “this is a portrait head”. Ewan carried on looking at the slides for some time. As there was no slide viewer he also held the package up to the light. “Are there ones you feel are stronger then?” I asked him. “Well” he paused “I've seen a lot of portfolios from -”, Ewan paused again and appeared to choose and speak his words carefully:

Non European countries and I'd have no difficulty offering this lady a place. Although I have to say some people...may not share my...enthusiasm hah and they may read it, may read the material rather...unfairly.

Ewan had laughed lightly throughout. I was curious about what seemed a sympathetic approach, whether it was his understanding, real or constructed of where Alicia came from that caused him to look at the work in this way.

So because of your understanding of the context that she is working within is that allowing you to look at the work differently from em, if she wasn't from that particular context?

“I suspect so, yes...hahmmm” Ewan replied, again with a smile and slight laugh. “In a positive way?” I asked, unsure of what he meant. “Yes. Yes, I'd have no hesitation in offering her a place and the fact that she's an overseas student who is able to pay is a

benefit hah.” In only a slightly longer time than Sue, Ewan had made up his mind and I switched off the tape.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS

The unfamiliarity and working alone with Ewan, led to a very different kind of feel to these particular selections. Other than myself, there was no one to deflect Ewan's responses. He looked and spoke to me. I had been surprised by his directness, or as he himself had described it, not sounding “very pc.” I thought that Ewan had sounded self-conscious at times, careful in his choice of words yet had referred so much to Sue and Alicia's ethnicity and used expressions such as “pigmentation” and “(stylistic) clichés” that I had not known how to react to. These words jerked and more so because they appeared polite and decent sounding in tone. I had felt somehow more implicated in the process and less confident at how to behave. In other areas, there had been at least two and often three selectors, enough to divert and question one another and allow the dialogue to shift and develop. This had been key, that they had often questioned one another. The grappled consciences and ethics often came from selectors themselves. Here, there was only Ewan and me. I listened and prompted, however, had felt much less comfortable being on my own with Ewan, and that had established a very different kind of engagement and dialogue.

As he said so little, I noticed more about Ewan's actions. He had appeared to focus strongly on the paperwork and took considerable time to read through the material in what seemed like great detail. He had often commented on applicants' ability to write as

well as their job experiences. This latter area in particular had been unusual, as few other selectors had mentioned that side at all. He had not seemed overly concerned by qualifications or references. However, it did seem that it was from the paperwork that he constructed his picture of applicants.

In the case of Sue there had been so many presumptions about how she had been expected to perform in relation to her ethnicity and background. Sue's use of language and the term design over art had been noted immediately as unusual, not just for a First Year applicant but in particular for "somebody coming from (her specific ethnic) background". Her drawing and mark making had been singled out as "more confident", not "prototypically (ethnic)" and her background too had been described as "unconventional", even though, on paper at least it had seemed very conventional.

The unconventional nature of Sue, if there had been one, seemed bound up in Ewan's expectations of how someone from her ethnic background might work. Sue's unconventionality seemed to lie strangely in her very conventionality. She had not performed to Ewan's more stereotypical ideas of how someone from her ethnicity might, in his mind at least, have been expected. Despite being British, living locally, and attending school and college in the area, it seemed that Sue's ethnicity led her to be viewed as someone *other*. It came across as though he had expected something else from Sue, yet not surprisingly she represented few of these assumptions. She had not met Ewan's suppositions about anticipated cultural style, language or content. In minutes and with little visible struggle or dilemma, he had decided "given her background" to "give her a place".

I wondered how this would play out at Sue's interview, when Ewan was not there. Two different selectors, Sian and Mark, conducted the interview. The only notes about Sue's portfolio that they had to go on were Ewan's: "A very positive portfolio". The interview was very relaxed and while Mark nodded and acknowledged responses, it was Sian who took the lead with questions. Sue looked nervous and was extremely quiet as she sat down. Sian smiled and commented quickly that she remembered her from the Open Day, then asked Sue the quite standard: "Why do you want to come to art school?" Sue replied briefly that she had always dreamed of this and wanted to be some where with the reputation of this School. When asked why she was interested in this course more specifically, Sue explained that she wanted this because there would be more job opportunities at the end of it.

Sue seemed painfully quiet and Sian shifted the conversation to a question about the kinds of things that Sue liked. In amongst art related terms such as collages and abstraction, Sue mentioned shopping. "What shops do you like?" asked Sian, then before Sue could answer, skirted quickly into why and "where are your favourite parts of the city?"

This was so different from the kinds of questions I remembered from Ray's interview. When the questioning was pulled back to art, Sue replied that she only knew two artists, both well know early 20th century painters. "I don't really know any others" she added. "How would you feel about group critiques and working in a group?" asked Sian, "have you done this before?" "I get nervous" said Sue. When Sue was finally asked if she had any questions, she said quickly: "What is the course like?" Sian

explained and mentioned all kinds of other things that went on in the School, including the Degree Show. "I've never seen the Degree Show" replied Sue, "whose work is in it?" Sue seemed to know very little about the School, the course she had applied to, artists or designers, even the Degree Show that marked the culmination of four years of study seemed to elude her. I was unsure where this would go. Others had not got this far because of that very kind of lack of knowledge. After Sue left, Sian and Mark looked at one another and exchanged a simple "yes". "I think she'll do alright" said Sian "she's determined in her own quiet way". I could not help thinking of some of the other interviews I had sat in on, how relaxed this one had seemed, so very different from the tough questioning of others.

Alicia caused even less deliberation than Sue had. Ewan had declared his knowledge of the part of the world that Alicia came from early on, and it seemed this had affected how he viewed the work. It led him to be "impressed" by what Alicia had achieved. These achievements signalled that this was someone who had been "taking full advantage of the limited opportunities available to somebody in that part of the world." Again Ewan appeared sympathetic to Alicia's circumstances, yet his knowledge of where she came from seemed to lead to lower expectations. Her ability in writing and her social conscience were achievements. Even prior to looking, Alicia's portfolio had not been expected to be "ravishing" and her work had been described as "not outstanding...but by local...terms...very... credible."

Ewan's reading of Alicia was considerate of how he perceived her circumstances. However, I found Ewan's ideas troubling. There was fixedness in how Alicia was known

to him and at times his words shifted into a kind of colonial discourse of predictability, normativity and otherness⁶⁵. Like Sue, Alicia too had confounded his expectations. She had performed better than he had expected, in what she had written, said about herself and the work she had made. It was how he knew and fixed Sue and Alicia that, on this occasion, seemed to lead to their acceptance.

These discussions raised a number of important questions about the process. The possibility of positive discrimination based on ethnicity⁶⁶ is introduced, as is selection based on potential. However, here these are linked to very pronounced ideas and takes on cultural difference. While selectors had often searched for difference, in this case any diversity that Sue and Alicia might have brought was bypassed in the discussion. Ewan's deliberations had appeared straightforward, with no self-searching or interrogation. Any knowledge Ewan had of Sue and Alicia did not render their complexity, but appeared only to overly essentialise. He never really reflected on what either Sue or Alicia said about themselves, nor did he articulate what he expected from the work for entry. His expectations were based solely on his constructions of them.

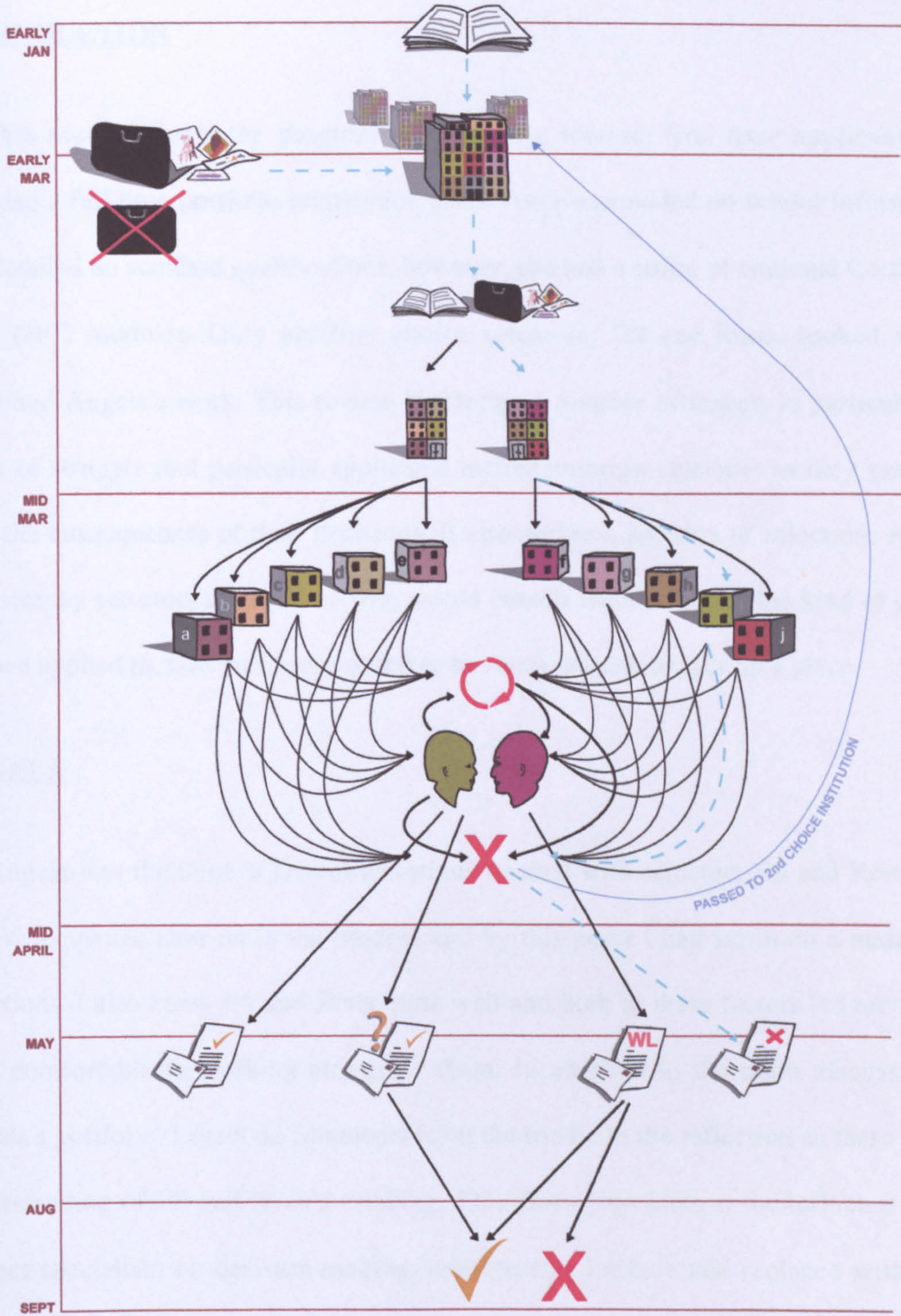
⁶⁵ Ewan had been kindly and decent sounding in a way that reminded me of a short story that I'd read at school. In *After you my dear Alphonse* (Jackson, 2000), Johnny, a young, white American boy brings his black, African American friend Boyd, home after school. The story revolves around Johnny's mother's over sensitivity to her son's joking around with his friend and her constant questioning and presumptions of Boyd's life, parents, even eating habits. She is constantly surprised by how similar his life is to that of her own family to the point that she gets upset at him for not meeting her expectations. Her reaction writes (McGrath, 2000: xiv), shows the "stereotyping tendency of a certain sort of well meaning liberal". Ewan's approach felt similar.

⁶⁶ I've consciously opted to use the term ethnicity over race as the application form uses this term specifically and also in recognition that shifts between terms are potentially problematic as King's (2003) article in *The Guardian* in relation to the newly created *Office for Fair Access* (OFFA) also suggests. Here, access, widening participation and inclusion are used interchangeably, however, she argues mean very different things. Without definition, the dangers are that complex terms are taken to mean the same thing and require the same kind of action. This is evident too in the *Race Relations Discrimination Amendment Act* (2000), where race and ethnicity are used interchangeably, without clarification of etymology or shifts in meaning.

I had found the observation alongside Ewan particularly difficult. I did not know him and working alone with him had been awkward. I had felt unsure of how to handle his directness and the many silences were frustrating. Other discussions had often been fraught with questions and challenge between selectors, while Sue and Alicia's had seemed empty in comparison. Despite the directness of comments, there was also a kind of anxiety around terminology, made apparent when Ewan declared his words as "not very pc" and I felt that anxiety in myself too. I had wanted to challenge more but instead became overly careful in my engagement and felt myself acquiescing, just wanting it to be over. I wondered if this was Ewan being careful or guarded in what he said and what might have been spoken in another context?

Perhaps that had been the most difficult part, that there had been no others, including myself, to challenge the observations. Up until now, even during the initial nerves, I had felt that my understanding of some of the idiosyncrasies of the process allowed me to open things up. Not here. Sue and Alicia were never discussed with any struggle, and instead seemed fixed and determined wholly by Ewan's personal views. It was how *he* saw Sue and Alicia's culture, background and opportunities and *his* view of *their* worlds that steered the outcome.

ANGELA



	APPLICATION FORM		SPECIALIST GROUPS		CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE
	INSTITUTION		REJECTION		UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE
	PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION		REFERRAL		ACCEPTANCE
	NO SUBMISSION		INTERVIEW		APPLICANT ROUTE
	SPECIALIST SCHOOLS		WL WAITING LIST		

INTRODUCTION

This section charts the progress of Angela, a mature, first time applicant who attended a full time portfolio preparation class. Angela provided no school information and detailed no standard qualifications, however, she had a string of National Certificate level (NC) modules. Only her first choice selectors, Jill and Rona, looked at and discussed Angela's work. This review highlights a number of issues, in particular the kinds of struggle that particular applicants incited amongst selectors as they grappled with the consequences of their decisions. It also shows a paradox of selection; Angela was seen by selectors as someone who would benefit from being on the kind of course she had applied to, however, was not felt to be *ready* enough to take up a place.

ANGELA

Angela was the third of five observations tracked with selectors Jill and Rona. The review happened later on in the process and by this point I had sat in on a number of selections. I also knew Jill and Rona quite well and both of these factors led me to feel very comfortable in working alongside them. In addition to the main discussion of Angela's portfolio, I draw on fragments from the triadic in the reflection as these add to understanding of Jill and Rona's thinking. This discussion hints at the influence of the subject specialism on decision-making, referred to a lot here and replaced with more generic terms. It also reinforces the idea of selectors trying to see beyond the influence of teachers and courses and introduces expectations in relation to maturity and quite forcefully reinforces the emotional struggle of selection. While Angela was scored at the

lowest, a 1, she was seen as someone with potential, however, did not make it through to the interview stage.

“I JUST DON'T THINK THERE ARE ENOUGH... HITS, THERE ARE TOO MANY MISSES IN THIS FOLDER”

Jill and Rona began by searching for the application form. As Jill read out the portfolio number from the sticker on the portfolio, Rona searched, with some difficulty, for the application form. “Okay” said Rona as she browsed through the book of application forms. “(College A)” added Jill as she read aloud from the identifying sticker on the portfolio. Rona continued her search for the form as Jill unzipped the portfolio and began to slowly turn the pages of the sketchbooks. She appeared to look closely and carefully. “Right so, where's she from?” said Rona as she scanned Angela's form. “(College A)” said Rona. “Portfolio preparation” added Jill. “Where's (College A)?” asked Rona⁶⁷.

They read in silence and then spoke very quietly, each voice rolling on top of the other as they moved back and forth between the pages of the form. “Right, so” said Rona. “So it's all...SCOTVEC” added Jill. “Is she...what's N, oh it's National Certificate” said Rona. “Yeah, yeah” confirmed Jill. “Right so she's em a mat-, mature, is she a mature student?” Rona asked. “Yeah, yeah, she must be mmm-huh” said Jill. “And she's done -” Rona paused and flicked through the pages: “Em right so she's...brought up (several) children, some part-time work right”. “Mmmm uh huhmm”

⁶⁷ I knew this College quite well. It was local and was able to explain where it was located. Neither Jill nor Rona had knowledge of the College or the course that Angela was studying on.

said Jill. "Right...so she's probably someone who's always been interested in coming to art school" continued Rona. "Uh huhmm" overlapped Jill. There was a long silence as they each read the statement. Finally, both spoke, muffled sounding, again each after the other, "Uh-huh", "Mmm-huh". The pitch of Jill's voice shifted as she finished reading: "Straightforward" she said clearly. "Uh-hummm" added Rona. "Look at the reference?" asked Jill flicking to the back page. They each went back to the form and carried on reading Angela's references. "She enjoys discussion and debate and group work" said Jill reading aloud. "Uh-huh, strong sense of pattern em" she continued, "it all supports em what she says she's interested in, I mean that's what these say she's good at".

I was curious about the seemingly careful reading of the paperwork prior to looking at the visual material and asked: "Was there anything about the form or statement?" "No" said Jill quickly and assuredly, "nothing". "Nothing stands out?" I asked. "Nothing at all" she said, then added:

Em... the only comment I would make is that in the past it's been great having maturer students on the course and that it works for the other students as well.

Jill paused then looked again to the portfolio: "Sketchbook" she said. They looked through the work, silently. "Can you see what they're doing here?" I asked. Jill responded quickly:

Yeah, yeah. They're, it's obviously a project on animals and em that's how, I mean it's not obvious from the visual research that that's how it started out, but from the cover you can see the start of an animal print and just as you go through there's some black and white photocopies of snake skins and leopards and giraffes.

Rona nodded as Jill spoke. I wanted to know more about their response to Angela's approach and asked: "Would this be a - not standard - but a kind of familiar way of working, of taking something through a process?" Jill explained:

Well...It could be but what I would have been looking for em, some original research, where maybe she was regarding animals in different ways, whether it was through her own photography or drawing or whatever, I would have liked to have seen a bit of that. I'm not saying that it's bad, but because that's missing in it, she's just come straight from photocopy, it means that the value of the investigation is not fully there.

Rona gave a series of "yeahs" and then added:

I was kinna hoping to find her looking, I mean she's looking at [...] animals. I'd like to see her drawing while looking [...], it's kind of almost beginning at a secondary source an' I think that is affecting the colour because the colour is kin' of em kinna coming out of her, the top of her head sort of thing, it's not really...based on observation...so em...but it's the first sketchbook hah.

Jill nodded and "uh-huhd" throughout and as they moved through the portfolio added:

It jumps around quite a lot, there's repetition, it's actually not seeing an idea right through and that could well be because she's used a secondary source of investigation.

They flicked through, "mmming" and "uh-huhing" as each other spoke. Rona commented in detail on the work:

I think...since it looks like it's heavily weighted into these animal prints it'd be quite nice to see, I mean I think it'd be helpful for her to have a lot of em, I mean almost like a set of photos about animals. There's just the one and em...generally I don't think we really encourage drawing from photographs but...if you were going to you'd probably need some more close up details of that to get...you know like accuracy of information.

They continued looking through the sketchbooks silently. Then, as if questioning herself, Rona noted: "It sounds like she's on a course that's strongly to do with sort of processes and maybe not...the starting points aren't there". She paused then "mmm'd". Each turn of the page was slow and sounded weighty as they scanned every sheet. The looking seemed careful, each piece of work scrutinised as though undergoing diagnosis. Rona shifted the discussion from the detail of the work to ideas about Angela's learning and what she needed at this point in time:

I think also this, the kind of career of someone of this...maturity, you know like...I think it's not, for me, I don't think it's got enough em...the level of inquiry so far I don't think's deep enough to em -

Rona drew breath in through her teeth as she added:

Tseeee...I don't know, I mean it's like, it's probably like [...] it sounds like...a course that's strongly to do with sort of processes but maybe not the starting point...it's like it's, probably like it should be...she needs to be on a kind of [...] a broad course [...] it's getting targeted too soon I think towards an outcome [...] rather than hard looking at things, analysis of subject before you begin, a breadth of ways of looking at something in two and three dimensions...I'm almost saying she's maybe, she's someone that would benefit from doing First Year hah but I don't know if she's ready to do, if she's good enough to get in at this stage.

Rona's voice trailed off and Jill "mmmd" and nodded throughout. Angela was already on a portfolio preparation course yet from what was said it seemed that she needed exposure to a different kind of teaching. "Right. I see what you mean" I said "so this might reflect something that's been open to her as a direction in terms of the course?" Rona came in quickly: "Uh-huh...yeah, maybe it's wrong...I'm not sure." She'd sounded hesitant and spoken faintly, then continued:

I mean I'm thinking on eh someone coming on to, eventually getting a career in (this area) I think...eh it's a very competitive area and we have to be em...you've got to be very articulate and I don't know if...em...the work's ready for...a degree course.

The comments seemed to shift from the visual work to the person. Despite Angela's maturity of age, perhaps neither she nor her work was ready. Angela seemed to present a contradiction: she was someone who “would benefit from doing First Year”, however, they were unsure if *she* or her *work* was *articulate* or *ready* enough.

They carried on looking, again in silence, this time out of the sketchbooks and into the body of the portfolio. It was a slow, again seemingly careful looking that finally led to more questions over the subject specialism being brought into play.

I mean I think [...] I don't know if it's (this area). I don't know if there's, I'm not seeing any specific (specialist) awareness you know...tseeeee hmmm.

Rona had sighed as she spoke. They each carried on looking and I wondered whether Angela just had not selected the most appropriate first choice. I asked them both: “Would this, I mean, would this be someone then, are you thinking that this isn't the area for her?” Jill answered quickly:

No I think this could be, but it's what Rona was saying earlier in a way her thinking...as of yet is not quite mature enough to actually deal with art school, 'cause it is a really hard course but you can see her, her thinking is actually quite limited through the work. She isn't, she isn't developing the idea, she develops lots of different techniques around one idea and that's not enough, you know you've got to see the offshoots of an idea, you've got to see sometimes unusual crossings of ideas but not just hammering it through lots of different techniques. Which you do find in a lot of the folders, people are just taking one idea and hammering it through different ideas - em techniques - it's not enough.

Rona had “mmmd” and “yeahd” softly. Then for the first time their responses pulled apart. Rona questioned whether this specialism was the right choice: “Is it (this specialism)?” she asked. Jill felt it could be: “She's got quite a nice sense of placement and in places really nice sense of colour.” “But at the same point” interjected Rona, “yeah, but at the same point,” she continued:

As well I think for (this specialism), although she's interested in (that specific process), I mean it is a broad based course initially, it's a broad based First Year course then in the department [...] she wouldn't be able to specialise immediately. We wouldn't want that either so...you know.

As well as the course that Angela was currently on, they had made a number of references previously to the effects of teaching on applicants' work. I wondered how or if they thought about Angela's work in relation to other applicants we had looked at to this point:

How do you think about this in relation say to the last one from (School A), when you were saying that there was a recognition that perhaps within that school or course someone might be saying to them you need to move your ideas?

They each “mmmd” and nodded. “Yeah you need to separate yourself out” said Rona. “Does that come into your head at all?” I added. Jill responded quickly: “Yeah it does, em because I think it's quite important you, you hold on to the different styles in different folios we're seeing. But I think the, the - “ Jill paused then carried on: “I think as mu - “ She paused again, then explained clearly:

It doesn't matter how much advice a teacher gives, at the end of the day the last school student because of her composition and the way she laid things out, her

selective process, her analysis was there. Not in all of it but her analysis was there. This student isn't quite analysing the situation and therefore allowing the idea to progress so that's the problem here, that's the difference I would say.

Rona came in equally quickly:

I think, I would agree with that, I think she hasn't done, I would say for any course in the art school, there's not enough em...analytical analysis of the starting point [...]. I think equally...it would have to be a sustained interest in drawing and understanding the subject as a starting point so...I mean.

It seemed that Angela's work did not have the level of analysis or understanding to inform where it currently was or where it might go. The discussion pushed this further, with Rona taking it back to issues of advice and information:

I mean...I don't know if this person's just started to think about coming to art school, maybe they need to go to em, maybe get on a course that would provide them...I mean I, I don't know, maybe, I'm thinking something like what (Portfolio Course A) can do. That's a kind of, like a grounding almost.

Rona paused and stressed: "I mean she is at a portfolio preparation course so maybe it's...emmm -" she paused again and looked at the portfolio: "I don't know it's -" her voice trailed away, then picked up again:

I think she's almost not done enough to know what course she wants to go on, how to target it, there's not enough of kind of an underpinning I think for her to make up her mind almost.

They each looked for a few more seconds, then Jill said clearly: "I just don't think there are enough...hits, there are too many misses in this folder." Her voice was animated in

expression, “and that's the way you work it out” she added. “Yeah I'm trying to be sort of -” said Rona less sure sounding. Jill continued:

If you've got about you know four hits and you know, there are some misses then you know you go for them, but she's the other way round unfortunately. But she could, I mean there are glimmers there and it's a shame, hopefully you know she won't give up but then they don't get that feedback from the art school do they?

Rona had “mmd” as Jill spoke then said quietly:

Maybe she needs to think [...] I mean it might be that she's got some...goal that she wants to achieve, eh it might not be a degree course. You know it might, she maybe needs to think through what is it I want to do and what's the best course to get on to allow me to do that you know. 'Cause...I think it's a wee bit mis...directed at this stage. I mean it says she's just been doin' this for the past couple of years, so maybe she has to...em...give it some hard thought you know. Apply some time to it and get a wee plan for the next four years or something hah. You know if it's something serious that she wants to...do.

Rona's words had come together slowly. Jill closed and zipped shut the portfolio and brought the looking to an end. I was still curious about their observations, how clear they had been about what Angela needed, what questions to ask of herself. “Is that something that's just too difficult to contemplate” I asked them, “how you give that kind of feedback?” “Well I would want it” said Jill, “wouldn't you?” She carried on:

I mean if you were, you were turned down from something you want, and you still wanted it, you would want to know what you should do to, you know.

Rona had nodded and “uh-huhd” as Jill spoke, then added:

Yes 'cause I think it's not just getting in or not getting in here. I mean it's, it seems to me she'll get rejected from here and then she may just go away and give up or

she may try again and again and maybe it's more an advisory, proper advice it might not be the right course for her ultimately but there is advice as to what this person should do longer term you know.

They both seemed so clear about Angela and I wondered how an applicant could get this information:

In terms of listening to what you were saying there was quite, I think clear things in your mind about what was lacking, which suggests that in terms of information for someone, you were quite clear –

“Yeah yeah” agreed Jill. Rona “mmmmmd”. “But” I continued, “do you think there's a problematic in that it'd become too difficult in terms of people looking for -” Jill interrupted and answered quickly:

Well I think we're making comments anyway, so one could just add to that if there was some sort of feedback column, you would fill it in with that you know, which could be relayed over the telephone or sent out with, with their folders when returned.

Rona added to this train of thought:

I think it's probably better I think to get feedback from people that actually look at the folios, because I think sometimes [...] you write a comment some of it is to remind yourself as to how to sort out one folio from the other.

“Like shorthand?” I asked Rona.

Yeah it is a kind of shorthand but at the same point, Jill and I could recall because we're doing this we could recall that folio if that person wanted information it would be best to come from us and -

Rona's words trailed off. I tried to tease it out further: "Rather than via?" Rona replied in detail:

Well I think then, uh-huh, because I think it gets...you know, because it's not actually in written, it's a shorthand, it can get interpreted the wrong way and I think em I mean some people are at school and they're just going through a process of applying to art school and if they don't get in it'll not make much odds; they'll just apply for the next thing or they might get a job, but other people might be a real em...they're gonna organise their lives around this if there's a chance.

"Yeah" said Jill assuredly, "like this woman is yeah yeah". "Like this woman" continued

Rona:

She's had children, she's now thinking right I've now got space in my life or I'll have space in the next four years, I can see an opening, how do I channel it an' she can probably, she could just keep putting in a folio here every year but it would be, it might not be the best thing but...some advice could maybe help her you know. Em I think people's age too for a career in (this specialism) - I don't mean - I'm not being ageist but I'm thinking like seriously like the kind of level of em...kind of the stamina of what is a possible life-style, to think ahead to that, to think do I want that, can I cope with that -

Jill had "yeahd" up until the last sentence, then quickly cut Rona off. "Oh not true!"

Jill exclaimed, "I don't agree with that at all, some of our best students have been mature students who have coped -" "Oh yes! No!" exclaimed Rona. She sounded like there had been some terrible misunderstanding. "Tremendously with families and everything -" continued Jill. "No!" exclaimed Rona with the same sense of urgency: "I'm not saying that - I know the mature students have come through and I think they have but in some ways it's like maybe -" "But they're coping once they've left" said Jill. "She needs to

“speak - oh absolutely!” exclaimed Rona: “But I think you know looking at that folio, you know I don't get -” Rona paused then tried to explain further:

I think to get, you know, to be made aware of that you know that...em...you know, 'cause it might help them direct what they want to do. I mean it doesn't mean to say, you don't have to have that kind of life in the fast lane eh...mode of, you don't have to have that lifestyle just in (this profession), you could equally have quite a, you know work in a studio and em you know have an agent or something. But I think to be aware of the options could help somebody focus, is this really what they want, how do they achieve it?

Rona's words had shifted from what appeared as an almost panicked response to Jill's reaction to a more hesitant, quiet and awkward tone. It had seemed a real misunderstanding and I had not wanted to leave it hanging like that. I spoke to Rona:

If I'm understanding what you're saying perhaps your feelings from the portfolio are that em she's involved at this point in what she's doing but not maybe seeing what lies ahead - engaging at the moment -

“Uh-huh” began Rona, “I think it's quite em -” her words faded. Jill picked it up:

But I think, I think it's wrong to discriminate between her and other applicants I really do because I think equally they can be just as uninformed or naïve about it, an' I think -

Rona came back in again:

Yeah I'm not, but then, then in some ways I'm trying to be positive with her because I think because em she has responsibilities and she is older then she should be em...made more aware because...like someone that's just applied at 17 and gets another opportunity then they might be on another track an' then they've got something, whereas this person I think should have the advantage of knowing the options because they don't have the time to...you know they're not just gonna

fall...I mean she's actually making a conscious effort now after having done one thing to do something else.

Jill seemed to agree, “mmm yeah”. “So she should do that knowing, in full knowledge of...how to...you know -” said Rona, then her words eased off again. “I understand what you're saying” I said. “ Yeah” added Jill. Rona tried again to explain:

I mean you know like kids have got a teacher, I mean I know she's at a course but...em maybe she's not at the best course for her needs at this time...I don't know.

I still was not sure that Rona had explained what she meant. Jill looked at us both: “Okay?” she said and drew the looking to a close. However, Angela had continued to unsettle right to the very end of the process. Even when we had shifted to the next tracked applicant, Rona had deliberated again over the decision. As she completed the selection form with Angela's score and notes, she seemed to speak hesitantly:

But see this one, I would say we wouldn't give this person an interview, but at the same point she's not an out and out, I mean do we have to then just put a 'no'?

Jill replied quickly. “My only worry Rona is that...I would say, I understand why you're being hesitant em...but the, looking at her folio, would she cope with doing First Year?” she asked. “No” replied Rona. “No” confirmed Jill. “So she's a no” said Rona. “Yeah” said Jill. “But -” said Rona. “I'm afraid so” said Jill “they've got to be in a position to take on the First Year”. “Yeah I know” said Rona.

Rona had more or less said this herself earlier, however, she seemed to struggle with the stark ‘yes’ or ‘no’ options for Angela. However, Jill had been clear and direct in her

reasoning. Despite my sense that they wanted to do more, they had reached agreement within the mechanisms available to them. They had not opted to interview; the work had signalled a lack of readiness that, in this case, they felt was also a reflection on Angela herself.

REFLECTION ON THE PROCESS

Before they shifted their attention to the visual material, Jill and Rona had undertaken what appeared a detailed and careful reading of the paperwork. They had taken considerable time over this as they tried to match up what was written with what appeared in the visual work. When Rona and Jill shifted their looking into the body of the portfolio, each page of work was looked at with the same apparent care and time. They had concluded quickly that the strong sense of pattern and colour noted by one of her referees had been seen to support “what she says she's interested in, that's what they say she's good at”.

The looking had seemed penetrative as they tried to see past the influence and direction of teachers and courses in an attempt to get to the person. In Angela's case, although they had little knowledge of the programme she was on, they had been quite critical, it seemed like one: “that's strongly to do with sort of processes and maybe not the starting points.” It became clear early on that Angela had a number of factors stacked against her that seemed to stem from the limited sources of advice and information available to her, as well as the almost benign nature of the course they felt she was on. While Angela was someone “that would benefit from doing First Year”

neither Jill nor Rona had been sure that *she* was *ready* for the course she had applied to or indeed for any course at art school. However, during the triadic Rona had suggested that in “the right environment” and “peer group” Angela *could* one day be “ready”.

Unfortunately for Angela, she had not had “the right advice or opportunities or come from the kind of experience, background” to allow her to develop. She was already on a college programme however, it seemed that she was not in the right place to get the kinds of knowledge and information she needed to “target” and “channel” herself and her work. Had Angela been able to access Jill and Rona's advice, perhaps she could have been directed to the kinds of experience she needed and be shown “the level [...], the type of work” and “know what the standard is”. While Angela's work showed “glimmers,” there was also a “lack of [...] (specialist) experience” and because of that, they did not know if “she could actually deal with the First Year course”. In Angela's case, it seemed that the qualities of the person and their work were inextricably bound together as Rona and Jill interwove the lack of readiness or immaturity of the visual work with the individual.

Jill and Rona had both been clear in what they looked for. A portfolio was not just about “different techniques around one idea”, that wasn't enough; “you've got to see [...] offshoots [...] unusual crossings”. The work had to go beyond what was taught. More than that, on this occasion it was also thinking ahead, to a “career in (this area) [...] it's a very competitive area and [...] you've got to be very articulate and I don't know if...em...the work's ready for...a degree course”. Yet despite the lack of

readiness Angela had not seemed an “out and out no”; there were flickers of interest, however, not enough “sparks” in the work to make it to interview. The visual work had not convinced them that *she* was ready for that next stage and this combined idea of readiness of both the person and the artwork was a key dilemma.

Rona and Jill's responses suggested that gaining entry required particular kinds of exposure and experience; knowledge of processes of working, the environment you would work in, being amongst peers who knew what the standard was and who really wanted to be in art school. It seemed that Angela would have a huge leap of understanding to make if she was to navigate entry and she had not “done enough to know what course she wants to go on, how to target it”. She had to develop her work differently and understand what kinds of processes to employ and why. She had to know where to go to find out how to do this, as well as what art school really was about. She had to understand all of her options and more specifically what the specialism involved.

Angela had evoked particular discussion and struggle between Jill and Rona over what she stood to lose through rejection. Both had tried “to be positive with her” because she had “responsibilities and she is older”. That meant that Angela “should have the advantage of knowing the options” because unlike younger applicants who might get “another opportunity”, they sensed that Angela had fewer chances, more was at stake and the odds perhaps higher. Angela's age and although not verbalised, possibly her background too, signalled to them that this was her “chance”, “space”, “opening”; something she would “organise” her life around. Although in age Angela

was mature, that did not play out in the visual work; for “this...maturity [...] the level of inquiry so far I don't think's deep enough”, the “thinking” wasn't “quite mature enough”. Without advice and direction, Angela “could just keep putting in a folio [...] every year but it [...] might not be the best thing”.

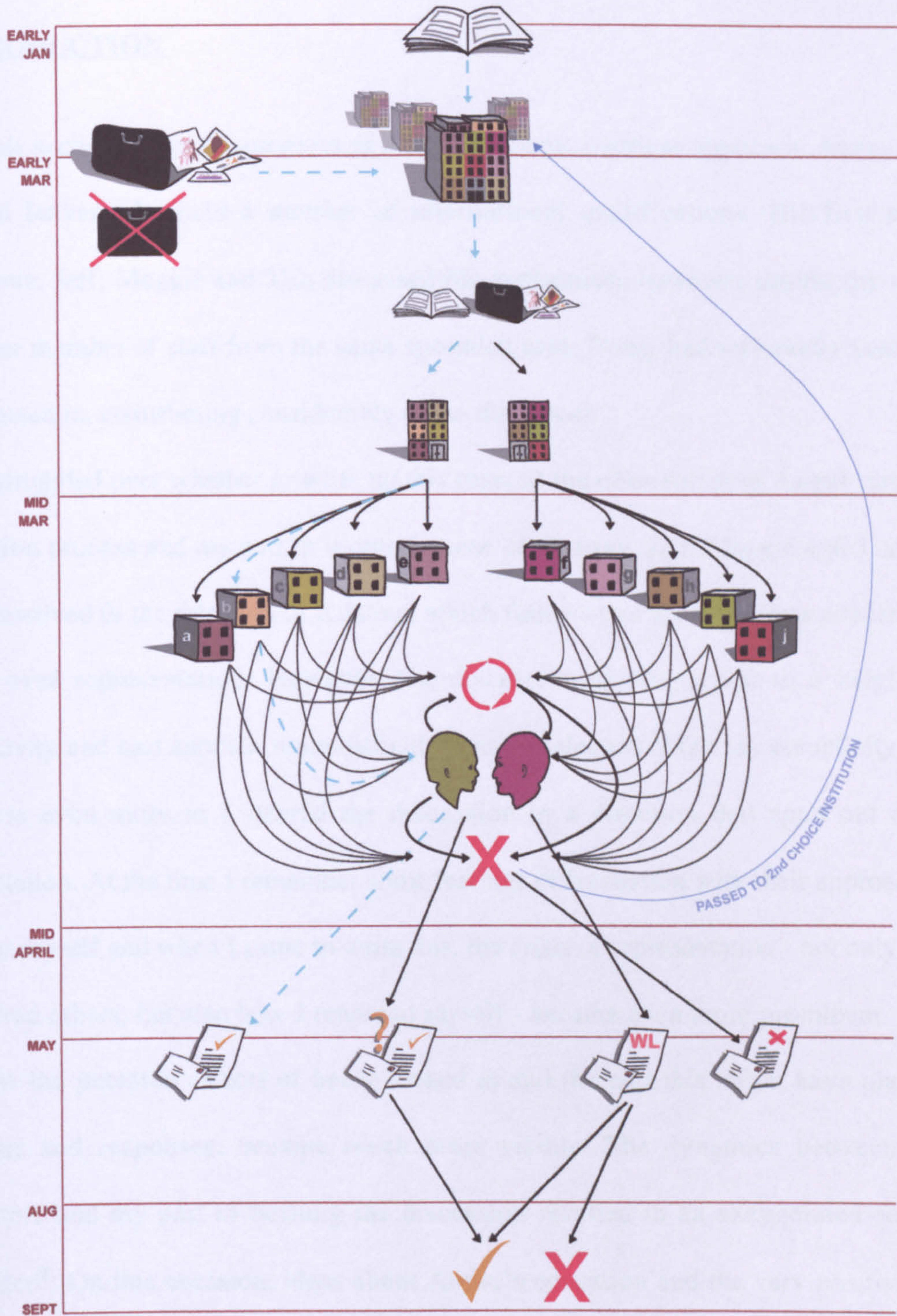
They were both so clear in their thinking about what rejection would mean to Angela and what she needed to do to gain entry; she needed “a plan”, to be made aware of her options and make informed choices. The idea of making a plan sounded simple enough on the surface and yet to schedule your life so specifically also required access to time and advice. While Jill and Rona had seemed sympathetic towards Angela, I was left wondering; I wondered then and later on about this idea of choice. It seemed it was not only a question of being made aware of the choices available, but it also came down to what choices you *could* make and *take*. Jill and Rona's responses had been bound up in their reading of Angela's background, experience and age and at one point this had become entangled in misunderstanding over the expectations that sat alongside “maturity”. Jill and Rona had listened to and also challenged each other and that had forced open the discussion of this area. Selection was not only based on the quality and potential of the visual work, or the appropriateness of the choice of area of study, in Angela's case what education might mean for her in the longer term also came into the thinking. Angela's age and circumstances led them to feel that she, more than others, deserved to know *what* to study and *why*. Rona in particular had grappled with this in terms of the purpose of Angela's learning, considering what it would take for her to

make a “career” out of it. Yet Angela may have had other ideas and understanding of what learning was for and what she wanted from it.

Alongside a number of other applicants, I had really empathised with Angela. I knew where she came from, the college she attended and had my own ideas about what all of that meant. Despite the “misses” in Angela's *work*, as a person - in terms of age, social class, geodemographics and alternative routes and qualification levels - *she* hit government agendas for widening participation. While the discussion highlighted the clarity of feedback and advice possible, as well as Jill and Rona's desire to do this, the mechanisms in the selection process did not seem equipped to allow this to work in any fair or meaningful way. Angela would never hear this advice or have the chance to act on it, only a letter of refusal would reach her.

Despite the emotional wrangling, right to the end, a lack of readiness in Angela's work and as a person won out. She needed another kind of “maturity” to deal with the course; maturity of thought and from what they could see before them Angela couldn't “cope” with that. The role of chance in decision-making played out to the end. As Jill suggested during the triadic, they could not know for sure about an applicant, it was “a bit of a lottery” but with Angela there just were not “enough...hits, there are too many misses [...] and that's the way you work it out”.

ANGUS



	APPLICATION FORM		SPECIALIST GROUPS		CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE
	INSTITUTION		REJECTION		UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE
	PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION		REFERRAL		ACCEPTANCE
	NO SUBMISSION		INTERVIEW		APPLICANT ROUTE
	SPECIALIST SCHOOLS		WL WAITING LIST		

INTRODUCTION

This section charts the progress of Angus, a young, overseas applicant. Angus was a school leaver who held a number of international qualifications. His first choice selectors, Jeff, Maggie and Tim discussed his application, however, during the review another member of staff from the same specialist area, Doug, had informally passed by and joined in, contributing considerably to the discussion.

I struggled over whether to write up this case, as the observation of Angus threw the selection process and my part in it, into a sense of disarray. Jeff, Maggie and Tim were also involved in the selection of Kristina, which follows this one and I was concerned at their over representation. However, the discussion of Angus led to a heightened reflexivity and cast another, more difficult light on selection. I felt my complicity in the process even more as I steered the discussion in a direction that spun out of any expectation. At the time I remember some feelings of frustration with their approach and also at myself and when I came to write this, the crisis of representation - not only how I rendered others, but also how I rendered myself - became even more prominent. In this review the potential effects of being looked at and the part this might have played in actions and responses, became much more visible. The dynamics between these selectors and my part in pushing the discussion resulted in an exaggerated sense of disorder⁶⁸. On this occasion, ideas about Angus's education and the very positive view on the kind of student that someone like Angus would make have a significant influence on the outcome.

⁶⁸ This had run through most of the reviews with this team, however, became particularly heightened here.

ANGUS

Angus was the last of seven applicants tracked with this group of selectors. It was a particularly confusing and often awkward observation. At times there had been six people involved in the conversation, which created a difficult *to-ing* and *fro-ing*. This discussion happened at the height of the process and the space had been particularly full, with numerous conversations going around us, which made this review seem even more confused. I did not know Maggie at all and even though I knew Tim and Jeff slightly, the dynamic between all of them and my confusion at some of their decisions exaggerated the awkwardness. During the discussion of Angus I felt that I drew on and adopted something of their approach, language and behaviour as a means of opening up the discussion on Angus. It was this in particular that caused the dilemma in my own mind over whether to write this or not. It took some time for me to go back into and feel confident enough about what happened to do this. As a consequence, while this discussion happened earlier on in the process, I have opted to place it here close to the end, hopefully emphasising something of my own cumulative sense of reflexivity.

While Angus was interviewed, this is not detailed. Like other overseas applicants this happened by telephone and was conducted by another selector who had not been involved in the selection. I was present during the conversation, however, could not hear Angus respond directly and this made it difficult to write up with any depth. In addition to the main review, I draw on elements from the triadic, as this importantly contextualises selectors' ideas about Angus in relation to other applicants and reinforces the troubled nature of this review. Angus was described throughout as "adequate" and

was not scored by these selectors, however, made it all the way through to entry.

‘WHERE IS HE APPLYING FROM? POLAND OR SOMETHING?’

There was a tension in this review that began much earlier at the beginning of the second selection, when Maggie had been unable to find an applicant's form⁶⁹. “Don't know why the women always have to do the paperwork in this place” Maggie had said. “D'you want to hoist the folios?” said Tim, “I'll do that. I did them on Friday” he said “I did it on Friday, I did it” he said again. No one answered Tim. “I did it on Friday” he said once more. When we reached Angus, last in the line, we could not find his application form either. Maggie searched for the paperwork, Tim left the table and Jeff stood silently.

As Maggie searched through forms, Jeff said finally: “Well I'm certain we've looked at this chap...it should be in there.” I helped Maggie look through the books of applications for Angus's information. Maggie flicked through the forms, reading aloud names: “McInally...Palmer...Taylor...Brown...it's not in alphabetical order” she said and continued to flick through the book.

Around us I could hear Tim talking and laughing with some other selectors, seemingly oblivious to the search that was going on. “There's Angus Murray” I said as his name caught my eye amongst the pile. “Been done” Maggie stated. “Yes” said Jeff. “Who did it?” I asked. Jeff gave a long “sssd” sigh. “Interview, it says” said Maggie as she read aloud the decision. “The three of us did it...Sam, Tim, myself” said Jeff

⁶⁹ This was the *Jenks'* form, which became a continued distraction during Angus's selection.

quickly. "Right" I nodded, "see since it's -" "And Sam actually wrapped it" he continued, "you can see by the hand skills here." He pointed to the package of work with a smile. Jeff's odd sense of humour was a key feature of many of the reviews with this group. "Right" I said "see since it's -" I was cut off again, this time by Maggie. "Right. That person has not got a form" she said emphatically. "Who?" I asked. "Jenks" replied Maggie, "I've looked through all of these books and she's not in any of them." The muddle carried on as Maggie focussed her attention on looking for the missing Jenks' form. I switched between Maggie and Jeff, as I tried to keep track with what she said and at the same time hold on to Jeff. Maggie was deep in conversation with others over the missing form. I tried again with Jeff:

I know this is a nuisance Jeff, but since he was someone I was tracking would it be possible to just quickly talk about why you're interested in him...and we'll get Tim to -

"Have we, have we accepted him?" said Jeff. "For an interview" confirmed Maggie turning her attention back to Angus's paperwork. "Did we?" asked Jeff, then added a long "hahhhhh" of a sigh. Some silence followed as Maggie carried on looking for the Jenks' form. "I can't find anybody with any of these names" she said frustratedly. "Is there another book?" she added. Maggie sounded and looked totally fed up now. "Well it should be in that book" I replied. We looked and flicked through the book of forms for several more minutes, trying to work out where it could be, while the voices of Tim and others mumbled in the background. "It descends into chaos at times doesn't it" I said. No one replied. Maggie was deep in search and Jeff stood at the side saying nothing.

I tried again to get the conversation on Angus's work going: "Okay, so he had only submitted slides Jeff?" "Yeeah" said Jeff, almost inaudibly. There was a short pause. No one looked at the slides; they just lay there on the table. "What are they like then?" asked Maggie coming back into things. Jeff sighed again, this time short, breath like laughs, "hah hah hah." "I can't really see them" I replied, "do you want to have a look?" As I passed the slides to Maggie, Jeff coughed loudly: "Ahem...I do remember, I, I didn't think we did accept that guy. What did we say about him?"

Maggie looked at the slides and said nothing, however, screwed up her face. I found it hard not to laugh. "What's your response Maggie? I asked, trying to check my smile. She paused as she looked, then said: "That is it? That is the portfolio? Where is he applying from Poland or something?" "I...did...where is he? What did we say about him?" said Jeff. However, Maggie's attention had been drawn back again to the missing Jenks' form. "I'm just trying to go through this once again" she said and flicked through the book, before being drawn back again to Angus. "Oh" she said reading from Angus's form "he's coming from overseas." "Yeah that's what it is" said Jeff, his voice quiet again and made quieter sounding by Maggie's assertive reading from the paperwork. As she spoke, Jeff whispered something inaudible. "What is it?" I asked him. He did not speak, but only made hand gestures. "Pause it? I said. "Switch it off" I asked. "Pause" I concluded and paused the recording.

Jeff explained off tape that Angus's overseas status might have swayed the decision, however, he had not been sure what conclusion the other two selectors, Tim and Sam,

had finally come to, as he had not been involved throughout⁷⁰. “Okay, so that's him dealt with” said Maggie bringing Angus to a conclusion and about to move on. I had not wanted to let Angus go at that. He was the last in the line of seven applicants and all of them to this point had seemed full of contradictions. Overseas applicants would sit outside of funded places, so the decision to accept on this basis was not at issue, however, we had looked at other applicants to this department that had seemed as strong, if not stronger than Angus, who had not made it through to the next stage. One in particular, John, was right at the forefront of my mind. He had been the same age, although local, and had also applied straight from school. While that portfolio had led to quite rich and in places, favourable commentary, he had not made it to interview and it was the rationale for acceptance or not that I wanted to try and open up. “Okay” I said to Jeff, “maybe we should get Tim and ask him why?” “Prrahhhh” rasped Maggie laughing. Amongst the stifled laughter I felt I had their attention and quickly called across to Tim: “Tim, there's one here that I was tracking. It's already been accepted and I just wondered if you could just quickly, just refresh -” “Yeah” said Tim. “Tell us why?” I continued as Tim moved across to the table, “what's of interest?”

Tim held up the transparent packet of slides of Angus's work and looked at them through the light from the window: “Yeah, well okay, well there's not a lot, but there's, there's a...adequate ah, drawing skills an'.” He paused. “Hahhha” laughed Maggie. “Sort of a deliberate hah”, Tim laughed himself. “Deliberate” he continued. Another colleague

⁷⁰ This is less unusual than it sounds. Selectors often put question marks besides applicants and would decide later on whether they would interview, based on the strength of other applicants and arising numbers. Jeff hadn't been a constant in the process and wouldn't necessarily have formed part of the final decision.

Doug joined the table, "Take your time Tim" he interjected with a smile. "Yeah!" blurted Tim, "Sort of..." his voice trailed off. Maggie laughed. "Adequate?" said Jeff. "Adequate" repeated Tim in agreement. "It's adequate?" I asked in an over questioning tone. Adequate had not been a strong feature of many if any of the other applicants who made it to interview. "Adequate drawing skills, yeah" replied Tim. I still had John in my mind and asked: "Is he as adequate as John, do you remember who had the sort of mixed media portfolio that didn't." Tim interrupted:

Yeah yeah, better, better drawing skills than that, definitely better drawing skills than that...an' also, an' plenty of them. So I mean that's all they've, that's all they've put in here but that's probably because they're advised, that they put so much emphasis on drawing... an' - where's he from?"

Tim seemed quickly to conclude that Angus had been advised or mis-advised, but his earlier comments on John were still on my mind. That discussion had raised a similar kind of question in relation to what was or was not in a portfolio. On that occasion Tim had noted about a particular work that the fact that John even put "that into the folio kind of works [...] as a little bit of a demerit". Yet Angus was not seen as wholly responsible for what was in his portfolio. "I hope they are explaining this criteria properly Fiona" joked Doug as he crossed again into the conversation. "Yeah yeah" said Tim. "I'll come back and question them" Doug joked again. Tim looked at Angus's form and blurted: "Oh! Right it's an (overseas) one is it, right. Okay, well they don't get any...any eh...especially..." Tim's words trailed off.

"How old is he?" Tim asked. "Younger than the Monroe plan" joked Jeff. "Yeah haha" laughed Tim, "but hah, how old, how old is this applicant?" "I don't know" said

Jeff laughing. "Does it say?" continued Tim, "what age is he?" It seemed that no one was going to reply. "I think he's quite young" I said. "Yeah" Tim replied, "see they don't get any...studio practice at all, even at the first and second year level." "What sort of an excuse is that Tim?" asked Maggie, serious sounding. Jeff laughed. Tim carried on: "From school they don't get any...they don't get any, so this would be all done on his own time." "So!" said Maggie, "do we make these allowances for people from Paisley and so on?" Both Jeff and I knew that Maggie was teasing, however, Tim had not realised and came back serious sounding "Yeah" he said. "Do you?" I asked, unsure if they had, as they had rarely read the paperwork to get an idea of where someone was from. Doug laughed. "No seriously" I said, trying hard to sound serious amidst the laughter. "I'm asking the question seriously" I said again. "Yeah Yeah", replied Tim. I started again, "You would -" Tim interrupted:

Well, are you comparing this on levels, 'cause all you got to compare it on is the level of skill right? D'you want to pull out that other folio and compare it right now?

Tim looked at all of us as he spoke. "We're winding you up Tim" said Maggie. "Oh are you? Right" said Tim, his voice slightly raised. Maggie laughed. Her admission did not ease things off. "Well look at it Doug" said Tim directly to him, "it's just a, just a -" "He's a genius!" exclaimed Maggie cutting in with a smile. "No he's not a genius. He's adequate. The other one I said was inadequate" said Tim. There was silence. Maggie looked again at the slides, "well" she said, then stopped just as Tim hurried away from the table.

“What do you think Doug?” I asked. Jeff and Doug both laughed. Maggie went off again in search of the missing Jenks' form and frustrated sounds of flicking paper backdropped the voices of Doug and Jeff. Doug gave an elongated “Mmmweeeel” then added, “Adequate”. “Adequate?” I repeated. “Adequate” he confirmed. “Good for First Year?” I asked. There was a little pause; “Was that sarcasm?” said Jeff smiling sarcastically. I was no longer sure what was or wasn't serious anymore. “No, I was asking do you think it's good?” Doug responded quickly:

Well it's a little kind of...he doesn't show much...creative imagination does it? It's all, it's much the same thing...hmmm, whereas I think a (local) student would have a range, wouldn't they? A bigger range of kind of creative, you know, their own work, their own kind of exploration”

Doug's voice was cut through by Tim shouting over from the other side of the room amongst the rack of portfolios: “Was it Angus Murray? Was it Angus Murray that we were comparing him with?” Angus was who we were looking at now. No one answered Tim, they all carried on separately. “I've been through all of them...where's that?” said Maggie as she carried on looking for the missing Jenks' form. Jeff and Doug laughed together. “We could say Doug, that this is a blank canvas that we need to work up on hahaha” said Jeff.

Conscious that Tim was still looking for the portfolio, I called across to him, “Em...it was John Samson.” “Let's look at John Samson” he said still in the distance as he raked through the rows of portfolios. Around the table, Maggie still flicked through the folders of forms and Jeff looked at Angus's paperwork. “Oh right” said Jeff and then paused as he glanced through it, then said directly into the microphone: “He also has a

terrific em...profile.” “Was that sarcasm Jeff?” I asked completely unsure of when Jeff was being serious or not. “Sorry, what was his profile?” I asked. “Em...pretty severe as far as I can see, high bridge of the nose...” said Jeff. Both he and Doug laughed and smiled to one another.

Tim rejoined the table with a thud as he delivered John's portfolio to the table. “Look” he said as he flicked through John's work “that's the sort of drawing skills that we're comparing him with right. We knocked this one back. We're accepting that just on the skill levels”. Doug gave a long sigh. “We know Tim, we know” said Maggie. “But this one's a bit more -” interjected Doug. Tim's voice was drawn into the background as he spoke to Maggie: “No but this is, no, 'cause it's being taped.” Maggie laughed, “No it's not” she said. I could hear them both in the background. Maggie moved away from Tim towards me. “What's Tim saying?” I asked. “He's saying it's being taped” she said almost in a whisper, still with a slight laughter. “Yeah” I said “this is, to discuss this.” “Ah right” she said quickly.

I felt awkward as I realised that Maggie had thought that this wasn't being recorded and the whole nature of the tormenting of Tim now seemed even more tortuous. Maggie joined in with the others as Tim carried on trying to explain. “It's the same stuff” he said, “that one's showing more skill, if we're going to just do it on skill” he added, pointing to Angus's work. Doug came back quickly: “Ah but that kid's as dead as a doh doh” he said gesturing to Angus's slides “an' this has...got a life to it” he said as he waved his hand across John's portfolio. “You think this is better, do you?” said Tim. There was a pause while Tim looked at Doug. “Do you?” he asked again. “Well...hah hah” laughed Doug.

They looked at one another and exchanged smiles as though each waiting for the other to speak. Doug continued laughing as he flicked through John's portfolio.

Then Doug spoke directly about John: "Well, basically we'd be selecting him for interview as well. See what, test out the potential then?" Tim looked at John's portfolio, opened out on the table: "Yeah...you would give this, you would give this a look?" "Aye!" replied Doug smiling. Tim's voice got quieter:

Well that's a real stinker compared to the ones we've accepted Doug...see if you give that an interview you'd be giving probably another 30% of these applicants an interview.

Doug gave a gasped laugh "hah count me out of it!" "Well we've rejected most of them that are this quality" laughed Tim. "He does get higher em points for English and world history than in drawing" interjected Jeff. Maggie "mmmd". "But he's pretty good in algebra and biology too" continued Jeff. "All rounder" quipped Maggie. "That's the sort of texture that, that we need in our mix in our, our area" said Jeff, still joking as he tapped shut Angus's application form with two strong pats, then rubbed his hands together. We all looked on, stifled smiles and I switched off the tape.

REFLECTION ON THE PROCESS

I was left with a mix of feelings after the observations with this group, with Angus in particular. I was concerned over the confusion with the tape and the awkwardness I later felt about it made it feel easy not to tell this story. I had initially thought that Maggie was "winding" Tim up, solely because she knew what had happened with Angus. That

may have played a part, however, so too it seemed had her thinking that she wasn't being looked at or listened in on in the same way. Jeff had not seemed to notice or really care one way or another, he had been the same throughout. Tim however, showed that he had been very aware. "Cause it's being taped" he had said, anxious to explain things. The discussion of Angus threw things into a tangle. This may not even be how people normally did something, but only how they did things in response to being watched and questioned; how they were prepared to be seen. This was what made it so awkward to write; I wasn't sure that this was how I wanted to be seen. Yet I knew that if I didn't engage with this, then all of the questions that I had about selectors' processes and in particular ideas of ethics and fairness became less meaningful, because I avoided being as open about myself and my own processes.

However, even when I tried to put this consternation to one side, Tim, Maggie and Jeff's approach had been very different from other selections observed. They had rarely, if at all, looked at the paperwork. There was no grappling to construct a picture of the person from the visual and written, instead, the emphasis was clearly on the visual material. It was predominantly from this that they made their decisions on whether someone gained entry. Yet that was not the case with Angus. His background had seemed to play a large part in things. Although Angus's work was described only as "adequate", during the triadic Tim had explained how their knowledge and "experience" with "what apparently look like pretty unsophisticated (overseas) portfolios" reassured him that: "They just come on really fast [...] we have a tremendous success rate with these applicants."

Tim's more certain picture of what to expect and how an applicant like Angus would perform on course meant that despite the "adequate" nature of the work, Angus was given a chance. The decision also seemed to be bound up in Tim's knowledge of Angus's education system. "They don't get any...studio practice at all" Tim had explained, "so this would be all done on his own time [...] that's all they've put in here but that's probably because they're advised." While Maggie had joked: "Do we make these allowances for people from Paisley?" and despite Tim's "yeah", it had not seemed clear that they did do this.

These distinctions in approach were reinforced during the triadic. When we reached the end of Angus's selection, both Doug and Jeff left and only Maggie and Tim remained. I asked them to reflect back on three of the applicants we had looked at, one of which included John who had scored well at a 3 but was not making it through to interview. Maggie talked a little, and then midway concluded: "I don't know if I could really separate them out." I wasn't sure I had explained things well enough and tried again: "I suppose what I'm trying to understand is when you start to discriminate, whether you feel there are particular qualities that -" I began. "But none of these are people we've actually offered an interview to...are they?" Maggie interrupted. "No" said Tim. "So I mean we're not looking to discriminate between the people we reject really are we? I mean some are better than others" she concluded. "Well there's a bit of debate" Tim edged in. "Well" Maggie continued: "I mean of them all I would say that the eh young man (John) [...] is probably closer...to what we're looking for."

I switched the grouping to include both John and Angus along with another applicant

Kristina, who had also been scored at a 3. While they had rejected her she was to be interviewed by another department. This time Maggie came in quickly and sure sounding:

Well in that case I would put the Murray person (Angus) with the (Kristina) person. In a way there's a similar lack of evidence really of what kind of person they're gonna be and what kind of student they will make...I mean I think we're really reaching in the dark with those people.

Even though Maggie saw Angus like Kristina, as an unknown, someone they would be “reaching in the dark” with, he was still going through. They, however, were rejecting Kristina, although she still had a chance of acceptance within another department. Yet someone like John, also rejected, who was “probably closer...to what we're looking for” had not made it to the next stage. Tim came back with another view about Angus:

Well...see...’cause I...I teach these students a lot, I know our success rates [...] what they do have is that they really are good on some of the art discourse by the time they arrive here [...] we're just looking at basic adequate skills.

When I had asked him to confirm whether Angus would be separate from the other two he explained:

Yeah, but you see that could just be me, obviously Doug wouldn't agree with the way I sort of reserve judgement on a lot of these applicants. Where kids who have say a portfolio programme that they've been involved in for a year, I expect a lot more. If it's a kid coming out of a [...] school (overseas) where I know the art provision over there is non existent really.

The triadic reinforced the contradictions. To Maggie, Angus was a question mark in terms of their understanding of how he would do on course. However, for Tim, the

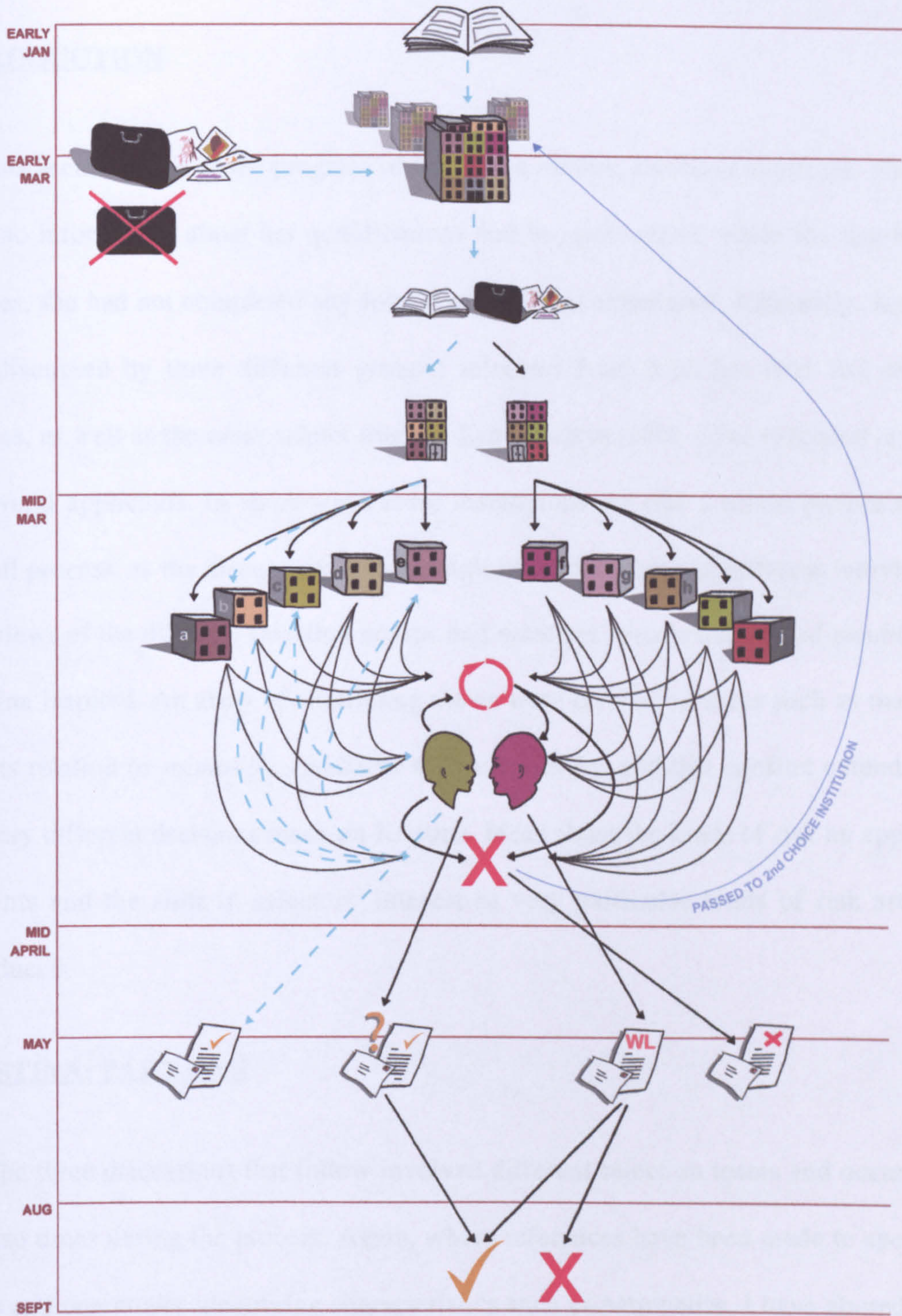
“evidence” about Angus's suitability lay outside of the visual work and in his own experience of working with students from that part of the world. The work could be “pretty unsophisticated” but “they just come on really fast [...] we have a tremendous success rate”. That knowledge caused Tim to “reserve judgement” on applicants like Angus. Whereas his expectations of applicants who had been on “say a portfolio programme [...] I expect a lot more”.

Doug constructed a very different picture again. In his mind Angus had not shown “much [...] creative imagination [...]. It's all [...] much the same thing” and in contrast, a “(local) student would have a [...] bigger range of kind of creative, [...] their own kind of exploration”. Tim's experience of applicants such as Angus and John was very different as relayed in the triadic. His knowledge and experience of what he felt was lacking in Angus's education led him to consider other factors: “What I'm looking at is why have they applied (to this institution) in the first place? [...] I'm considering these kind of things, that means there's at least some ambition.” Angus's ambition was grounded in his being prepared to travel and study abroad; there was never any discussion about what facilitated his ability to make and carry out these choices. This was in stark contrast to Tim's view of the local: “These kids that are going to portfolio classes and foundation classes locally, a lot of them [...] they're just there 'cause there's nothing else to do.” There was no reserved judgement, consideration of the education system, or reflection on how they did on course; only it seemed tougher expectations.

Maggie, Doug and Tim had all signalled very different views. Maggie and Doug both relayed a sense that applicants such as John, were more likely candidates for entry.

However, neither seemed to feel strongly enough to push their argument forward. The decisions were shot through with contradictions and without a sense of parity in how and what was looked at. Angus had seemed fortunate in this review. They had looked at the paperwork and seen where he was from and Tim's experience of applicants from that education system and part of the world came into play. He was sure of Angus. Other applicants, like John, had not been known in that same kind of way. Angus was "adequate", "as dead as a doh doh" but he made it through to the next stage.

KRISTINA



	APPLICATION FORM		SPECIALIST GROUPS		CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE
	INSTITUTION		REJECTION		UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE
	PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION		REFERRAL		ACCEPTANCE
	NO SUBMISSION		INTERVIEW		APPLICANT ROUTE
	SPECIALIST SCHOOLS		WL WAITING LIST		

INTRODUCTION

This section looks at the progress of Kristina a mature, overseas applicant. Kristina gave no information about her qualifications and beyond school, while she had begun courses, she had not completed any formal educational experience. Unusually, Kristina was discussed by three different groups; selectors from both her first and second choices, as well as the cross school triadic I had set up to allow more extended reviews of several applicants. In some ways these discussions act like a micro picture of the overall process, as the discussions were complex and criss-crossed different individuals. The views of the different selection groups and selectors reveals the kind of *trouble* that Kristina inspired. An array of conflicting views were offered on areas such as maturity and its relation to *suitability*, *readiness* and *teachability*, and this conflict extends into the very different decisions made on Kristina. Ideas about the kinds of risk an applicant presents and the shift in selectors' interest in very particular kinds of risk are also introduced.

KRISTINA: PART ONE

The three discussions that follow involved different selection teams and occurred at diverse times during the process. Again, where references have been made to specialist areas and potentially identifying characteristics such as nationality, I have altered these to more generic terms. I have opted to detail all three reviews as they demonstrate the marked shifts in selectors' responses to Kristina's work as well as to her as a person. The chronology of when these discussions took place has been adhered to in the writing.

Rather than relay all of the selectors' names here, I detail these at the start of each new event. In the first instance Kristina's work is reviewed by her second choice area; they had completed all of their first choice reviews and progressed on to second choices. Only one selector Jake looked at the work, however, Graham, a selector from a different area also joined in at one point, and as well as adding to the diversity of responses, it also opened up Kristina's chances of selection. A large number of applicants tracked had this specialism as a second choice, and Kristina was the last in a line of seven second choices looked at alongside Jake, who I knew quite well and felt very relaxed around. While Kristina was interviewed by this area, as with other overseas applicants, this took place by telephone and is not detailed here. This discussion reveals the kind of emotional reaction, curiosity and interest Kristina's work inspired, reflected in the high score of 4. It also shows how that interest in the work extended to her as a person. As the discussion shows, the edgy, difficult to define qualities of Kristina's work made it of particular interest to both Jake and Graham

"I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS BUT IT'S LIKE A TENTATIVE, IT'S LIKE THE BEGINNINGS OF LIFE OR SOMETHING"

It was early evening and the space was empty, with the exception of Jake and Graham, both of whom were working late. Jake began by looking at Kristina's paperwork: "405...Kristina Moore, (in her 30's), nationality is...(overseas)." Jake's voice trailed off as he shifted his looking from the paperwork to the portfolio: "Wowwww look at that" said Jake in a soft drawn out tone. "Crikey" he added. I had found it hard

not to share in the response: "She's written, is that all -?" "That's all handwriting" said Jake "it gets smaller and smaller". Jake turned the pages, and seemed to inspect them carefully: "Ah...notated colour, colour photographs [...] and a little text aside [...]. Quite interesting, wow..." Jake's voice was soft and appeared to register intrigue. "More pages of...writing" said Jake. He paused as he looked, then carried on flicking slowly through the sketchbooks. Graham had come across to the table. "What's her third choice?" he asked as he caught sight of Kristina's work. Jake looked at Graham and laughed, then each continued to look through the sketchbooks. They seemed very attentive and Jake took in a sharp breath as he flicked through the books: "Interesting notebooks, you know, yeah, like ideas, that are...as though - developing or creating ideas through drawing."

"That's great" added Graham, quietly and serious sounding. It was like Kristina's work had stunned them into a kind of silence. They looked on quietly, then Jake added:

This seems like, like a fluid combination of eh intellectual ideas and conceptual ideas and visual notation...it seems to be very natural...and very tentative, kind of...it's quite crude in a way isn't it? But very tentative ideas...being tried out before our very eyes, hah as you turn over page after page.

Jake carried on turning over the pages. I was curious about his take on 'tentative' and 'crude', as these terms had been used by others, though often less favourably. Shifts in ideas had also sometimes been seen as problematic, and a 'bit all over the place'. However, in this case these seemed positive qualities. "So in this case something like that wouldn't be seen as all over the place or would it?" I asked him. "Depends" replied Jake. I tried to expand:

So even though the notebooks, as you were saying, turn a page and it's like another idea that's tentatively being tested, that wouldn't be a negative thing?

Jake seemed to listen intently and “mmd”, then carried on: “No I think this is, I feel quite positive about this, you, I get a very positive vibe from it...it's like a child's drawing in there isn't it?” He paused and looked as though in thought:

Interesting, I mean just the combination there of like foam, soap or...I don't know what it is but it's like a tentative, it's like the beginnings of life or something...I don't know.

“I think it's quite a strong sketchbook” said Graham. “Mmm” said Jake “it is”. Graham carried on: “It's interesting because it could go anywhere, you know it could go into (Department E), into (D) into (C), into (B)”. Jake “yeah” in agreement, flicked on a little further, and then said again, “yeah”. Jake then turned to Graham and asked: “Have you?” He pointed to another sketchbook. Graham smiled: “Yeah, I've just looked through that.” “Is that interesting?” I asked them both. They each “mmd” quickly and carried on looking. Then Jake “mmd” again: “mmm....well, I - we'd be interested in interviewing this one”. “Why?” I asked “because of the range of ideas?” Jake responded quickly: “But also the, the use of (this process) I think is interesting, it's very perceptive...em and it's on the same level of articulacy as the drawing.” “Mmm” said Graham “the ideas are sophisticated, that's what's interesting about them...” “It's quite high” said Jake. They shifted from the sketchbooks into the body of the portfolio. “What is that?” I asked of a difficult to make out image. “Eh...looks like a painting” said Jake,

then he and Graham carried on looking silently. As Kristina's First Choice had still to make a decision, I was curious about their level of interest and assuredness to interview.

Are you in a position if somebody is being interviewed for a department and you're interested in them as well, are you in a position to offer them an interview too?

“Uh-huh” replied Jake. “You are?” I asked again. “Well I'm going to” laughed Jake. Graham laughed with him. I was still a little unsure, as the protocol of the process had seemed different amongst selectors:

So even though her first choice might say ‘we want to interview this person’ and then they offer them a place, you're still in a position to say we want to interview too?

“Oh right” said Jake:

Well, oh yeah [...] infact we arranged that with somebody last year with (another specialism)...somebody who applied, who actually you know she was...a little undecided between (another area) and (this specialism)...and so she had two interviews and made a choice, we would have taken her definitely after the interview and she chose (the other area)...yeah.

“That's quite an interesting situation you have” I said, thinking about the potential complexity of these shifts and undecided-ness on the part of the applicant. Jake explained further: “Well there's going to be a number of them...with potentially two interviews if they want it aren't there?” Jake looked on, with Graham looking alongside him. “So this is one that's of interest to you?” I asked Jake again. “Yeah, this is definitely of interest I'd mark it, high” he replied. “If her second choice was (our

specialism) I'd interview her as well" added Graham. "Mmmm" said Jake, "she might end up in (your area) anyway in second year". Jake laughed as he looked at Graham. "I just don't think she's found (this specialism) yet" joked Graham. They both laughed with each other. It seemed Kristina could go anywhere. "So is the thing that interests you here, that the ideas that are there...you feel that, that could go into other areas, those ideas could shift?" I asked. "That's what I think is so interesting about the sketchbook" replied Graham. "Yeah yeah" agreed Jake. Graham carried on:

Is that the ideas are sophisticated, and could be mediated in many different ways and if she had an interest in (our specialist area), you know I would be interested. But she's not declaring an interest and you're not seeing it in any of the finished work but that can also be because [...] this is where she's been pushed or this is the kind of perimeter of her knowledge or it might be that she just doesn't like (that specialism) and prefers mediating images in that way.

They paused and looked, then Graham added again: "But if her second choice was (our specialism) I would definitely interview". "Regardless of whether her first choice was interviewing her or not?" I asked. "Yeah" he replied. I was really curious about this, as some other selectors had not looked at second choices, let alone wanted to interview. "So you'd be the same?" I asked Graham: "If you find something where, even if they're saying they want to interview or are interested you'd say interview as well?" "If I think it's em...if I think it's better than the first choices that I already have yeah definitely" replied Graham⁷¹. I followed this with Jake: "How do you feel this one compares to some of the first choices that you had Jake?" "Oh it's eh...better, more advanced, I wonder if

⁷¹ Some selectors depended only on collegial referral rather than review of all second choices. Others like Graham and Jake had looked at them all, concerned that potential applicants might slip through the net.

she might be...I mean I thought possibly a second year?" Jake paused, looked to Graham and drummed his fingers on the folder. "Yeah" said Graham. "A lot of experiences" added Jake. They looked at Kristina's paperwork in some detail now. "She could easily get disenchanted with a First Year Programme" concluded Graham. "She might..." said Jake. His voice trailed off as he closed Kristina's folio.

It seemed that Kristina's work had captured Jake's attention immediately and also that of Graham, who came in only as a passer-by and ended up part of the looking. Each had been lured into Kristina's portfolio; her processes of working, fluidity of approach and ideas had held their attention. Kristina's work signalled that she was someone who could go anywhere and both Jake and Graham were interested in those qualities. If Kristina's first choice did not want her, and even if they did, Jake wanted to interview.

KRISTINA PART TWO

Kristina's first choice area looked at her work some days later and this discussion is charted here. She was the third of seven applicants reviewed alongside selectors Tim and Maggie. A third selector Jeff also joined in the review, showing up part of the way through the process. While the initial attraction to Kristina's work was similar to how Jake and Graham had responded, the looking soon shifted and this discussion shows how too sophisticated a level of work and experience could sometimes conspire against an applicant. As some of Kristina's part in the triadic has already been detailed with Angus, I have opted only to reiterate some key observations in the final reflections. This discussion relays selectors' concerns over the *unknown* that they felt Kristina

represented both as a person and in her work. Even though Kristina was still scored highly at a 3, these selectors decided not to interview.

“SHE PROBABLY WOULD BE A DIFFICULT STUDENT...DOESN'T SCARE ME”

Maggie looked for Kristina's application form, while Tim opened up her portfolio: “Okay, right away we've got another interesting folio...” He carried on flicking through the work. “So immediately you open this up you find this interesting? I asked. “Yeah yeah” replied Tim. “Can you tell me why?” I asked. Tim explained:

Well here's someone, I, we haven't looked at his age, her age or his age, we don't even know if it's, I haven't looked at any of that and here's someone who's already aware of for instance, Pop art -

“Lichtenstein” interjected Maggie with a laugh. “Yeah” laughed Tim:

Lichtenstein an' Warhol, so we know, well here's, here's somebody thinking art immediately. They're not just dealing...with local issues. This is big international art this person is already aware of.

Tim paused then added: “So...what I would normally now, is say well how old is this person?”. Tim shifted over to look at Kristina's paperwork and said: “An' we find out that she's (in her 30's), so that explains that, so she's been thinking about art for some time”. Tim carried on flicking quickly through Kristina's sketchbooks. Maggie looked on: “Why is there no original work here, is this 'cause she's from another country is it?”⁷²

⁷² The portfolio had been made up of sketchbooks and photocopied images of larger pieces, this was what Maggie meant by “no original work”. Xeroxes and photographs of larger works were common, particularly amongst overseas applicants.

Maggie went off to look at Kristina's form and read aloud where Kristina came from. "So that's fair enough" said Tim flicking on. "So that's why we've got no original work" concluded Maggie. "That's fair enough" said Tim again looking on through Kristina's notebooks: "So we've got someone who's (in her 30's), applying for...First Year rather than Second Year direct entry, so there's, what's the, what's the foundation...?"

Tim had sounded unsure and went off to look at Kristina's paperwork while Maggie now flicked on through the visuals. Tim came back with more information on Kristina's background. "Okay. So here's someone with eh...this person's already been to art school". "She's already been?" said Maggie. Tim carried on: "Yeah...so hah, so we're looking at a, at a mature...applicant here". Up until now neither Maggie nor Tim had really looked at the paperwork in any detail. I asked: "So what made you go back to the form there Tim?"

Just to find out...we're looking at, this is, this is fairly advanced stuff, this is right out of the norm of the First year applicant. So now we're, I would be personally, I would be looking at, to see [...] has this person applied for second year direct entry an' and been turned down for instance? It doesn't seem to be indicated so...they're either very very serious about getting in here, at at this age, with all this background willing to, to not even risk ah being turned down at direct entry, they're gonna go right and take the full four years. So this is, it doesn't count against them in any way, just means, I want to know what we're dealing with, that's why I returned to the folio and I just returned to her statement about what she's saying about herself and that's why I came across the...reference to, she's already been to college...and...this is also going to inform the way we look at these things so we can...we can raise the critical stakes a little bit here hah.

Tim had returned again to the paperwork and as Maggie flicked quickly through the work he read aloud:

Ah...so [...] so here's someone who's, who is taking a second crack at it...okay and she's been involved with a group of artists [...] in eh (her home country) em...she's living a very arty - woops! -arty life.

Tim had dropped the form, picked it up and seemed to ponder over it for a few moments before speaking: "So now we just look at this, is this someone we'd consider for ah a suitable applicant for the four year programme and there seems, there's no reason not to -". "Except that there's no drawing" said Maggie. "There's not, there's no drawing, well there's the sketchbook" said Tim. Maggie "mmmd". "But it's but it's of the order of ideas....an'..." Tim's voice trailed off. "Does that bother you Maggie, that there's no drawing?" I asked. "Well...nnnn...I mean I think if we were looking at this we would say that that's not really fantastic is it?" said Maggie looking to her colleague as she held open a piece of work. "We would probably say that the drawing is appalling" interrupted Jeff. "Yes" agreed Maggie. None of us had noticed Jeff's arrival until he spoke. He was a member of staff from the same area as Maggie and Tim who now appeared and joined in the review. "Excuse my intrusion, I'm just back from a sick bed, loads of unpleasantness, is that what you want on your interview?" joked Jeff. "That's perfect" I laughed." Tim cracked up with laughter. Maggie was still engaged in reading Kristina's paperwork and sounded distracted as she looked up and asked "What?" "I have a jaundiced view" Jeff joked again. "About this?" I asked. Jeff didn't reply, however, Maggie came back: "Well I, I would have real questions about why this person wants to come to art school, 'cause they seem to be sort of living the life of an artist already." She looked at Tim and Jeff. "That's a good question" said Tim. Maggie continued: "And whether you could actually teach them anything that they would want to accept".

“Ahhh” sighed Tim: “One question that arises is -” Maggie was determined sounding: “So I'm gonna read the form”. Maggie went off to read Kristina's paperwork again. Tim carried on his explanation:

What, when we've got an applicant like this, we think well is this someone who...actually...is it likely that they'll get frustrated with, going through the First year programme...now we can't know that, but it is a question that we have to keep in our mind, it's just our experience tells us that this is [...] usually the case...that someone who already sees themselves as being an artist, trained, well developed...sophisticated wants to get on with it eh meets quite a bit of frustration with going through the first and even the second year programmes 'cause they want to get on with being, doing advanced (specialist work), so I mean, there is a course...now that's just saying, what's the likelihood of that and we say it is likely. Our experience tells us that's likely.

“Someone who's got this level of experience -?” I began. “Yeah” answered Tim. “Might get bored?” I asked. Tim explained further:

It has to be a consideration we would at least bring in to the...into the deliberations here, we think well, what's...what are the chances of this person...having a happy time over the next four years. I wouldn't keep her out...em...but it might hahhahah we'll see [...]. But you see in my view none of those are good, are enough reason to...keep someone from applying to...the four year course...for me.

Tim's tone seemed a mix of certainty and hesitation. I had thought perhaps he seemed sure in himself, however, unsure of Jeff and Maggie's reactions. I followed this up with him: “Is there anything about it that you think is particularly strong then that's keeping your interest?” Again Tim explained in detail:

Ah...actually yeah. I find that that this kind of awareness of...the kind of art that's being made out there in the world, she's obviously aware of that and she, that's obviously what she wants to get into right away. Now that could...when we get

into a discursive, that could actually be the reason why we say well...is that a likely candidate, especially with the first two years which are...you know the First Year's quite prescriptive. Second Year's less so but there still are prescribed course components that we run into difficulties with students anyway, because they're, they're seen as being a bit prescriptive. If we get someone who already sees themselves as an artist, and she makes that quite clear in her statement...em...we at least have to consider it...but, so the, the eh, what we'd call the basic skill level is...is eh...not very high.

I thought Tim had sounded awkward as he spoke. Jeff looked on, then interjected: "Don't know. Some of these are, some of these drawings of hands, are as good as Matisse's". "Tahahah" laughed Tim, "don't be sarcastic". Maggie "mmmd" in the background as she looked at the paperwork. "How old is she?" said Jeff to Maggie. Maggie replied, then paused and continued: "I mean she's lived a sort of itinerant -" "A Life" interrupted Tim. "Life" continued Maggie, then added: "No doubt she's quite an interesting person. But the references, the references don't tell you anything." "Right" said Tim. "At all" stressed Maggie:

Because [...] there's no name of school or college, this could just be a friend writing [...] and the other one says [...] that she's...you know, pretty interesting person but...her own statement, she says that she's heard about (this institution) from other people...and she's looking for an [...] intense atmosphere and a critical challenging dialogue.

Maggie paused and read on, then added: "Her spelling I must say, or her grasp of English is eh idiosyncratic I think". "Well she's (from overseas)" said Tim. "I don't know" said Maggie as she flicked through the paperwork. "English is a second language" added Tim who shifted back from the table slightly as Maggie and Jeff moved closer to the portfolio. "Do you have difficulties now Maggie?" "Well, I don't know

what you'd be able to teach a person like this" she replied. Jeff came in quickly: "Well...I think it would be difficult". "Yeah?" said Tim. "I find it hard not to make a response about this" added Jeff. "Yes" agreed Maggie, then added: "I mean maybe she's worth an interview. I don't know."

Tim had moved away from the table and seemed to busy himself with other bits and pieces, however, had continued to listen in: "What you saying Maggie?" he asked. "I don't know" she said again. "Well...I'd give her an interview myself" said Tim. "Yes" agreed Maggie. Tim turned to Jeff: "What d'you think? Would you Jeff? No?" "I'm just in" replied Jeff. "Well you just, tie breaker" said Tim. "Do you want a comment?" asked Jeff. I hadn't understood Jeff's early comment of 'hard not to make a response about this' and asked him: "What did you say, you would find it hard Jeff about the form to -?" "I was being sarcastic" said Jeff. "Ah okay I see" I replied. He carried on his explanation: "She wants to come to a place with -" "An intense atmosphere" interrupted Maggie. "An intense atmosphere" repeated Jeff "and a [...] challenging dialogue and art and all the things -" "Connected" interrupted Maggie again, still standing alongside him. "Connected with [...] art" concluded Jeff. "I think she's trying to come to the wrong place don't you?" he said directly to me, with a smile. "I'm only here to listen to what you're saying" I smiled back. Tim laughed in the background.

There was silence as they all stood and flicked through the folio, though it did not appear as though they were actually looking at the work. Jeff came back again: "Well I...I would, if I were thinking I would go, I find an awful lot of what's in there very very derivative". "Yeah, I'd agree but -" began Tim. Jeff carried on over the top of him: "I

find some of the drawings here which are...ah intended to be naïve and others, which are so called studies are infact real naive so.” Tim laughed. Jeff continued: “There's a problem there for me about -” “Skill” suggested Tim. “About -” Jeff paused on Tim's interruption and looked to him: “Skill isn't a word I like using. Her real abilities to perceive things”. Then he added: “I think she's probably somebody of a certain age, in love with being an artist.” Jeff carried on:

Em she's had some sort of background with other artists and some sort of training. I would be inclined to think she would be difficult. I don't think the four years here would help her and I don't think it would help the other students who would go through the course with her.

“So is that a no?” asked Tim. “I'd give her a thumbs down” said Jeff. “Is that two thumbs down?” asked Tim as he looked to Maggie. “I think so, I mean I -” began Maggie. “Alright” said Tim. His voice seemed brusque. “I think she'd be much more suited to a kind of more multi media course and that's not what we offer...is it?” said Maggie. “Fair enough” said Tim, quickly. “But you were interested Tim, even though you are agreeing with those comments?” I asked. Tim was busy closing up the portfolio:

Yeah I, I'd just probably putting a little more, a little more weight on this, on this being in love with being an artist thing...which [...] I wouldn't count heavily against her, 'cause it seems to me that art's all about that, you know an' it could carry her through, of course, she probably would be a difficult student...em doesn't scare me.

I felt a little awkward as I pushed this further, this time with Maggie: “But you're thinking about it as difficult in terms of the course she'd go through, how teachable she would be or how interested she'd be?” “It's in terms of the course that's offered here”

said Maggie. Tim “yeahd” again. “I mean -” she began. Jeff interrupted: “Well...you...I, I would find it difficult to imagine...how she would really benefit from the course that we have.” Tim coughed and then added:

You know [...] the one point I would say against her, there's [...] not enough, for a woman of that age with that experience there's not enough, if she's applying for (this specialism), there's not enough evidence of (this specialist process) [...]. There's only about four (works in this specialist process) and of the kind they are, they're not things that are gonna take 6 months to do...so just that sketchbook, an' four (specialist works) an' a series of photographs obviously done in a sequence over a...relatively short period of time...is really not...heavy, heavy weight of...evidence there that would support her application for (this department) so that's the mark that I would hold against her. But I would, personally I would still give her a look, but...two against one is, is a no, so I'll, I'll go with my...colleagues here on this one hahhaha.

“Wait a minute now Tim, maybe -” said Jeff. Tim laughed loudly. Maggie sounded serious: “Right, so what are we saying here?” “Saying no!” Exclaimed Tim laughing. Jeff continued: “Maybe we should do to this one what the guy in the French Revolution did, you know the one that eats all the application papers?” I looked at Jeff. Tim gave a short laugh, finished zipping Kristina's folio closed and busied himself with other things: “How you feelin' Jeff?” asked Tim. “Oh I'm feeling hellish, [...] show me where we are” said Jeff. “Just doing these for Fiona” replied Tim: “an' then we'll get on to our other students, there was just ah three more of these is it? An' then we're...em. If you're feeling really bad come -” “I'm feeling a lot better” assured Jeff. “Okay” said Tim.

The conclusion to Kristina had been odd. Tim had seemed to have a very different idea about Kristina from Jeff and Maggie. He had held on to that view, then finally seemed not only to give way but to actually come around to their way of thinking about

Kristina and the problems she would present. Agreement made not to interview, the discussion switched quickly, without deliberation. Kristina's flexibility of approach so desired by Jake and Graham, and that had initially interested Tim, now went against her. That Kristina might be "difficult" hadn't scared Tim. However, this had then shifted at the end; now she wasn't "specialist" enough and that was the "mark" that Tim held against her. More than this, she had gone beyond what their teaching and learning environment had to offer. If Kristina's work had hinted that she could go anywhere, in their minds it wasn't into this department or anywhere else in the institution.

KRISTINA: PART THREE

The divergent nature of responses from the two groups made me decide to bring Kristina's work into the wider discussion involving selectors from across the school. I had organised this with the help of a few selectors, a couple of whom had suggested the idea to me. I was curious to see how this mixed group of selectors from different areas would respond to Kristina. As this review was not linked to entry or non-entry, we agreed that it would be interesting to set this up without the paperwork. This way selectors could react only to the work and see how much they guessed about the person from the visual work and how much they actually depended on the paperwork to help them in their considerations. Four selectors were present, Graham, Sam, Colin and Elaine. It was as Colin described a "synthetic" situation. They were not making decisions on entry; however, in many ways the release of that pressure gave them more time for consideration and caused them to question their processes even more.

This observation happened when all of the other *real* selections had been completed. Kristina was fourth in a line of five applicants and immediately her portfolio had prompted a “wow” reaction. I knew the four selectors well and had worked with them all before. It was very relaxed and felt like there was opportunity to open up areas and issues. For the most part, these selectors did that themselves, with very little prompting from me. Indeed, I had felt part of this one, at ease with my role and comfortable with my own clumsiness and hesitancies.

The discussion shows again the clash in response to Kristina's work and how intermingled this was with presumptions about her as a person. It also allows another interesting dynamic through the involvement of a mix of individuals, from various specialisms, challenging and questioning one another.

“WITHOUT A DOUBT AN INTERVIEW, WITHOUT A DOUBT AT ALL”

“Oh that immediately looks like quite a mature kind of presentation” began Elaine as she opened the portfolio. “Oh it does yeah, very professional” said Colin “you get a good buzz off of that first page don't you?” “Uh-hummmm” agreed Elaine. “As in?” I asked. “Just that, you get quite a buzz off of that you think woh, it's much more mature” explained Colin as he held open the first page of Kristina's portfolio. Graham leaned across and looked in recognition: “Oh I have seen this one yeah. Oh maybe I'll just not say too much”. All four of them looked at the notebooks: “Oh wow” said Colin quietly. There was a lull as they looked on. “Did you just say ‘oh wow’?” I asked him. “Yeah” replied Colin, his head down close to the portfolio. “What? This is really -?” I asked.

“Yeah” said Colin softly and assured sounding. “What? You're getting a good feel from this Colin?” I asked. “Yeah, yeah, it's good yeah” he confirmed. Sam added to the approval: “Very sophisticated, well presented”. “Yeah” said Colin again. “This is a bit kind of padding though isn't it? The image all the time” he added and flicked between a couple of pages showing them to Sam, who “mmm-hmmd” in agreement. I thought about the reactions of Maggie, Tim and Jeff and their concerns at the over sophistication of Kristina's work. I also thought back to some of Colin's earlier comments and concerns over another applicant's work being too finished looking. I asked them about this:

You say ‘sophisticated’; does it bother you that these look like finished things that you're not seeing - in the other ones you were concerned about seeing the development.

Colin “mmm-hmmd” a couple of times, overlapped by Sam's “I would -”, then Elaine's: “We're assuming you're going to see the development further back”. “Yeah” Colin agreed “in the sketchbook”. “Sketchbook yeah” repeated Elaine. “I'd be worried if it was just this” said Sam as he pointed to the main body of the portfolio. “Yeah” agreed Elaine, followed immediately by Colin's, “Yeah”. He paused as though in thought then added: “I suppose if there were no sketchbooks, we'd be wondering, I'd be wondering, about the teachability thing again”. Sam “mmmd”. “Well I'd be wondering where it was coming from but -” said Graham. Colin “uh-huhd”, then added: “but we need to wait and see the sketchbooks.” “We're starting to get repeats” observed Sam as they flicked through the portfolio. “But...I think...when you see this [...] work against (this)...this is not somebody, you can't do that in schools and stuff” added Graham. “Like that. Yeah”

agreed Colin as he pointed to a work, and then carried on: "I mean you can see, you know there's development of ideas in there now in that image." "Yeah" agreed Graham. Colin flicked through some pages: "You know, it's fine, so the question's beginning to be answered." "In terms of how they've put these works together?" I asked. "Yeeah" said Colin: "I just think you know, about the way ideas are being explored in the work, and you know it's not just - where here -" Colin flicked back to an image and explained: "You know I was worrying about 'oh it's a picture' but then there -" He flicked forward to another sheet: "The relationship between images and the development of ideas between the pictures is being explored, so there's a sense of articulation, adventure."

They all looked on. Graham and Elaine had both "mmmd" in agreement. "What about the teachability thing, is that coming into your head?" I asked them. Colin replied quickly:

Yeah. It's coming into my head. Because the work is so sophisticated in terms of teachability in the early years of the art school, if not First Year alone, you wonder if they would be...happy to subject themselves to the...the breadth of learning and teaching that's in the First year of the course and I think in elements of the Second year course as well. You know they might, this person might see him or herself at a level of sophistication that's beyond the kind of teaching they might be on so that concerns me. How would you find out about that? Interview them, interview them and find out what their attitude is.

Sam had "mmmd" throughout and all four had continued to look on at the work as Colin spoke. Colin's comments had touched on earlier responses made by both of the other selection teams and I tried to carry this on further: "Does this seem someone then who's at a level where you could consider second year entry?" They all paused as though in thought. "Possibly" said Colin hesitantly. "I think it all depends on...you know their

motivation and the needs of the person” said Graham. Colin “yeahd”. “What are they hoping to achieve?” suggested Elaine. “Yeah” said Graham. “Why are they coming?” continued Elaine. “Yeah. If it's (Department B), you know then second year” suggested Graham, as he unknowingly hit on the very department that Kristina had applied to as a First Choice and been rejected by. “Mmm. Yeah it depends on the department doesn't it?” said Elaine. “Yeah” Graham confirmed.

They shifted into the notebooks: “What would you hope the notebooks might tell you?” I asked, hesitant at my interruption of their looking. “See the development of ideas, perhaps see you know some exploration into different medium - media” answered Colin. “Mmmm” said Graham softly, then added: “Isn't that great?” He pointed to a page in Kristina’s notebook. They all looked on and seemed deep in thought. “Ah, you know the question of direct entry to second year...I'm not, I'm not sure about it” said Colin. There was a pause. “Why?” I asked, “because of the sketchbooks now?” “Eh nooh” said Colin ponderous sounding and then he continued, slowly at first: “Related to that teachability thing again you know wondering...” His words trailed off then quickened:

The work here, it seems kind of quite exclusive in terms of media, in terms of you know varied, broad development of ideas and issues to do with media and ways of looking and ways of creating the image...so you know I suppose you'd find this out in the interview, but if eh that development of these skills weren't in there you know you might have somebody kind of landing up in second year that doesn't actually have the resources to kind of build through the second year.

Graham “yeahd” as Colin continued:

And you know this is the problem area, you know it might be somebody who in terms of their attitude, feels they're beyond the kind of learning they would have

in the First year but they actually haven't resourced themselves enough to deal with the second year. It's difficult isn't it? You don't want somebody too sophisticated but you don't want somebody too unsophisticated, you need somebody just some where in the middle.

Graham had “mmmd” throughout and sounded keen to interject:

But I think, you know obviously I have looked at, I've seen a lot of this before, and you know, you're right, I think most of the resourcing is towards the flat image.

“Uh-huh” nodded Colin. “The whole way” continued Graham:

And my thoughts on it was that you know this person hadn't been [...] exposed to (other specialisms) for example or those other possibilities and em so if I was looking at this thinking about (our department) then I would be happy for this person to do the First year course because I'd want to open them up to the way that you resource, towards looking at other ways of mediating these ideas.

Colin had repeatedly “yeahd” in agreement as Graham spoke. “Cause there are some really sophisticated ideas, but they take quite linear routes” said Graham, then paused as Colin “yeahd”. “Cause the stuff that's happening in here, is, it really is quite exciting I think” concluded Graham with reference to the notebooks. Sam “mmmhmd” and Elaine “yeahd” assuredly. “Without a doubt an interview, without a doubt at all” said Colin, then continued: “I suppose what I'd be trying to look for in the interview is just that teachability thing, you would find that out”. “And what their motivations are as well” suggested Elaine. “You would want to know what their expectations of the course was” said Graham. Elaine “mmmd” in agreement. “That's right” said Colin. Graham carried on: “Because they might be coming here because they want to open up and they realise

their limitations". "Yeah absolutely" agreed Colin. "Or" continued Graham: "They might be coming here thinking they're a superstar and they just want to kin' of be polished a little but -" Colin agreed: "Yeah eh and the latter would be a problem." "Yeah it'd be a big problem" said Graham. "It's a problem you know how d'you deal with that because it's obviously, could still be a viable student" said Colin, then paused and added: "But that's a problem in terms of the course." "But that's someone you'd still be interested in?" I asked them. "Oh yeah" said Colin. "Very much so" stressed Elaine. "Yeah yeah" agreed Graham. "Absolutely" said Sam. They looked on. Unprompted Colin went back again to points we had discussed:

I wonder if this discussion that we're having just now em, the expectations of the course, the viability, teachability, I would want to cross refer what I've seen with, just information like, what age is the person? If it turned out it was like a 35 year old that'd be quite different from if it turned out to be an 18 year old you know.

"In terms of what? How you're looking at the work?" I asked. Colin explained:

In terms of these questions – no, no - in terms of these questions. It'd start to make me consider much more what I'd be asking in the interview. If it's a 35 year old, the implication's, maybe you'd have difficulty in terms of their assimilation into the course and how much they could get out it.

Graham "mmmd" and began: "But, but also -" "If it's an 18 year old that might be different" said Colin and stopped to make space for Graham. "But also we don't have enough information, I mean this person might have done a foundation course or a second year or something somewhere else." Colin "yeah, yeahd" in agreement. "And they're

obviously foreign⁷³, so you know might have just picked up on it wrong and applied for the wrong course” suggested Graham. Colin again “yeahd” in agreement. They closed the discussion on Kristina and moved on to the next applicant. However, I had also asked them to review all five together. This raised considerable discussion about the five applicants, which was very long and detailed. Here I've honed in on the areas of the discussion that related specifically to Kristina.

“Okay do you want to tell me then how you would sort these five out into two bundles?” I asked them. “Right” said Elaine very seriously. “Okay” said Colin. “I don't know whether you feel you'd need to discuss it or -?” I began. “Well, what is it, how are we doing this? Is it a case of, who we would interview and who we wouldn't?” asked Elaine. “Are we doing it collectively?” asked Colin. “No not necessarily” I said to Elaine. “Just any separation” suggested Colin. “But it has to be two bundles as opposed to three bundles?” queried Elaine. “No” I stopped to think: “If you feel it has to be three bundles...it's really up to you.” “And we have to do it as a group?” asked Colin. “No, you can tell me individually” I replied. “Cause I'll never agree with Graham” joked Colin. They all laughed loudly. “You can tell me individually, it's probably better, 'cause it's maybe unlikely that collectively you will agree” I suggested. “I think it's likely we will” said Colin. “I think it's likely we will too” suggested Graham. “Okay then, who would like to start?” I asked.

I would quite like to vote for three groups” said Colin: “And it would be, these two, then these two and then that one on its own” he concluded. The one on its own was Kristina. “I mean I would have no difficulty with that” said Graham. “Well it kind

⁷³ This was guessed at by the writing in the notebooks which was in another language.

of...you wouldn't?" said Colin. He had looked at Graham jokingly. "No, I wouldn't, no" said Graham, "no, honest" he smiled. "We agree?" said Colin smiling back. "No, if you were going to separate it out into three groups, that's definitely how you'd separate it out" said Graham. "You know we had the option [...] of three or two, and so I, Elaine mentioned three and, if your mind was on that, that's my three" said Colin. "What links these [...] together then?" I asked hoping to draw out why Kristina was on her own. Colin pointed to two of the portfolios that had, unknown to any of these selectors, been accepted for interview: "Em, there's a similar kin' of, a similar enthusiasm em slight lack of sophistication -" began Colin. "Thoroughness" said Elaine. "Yeah" agreed Colin, then added: "There's a real energy in these two folios I think, for learning and there's an evident enthusiasm and hunger." Then he turned to Kristina's:

This is slick as hell em maybe a bit cool, maybe, I mean I suspect somebody that's quite a bit older somehow and I suspect has had a bit of training already.

He turned back to the other two and added: "Em whereas these people are raw material and I think basic good quality kind of people." Sam "mmmd". "Sam?" I asked. "Yeah. I'd agree with that" he replied. "You'd keep it as three as well?" I asked. "I think it's quite clear" said Elaine. "If three's the option, yes, I would separate it that way" said Sam. It seemed that Kristina was out on her own. I asked them finally: "Okay, do you want to see the paperwork? Not to do anything with it, I'm thinking about your time, but out of interest do you want to see it?"

They all plunged into the paperwork, looking and reading different forms giving rise to mixed conversations. "She looks a bit like Gemma Rook, a First year student" said

Elaine looking at Kristina's photograph. "Yeah?" asked Colin. "She looks a bit like her?" I asked. "Yeah" replied Elaine. "In terms of what?" I asked "Attitude" confirmed Elaine, then turned to Colin with the photograph and said "Colin". "What's that?" he asked. "Gemma Rook?" said Elaine holding the photograph to him⁷⁴. "Ah yes hah" he replied. Colin shifted to Kristina's paperwork. "Ah this is this folio here?" asked Colin as he made sure of the match between the paperwork and portfolio. "Oh I thought that was a man" he said surprised. "Did you, why?" I asked. "Yeah" he said quickly. "The teachable or unteachable" added Elaine. "Em" said Colin, he paused: "Why did I think it was man?...it was...the coolness of it I think. I think it was the coolness of it".

Graham came in: "I thought the interesting shift to the -" However, he was cut off by Elaine, "Gemma Rook" she said again. "Woh, better than her" said Colin in a raised tone. Elaine answered quickly, her voice also slightly raised:

Yeah, oh absolutely, better quality work but very similar, I'd I'd have fears about her. Definitely, obviously an interview but I'd have strong fears about her teachability.

"Coolness, yeah" said Colin. I was really curious now about Elaine's reaction to the form: "Now you're reading her form you would have strong fears?" I asked. Elaine answered: "No, I mean yeah we'd already had some fears about it already but em I think then looking at the form and stuff as well -" Sam "mmmd". "Let me see" said Graham.

⁷⁴ I was really curious about the response to the photograph and the association with another student. I'd wondered what part if any, the photographs had on selectors and their construction of applicants. However when I'd asked this during another selection, the selectors had suggested that they didn't notice or look. Yet it seemed that they might. I let it go here as they all seemed very engaged with the forms and viewing how individuals' backgrounds compared with their ideas that had arisen from looking at the work.

They all looked at the form together. "I'd still interview her for (our department)" said Graham. "Oh absolutely, absolutely" replied Colin quickly. Elaine carried on: "Oh yeah, yeah we're not saying, no, but that's what you'd be wanting to find out at the interview."

Graham continued:

But I think what's interesting if you were interviewing her for (this specialism) is that you know the question she'd be asking is why (this department)? And that'd be quite an interesting starting point for a conversation.

Elaine "mmm-hmmmd", then added "But it isn't (that specialism) was it?" "No" replied Graham, "but then we'd see how she reacted to that." "Is she still of interest to you Sam after reading the statement?" I asked. "I'd be, I'd be really worried, but I was anyway" he replied. "Because of what? Her experience or -" I asked. "Just because of that teachability" he replied. "She strikes me as very Gemma" said Elaine again. "I think she might want to just -" began Sam. "Yeah" said Colin in response to Elaine. "Why are you saying that Elaine? Is what you're reading reminding you of her?" I asked. "It -"

Elaine paused, then carried on:

What I'm reading is, is not necessarily what Gemma's experiences have been but it's a similar kind of...attitude...coming through that Gemma seems to have as well that she's...what age is Gemma about 23 or something?

She looked to Colin. "I haven't read this at all. Let's have a look" said Graham. Elaine continued:

Which is again [...] she's desperately wanting to be cool all the time and this kind of you know [...] I'm, or I've got a level of sophistication and skill an'...let's see you trying to teach me anything.

Colin came in: "Yeah...it's the, I suppose in what, you know when I look for teachability, I look for...the wee clue is, just a wee pocket of -" "Humility!" exclaimed Elaine. "Humility" said Colin in synch:

That pops up some where and humility is kin' of essential to learning I think and so when I read through this statement I agree with Elaine, I don't find any clues to humility infact I kin' of, I see the reverse slight kind of-

"But again you would -" interrupted Elaine. "Galousness in it" concluded Colin. "You would interview, you'd definitely interview" stressed Elaine. "Oh yeah" said Colin. "Yeah" repeated Elaine. "Without a doubt, that's what I'd be trying to figure out" suggested Colin. "Would that be hard to get then, if you were doing a telephone interview which might be the case with someone who -" I began. "It'd be impossible over the phone I think" said Elaine. "Just have to be a fairly long telephone conversation" said Colin more relaxed sounding. "Yeah" agreed Graham. Colin explained his approach more:

An' try and warm it up somehow and I mean lot of it would depend on how you dealt with the interview, you'd have, you'd have to try and relax things a bit get it relatively casual I suppose an' then build up to you know more formal questions.

Graham had another approach: "Yeah but I think you would, I think you would try and displace her. That's certainly what I would do." Colin "uh-huhd". "How do you mean?"

I asked. Graham explained:

You know by saying that, you know, we've looked at the folio, I'm interested in it and I'm from (another department) and displace her thinking about her work in that way, and see how she reacts to that, why is (Department B) not interviewing

me, why is (Department E) interviewing me and I didn't choose (that department) and kind of take it from there and see what happens you know.

Colin had “yeahd” throughout and looked again at the paperwork: “Oh right!” exclaimed Colin as he read out Kristina's choices, “sorry I never looked at that...(Department B), First, (Department C), Second, (Department D), Third”. Graham “mmm-hmmd”. “Does that surprise you?” I asked him. Colin read from the comments sheet: “Interviewed by (Department C)...(Department E) interested” Graham read aloud from the selectors' comments sheet: “Seems to be an artist already”. “Uh-huh...” said Colin. “Doubtful of how much we could teach her” added Graham still reading aloud. “Uh-huh” said Colin again:

That's interesting now reading that reflects everything we've said and I'm just so pleased about that. In terms of collegueship, and you know a lot of this depends on being able to trust people.

Elaine seemed teasingly to question Colin's assured sounding thinking: “Well (Department C) obviously think they can teach her something.” Colin had carried on: “An' how your colleagues are approaching things in the same way as you.” “They're very interested” said Elaine smiling. “So am I” said Graham and then came back again with his ideas on displacement:

I think that's where, what's interesting about that folio is you know [...] where it shifts for me is when it moves into (this work) you know and it's like she hasn't had, she hasn't been exposed to too much experience of (this process) and I don't think she's been exposed to (this approach) at all from what you see through the stuff, it might be quite interesting, again its that kind of displacing the outcomes and the interest, and bringing it into something else that would be completely new and that could be really interesting, but is she prepared to do that?

They all “mmd” as if in agreement and brought the looking to a close.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS

Across all of the selectors, the reaction to Kristina's work had been immediately positive. From Jake's: “Wowwww look at that” to Tim's: “Right away we've got another interesting folio” Kristina's work “immediately” looked “like quite a mature” and “very professional” “kind of presentation”. From the very first page they had all got “a good buzz”. However, Kristina's sophistication also led to doubts. She had aroused almost a kind of suspicion amongst Tim, Maggie and Jeff. What did she want from art school? Why had she applied to First Year rather than Second Year direct entry? Why would someone of that age, “with all this background...not even risk being turned down at direct entry?” That shouldn't “count against them”, however, it made Tim and Maggie want to “know what we're dealing with”. The reading and re-reading of her paperwork seemed to affect the way that they had looked and constructed Kristina the person. The “critical stakes” were raised and suddenly it appeared that everything construed against Kristina. There was skepticism about her references; they hadn't told them “anything at all [...] this could just be a friend writing”. Even Kristina's declaration of why she wanted to study in this “intense [...] critical and challenging” place seemed to be met with a similar kind of cynicism.

The discussion of Kristina had seemed continually speculative: “What are the chances of this person...having a happy time over the next 4 years”; “You wonder if they would be...happy”; “She could easily get disenchanted”; “This person might see him or

herself at a level of sophistication that's beyond the kind of teaching they might be on". These quandaries led to very different outcomes. Although Tim, Maggie and Jeff finally agreed that Kristina was "no doubt quite an interesting person", they concluded that she was "probably somebody of a certain age, in love with being an artist" and that made them "inclined to think she would be difficult". They could not be sure of her or what she wanted from art school, or the course. Nor were they certain of what they could teach her that she would want to learn and more than this, her presence could have an adverse effect that would not "help the other students who would go through the course with her". Again, it was *their* "experience" of people like Kristina that led to these mixed and generalised conclusions. Kristina was constructed as a known "difficult" person and yet during the triadic had also been described as unknown, someone they were "reaching in the dark with".

Yet while other selectors shared some of these concerns over Kristina's suitability and "teachability", they had a different approach to testing out their speculations. Elaine too had constantly asked of Kristina: "What are they hoping to achieve? Why are they coming?" In order to make a decision, selectors had to understand "the needs of the person" and Kristina's expectations. Kristina's work was "slick as hell em maybe a bit cool" and, together with the cross-referral of the paperwork, she instilled a feeling of trouble in some of the selectors. The implication with Kristina was that "you'd have difficulty in terms of their assimilation into the course and how much they could get out it". How Kristina presented herself in the application form, her statement and even photograph, caused all kinds of associations and presumptions about her. "Teachability"

went hand in hand with “humility”, an attribute “essential to learning” and they had not found “clues to humility” in Kristina's work; in fact it had been “the reverse, slight kind of galousness in it”. Kristina's visual material and paperwork seemed to signal an “attitude” that they had seen in other students and were nervous of or almost hostile to.

However, in order to understand Kristina the person, they needed to “interview... and find out what” her “attitude is”. Perhaps in doing so they would discover that she, “actually hasn't resourced” herself enough and that fears about her being overly sophisticated may prove unfounded. Indeed it may even be that Kristina was limited in her focus and under resourced in exposure to other areas and “the First year course” could “open them up” because despite some “really sophisticated ideas” she had taken “quite linear routes”. Kristina might “realise” her “limitations” or she might think she's “a superstar” and only wants “to be polished a little”. Maybe Kristina had not fully understood the selection process and what the application material had asked of her. The interview would be the forum to explore that “teachability thing”, “what their motivations are”, and “their expectations of the course”.

The discussions of Kristina reinforced the idea that across the gamut of selectors, different expectations and readings of the visual and written material could lead to very different outcomes. It seemed to depend on who was looking, what those selectors wanted, their experiences of other students, courses they offered and how they chose to use, or not, all of the elements of the selection process. While Colin had been “so pleased” that other selectors' comments had reflected “everything we've said” the outcomes for Kristina had been very different. She was in the unusual position of having

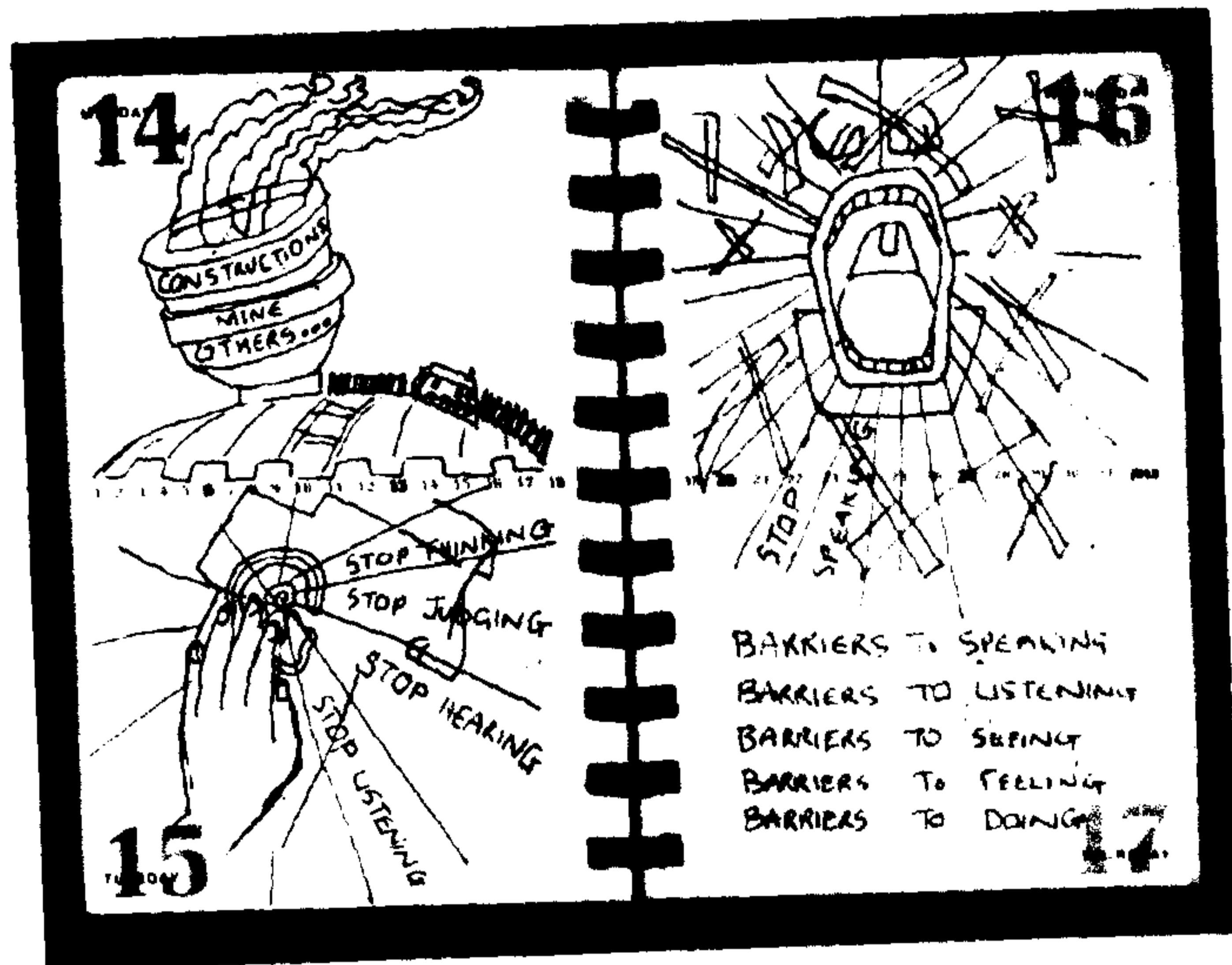
too much and too many experiences, yet also for some, not having enough “specialist” experience. The conflict of viewpoints continued in ideas of maturity. Maturity in the visual work was often sought after, however, her maturity of age in relation to this level of visual sophistication was potentially more problematic. In this case it caused doubts about her assimilation into the course. Kristina could be a problem, “a big problem”, and for some that was too much of a risk. For others she was “definitely, obviously an interview”; Kristina “could still be a viable student”.

These discussions showed the fine-tuning of what was desired and how that shifted across selectors. There were different positions amongst these selectors over what qualities were sought. In this case, the sometimes informal nature of the process was also an important factor. Jeff had casually entered into the review and had a critical influence on the outcome; he had been the “tie breaker” that confirmed Kristina’s exclusion. This highlighted something of the precariousness of the process, particularly in relation to Kristina which was echoed in the shifting responses throughout. Likewise, with Graham's input, while he had not affected the outcome, his presence showed that in those *unplanned* moments, an applicant who might have been passed over could be seen and picked up by another group. Kristina’s review suggested that space for this to happen could be important to an applicant’s chances of entry.

All of these discussions raised questions about the courses themselves and how willing individuals were to have their teaching challenged by potentially “difficult” students. It had seemed that there was a desire for difference - but not too different. During the triadic Maggie had described Kristina's work as “idiosyncratic”; it had shown

“maturity, a more sophisticated mind at work”. Yet now the notion of going beyond teaching and courses took on new meaning and significance in this context. Selectors had sometimes tried to go beyond the surface of visual work in order to understand what and who they were looking at. Applicants also had to come to selectors, going beyond the influence of courses and teaching in order to reveal themselves. However, Kristina's work seemed outside of this; it was “advanced stuff [...] right out of the norm” and to some that made her too different. Her maturity, level of sophistication and individuality, put her *beyond* entry in some selectors' minds and conversely made her exactly the kind of student that others wanted. Kristina was a quandary, an unknown; for some it was an unknown that they felt they knew; they had seen it in other students and wondered if Kristina could be harnessed, what you could teach someone like that? Yet for others that she could not be fixed or explained was what held the interest. The captivation seemed to be that she could go anywhere and this unpredictability could give rise to something new and exciting, something unexpected. She would be a challenge and for some that was a quality to be desired; for others it only led to doubts, even fears. These discussions showed the shifts across selectors' thinking and how this broad range of looking could open up chances. Although Tim was on the edge, Maggie and Jeff's concerns over the difficulty that Kristina seemed to signal finally swayed him. Jake and Graham wanted and were prepared to take the risks that Kristina appeared to represent and this was what moved her through into entry. Colin's words had seemed to sum things up: “It's difficult isn't it? You don't want somebody too sophisticated but you don't want somebody too unsophisticated, you need somebody just some where in the middle.”

Reflections: En/unfolding Selection



INTRODUCTION

In this research I hoped to offer new insights to in/exclusion, in particular how it surfaces and shifts within institutional processes of selection and more specifically, Higher Education in Art and Design. This was a highly contextual look inside one institution; a snapshot involving a unique set of actors. Selection has changed over the three years since this study began and in these reflections and arising thoughts I try to take account of the changing context of the selection process. One of the biggest shifts to happen is the movement from the Scottish Joint College Application Scheme - involving all 4 Colleges in Scotland - to UCAS. Indeed, it was the imminence of this change that made the study timely and important to undertake. Change so often seems to happen without time for reflection on what currently goes on and how that might influence decisions for the future.

In terms of shifts, there is now increased *written* guidance for applicants on admissions processes, specifically completion of paperwork, what to put into a portfolio and to expect at interview⁷⁵. Guidance for potential applicants as well as criteria for selection has - on paper - become more explicit. These procedures suggest a desire to make admissions' processes more transparent for applicants, staff and across the HE sector as a whole and have arisen in response to wider policy drives to bring about fair admissions, address issues such as FE/HE transition and, importantly, continue to widen access. In undertaking this study, I hoped to add to what was underway and also point to areas that still seemed to need consideration. By opening up selection in *practice*, my

⁷⁵ All of this is available on the internet as well as in booklet form.

aim was to influence change through a response to what happens on the ground as part of people's day to day processes.

As many of the writers drawn on in this study propose, it is this very detail of insight, getting inside those areas that were and still are often unspoken and unseen that makes this investigation so important. The selection stories themselves are *troubling*, as Lather (1991) suggests, precisely because they do not bypass complexity or conceal flaws but are perplexing in the emotional, ethical and moral wrangling that they pose.

In this section, I try to pull together, open out and close off some of the issues raised by the individual case studies. In doing so, I also draw on wider selection narratives from other selection groups to help reinforce how some of these issues and ideas surfaced across the process. I also use this en/unfolding as an opportunity to work in areas from the quantitative material, re-contextualising a number of ideas that emerged from the selection stories by broadening them out into a wider field of applicants.

A huge area was covered by the statistics and only a very small part is used here. In the quantitative work I try to engage with the shifting factors that affect an applicant's chances of in/exclusion, allowing other important layers of insight to the specialist nature of looking across selection teams and amongst individual selectors. Chance, probability and odds of in/exclusion as they relate to applicants' movement through the process are explored and allow further ways of thinking about ideas - particularly of risk - as raised by selectors' narratives. By looking specifically at the odds of in/exclusion, as well as how applicants are measured and scored by different selection groups, I try to tease out how the apparent shifts in approach and outcomes play out across all of the

candidates. I also explore if and how factors such as social class, type of school and postcode - the focus of many performance indicators - have an effect on applicants' in/exclusion.

I have tried to avoid the proliferation of numbers that writers such as Hacking (1982) warned of and that I have questioned throughout and hone in on very specific areas that help to expand the understanding of the stories of selection. This exploratory combining and re-combining of variables alongside the detail of the narratives is an attempt, as Gephart (1988) advocates, not only to “bridge the gap” (6) between methods, but to trouble the “distinction” (Ibid:65) and “rules” (Ibid:64) in order to expand “dialogue” (Ibid:65), ways of looking and understanding. My hope here, like Lather (1991) and St. Pierre (1997), is to make these reflections continue to *trouble* - productively - by offering possibilities for re-thinking in/exclusion and approaches to it that arise directly from the research and in particular that emerged empirically and reflexively.

(UN)CERTAINTY AND READINESS

CHARTING THE SHIFTS

Nothing is more fragile than the surface [...]. We might have thought at first that we were inside the same element [...]. But we see now that we have changed elements, that we have entered a storm (Deleuze, 1990:82).

Deleuze introduces the idea of the appearance of things as a surface, not to be penetrated, but to be entered into, unfolding and enfolding all at once. Nothing is fixed or finite. Binary oppositions are dispersed “into a continuous tacking movement that finds no rest” (St. Pierre. 1997:184). The selection process and decision-making was not

clear-cut and the selection stories showed this by taking us through the emotions, certainty and uncertainty of selection events⁷⁶. Just as Williams (1997) and Schwartz and Webb (2002) suggest, this was an arena in which ideas shifted their meaning in the hands of different people, in response to diverse applicants and often seemed in continual flux. It was a process in which different kinds of looking folded in on one another, disappearing and reappearing as shifting relations of power became visible (Foucault, 1994).

The cases showed the extremities of these *shifting* movements. Colin and Duncan's uncertain, "50/50" dilemma over Ray's inclusion when the focus was only on the visual work. Then, the certainty that arose from the interview and meeting Ray the person, where they each became convinced, believing that "*he* can do it". These ideas shifted again with Jake and Eddie's sureness of James and Jackie's exclusion. Neither as people nor in their paperwork or portfolio were they seen as "ready for art school" and in this instance readiness folded into the need and visibility of their "hunger" to be accepted. Unlike other applicants who had wanted "something desperately", Jackie and James seemed only to be "waiting for it to come to them". Conversely, there was the absolute certainty of Katie as a person that arose from looking at the visual work; she had, "that spark of uniqueness" that allowed selectors to tell from the visuals alone that Katie was "a banker".

⁷⁶ 'Event' may seem an odd choice of word, however, arose directly from a discussion with a friend who described selection as an important "event" in the academic calendar. It seemed to me too that the drama, discussion, noise, and exchange within the process made selection feel event-like, as though something unusual or special was taking place.

The shift into Angela's case, showed that the balance of in/exclusion could be more fraught. Jill and Rona struggled with their uncertainty over whether Angela could “cope”. The “glimmers” and “potential” they spoke of seemed to signal their desire to be more certain about Angela's capacity for inclusion and the review of her work appeared on the edge. What tipped the balance in such cases was not fixed and in the end, Angela's in/exclusion came down to the weighting of “hit” and “misses”. There were just not “enough hits” and “too many misses”. The decision to include both Sue and Alicia caused the movement to change direction yet again, introducing another kind of certainty based on what was presumed known and the different kinds of expectations that this knowledge could lead to. From Ewan's perspective, although Sue and Alicia's work was “not outstanding”, in terms of what he expected, it was “very...credible”.

Like Sue and Alicia, Angus's inclusion also arose from selectors' knowledge and experience of particular students and where they came from. In this instance, Angus was described as part of a generalised, tried and tested group of overseas applicants that selectors like Tim knew their “success rates” with. Even though Tim's certainty had not extended to other selectors such as Maggie, his experience of teaching people like Angus made him positive that he would fit in. These cases in particular showed how selectors' knowledge of particular applicants could lead to different levels of expectation and the use of other kinds of criteria from those applied to other candidates.

In the discussion of Kristina, ideas of good and bad risks, as well as *risky* or *too risky* an individual also took different turns. Kristina was a desired unknown for selectors like Jake and Graham, with an unpredictability that they wanted. Yet for Tim and Maggie, it

was that very quality which led her to be seen as a known possibility of *trouble*, someone who “probably would be a difficult student”. For others again, the *trouble* that Kristina seemed to represent was not seen solely as her “problem”, but was also a responsibility that lay with teachers and courses to open up to the challenge that applicants like her might present. How selectors worked their way through to a final decision seemed racked with shifts and hypothesising over *readiness*: how applicants would do once on the course and what they might do next - all bound up in an array of factors that constituted being *ready*.

Qualifications

From the discussions, perhaps strangely, it seemed that the currency of *qualifications*, for example in art might not be central to these considerations and indeed at times their influence had appeared almost cursory. During wider discussions the qualifications section of the application form had been described as something that you: “Just give it a glance to make sure that the basic English is there for instance, that sort of thing”. When asked directly whether an applicant being qualified or not was a concern, Joe had replied that it might “concern us if they were...greatly under-qualified”, however, the expectation was that applicants were usually in the midst of *becoming* qualified, “so in a sense it’s not an issue”.

A number of the discussions allowed some of the subtlety of this area to emerge. For example, in the case of Angela and James, it seemed that being locked into other modes of teaching and learning and qualification frameworks within schools or Further

Education may work against you. Or, like Kristina, having no formal or standard qualifications in art could be part of what sets you aside and brings you in or paradoxically, sets you too far apart from the experience applied to. Added classes in art may function similarly, where not being in the “right environment”, with the “right peer group” takes you further and further away from the specific nature of the learning and teaching experience being considered in these selection processes. In this context, if qualifications played a part in *readiness*, the narratives hinted that these too might be part of a more subtle complex of factors that were open to shifts across selection groups.

Teachability

Teachability did seem to be a key part of an applicant’s readiness. Selection was a process where in order to be fair, selectors had to see beyond the surface of visual work and the benign/malign effects of teaching to get to the person. The person and/or work could signal un/teachability and selectors often struggled with how and where applicants got that from. It was not clear-cut. It was a tangle and it shifted in a highly contextualised way. There were those like Angela with potential that selectors felt would benefit “from doing First Year” but they were unsure if she was “ready”. Some selectors had suggested that this might be bound up in an applicant’s prior learning experience, where the route taken and how it prepared someone could affect their chances of in/exclusion: “You can [...] see the chance if it's a good art department, [...] the [...] chance that a school kid's had.” Likewise Duncan and Colin had struggled constantly with Ray, puzzling whether his work was the “product of his current education”, if “this

is something he's encouraged to do in school" or "a subject he's taken up himself". Some selectors tried to engage with these issues in order to get a fuller picture of both the person and their visual work. With Katie too, even though she had hooked them in, selectors still tried to "look past the school" in order to understand how, as a person, she was learning and teaching herself.

Ideas about the influence of teaching, motivation for study and applicants' ability to go beyond those influences shifted across selectors. Even though a good art department and teacher could set an applicant off in the right direction, it did not always follow that this would lead to entry. This was flagged up during wider discussions, where it was made clear that a good teaching influence did not always mean "they must be good". Selectors had often tried to "think" about how "they used that opportunity to advantage or not, 'cause you don't want to disadvantage people that haven't been at a good school." Many selectors discussed their recognition that some applicants were being "led to look at the right things [...] artists and taken to exhibitions and being made aware." Selectors had to try to get beyond *what* and *how* something was taught in order to reach the individual.

That was often "difficult" as they had "to look out for...the [...] students' focus and not the teacher's focus". This was something that some selectors felt they had to do because:

You know it's a good school...and [...] maybe this is an impressive folder but this person's been given a lot of opportunity, so how does that compare to someone that maybe doesn't have that opportunity [...]. There's got to be something underneath. There's got to be someone there.

“Folios” that were “well directed, beautifully presented, easy [...] to look at” caused a real “difficulty” for many selectors as they had to see beyond the gloss. One selector had called this the “aesthetics of presentation” where the “course is so strong” that “rather than a true development of an individual...creative process” it becomes “formularised”. It was also “much harder” for selectors when they came “to the folios that haven't been so well directed but there's a definite personality there”. They had to consider that and not “go against them because they don't have this quality of presentation”.

All of this seemed in stark contrast to the discussion of Angus, Sue and Alicia, which showed so clearly that selectors’ presumed knowledge and experience of people could influence their ideas on applicants’ readiness. Without looking at the paperwork, Tim had been prepared to make so many allowances for the limited education and levels of advice that he assumed to be available to Angus. Likewise with Sue and Alicia there were forceful, though tenuous presumptions about their background, cultural experience, where they came from and the kinds of opportunities and chances this led to. This distinction between what was known or unknown signalled how selectors knowledge of people or place, as well the ways in which they used the different layers of the process to understand an application, could affect an applicant’s chances.

This was perhaps made most evident in the discussion of Kristina, where the work was felt to be “so sophisticated in terms of teachability” that she “might, [...] see [...] herself at a level [...] that's beyond the kind of teaching” on offer. This idea of *beyond* and in particular looking *beyond* the surface of applications, emerged in almost all of the

discussions and was made more complex by the changing elements that selectors drew upon to help them do this. Wide ranging factors often came into play, such as selectors' experience of past students on course, knowledge of where applicants came from, particular schools, courses that applicants had undertaken, what the work signalled about the person, and, if they made it to the next stage, how they performed at interview. This latter element had often been seen as a critical part of assessing someone's teachability and sometimes what happened at this stage was the very detail that an applicant's in/exclusion hinged on. The visual work might have convinced, however, at interview the person might not, or conversely, for others the interview could provide an opportunity for the person to win through. "Teachability" - where it came from and how it was identified - was not straightforward, however, it was not only bound up in the portfolio but also it seemed in qualities of the person.

Kinds of knowledge

Readiness was also linked to broader *kinds of knowledge* and where this came from also troubled some selectors: "How does a student or school pupil that age know, if they're not availed of anything else other than their teacher, and their family are not involved in art?" Colin had asked. The discussions of Jackie, James and Ray made visible some of the kinds of expectations of knowledge amongst selectors. In Ray's case a question during the interview about exhibitions at very specific galleries suggested that applicants had to "have an idea of the field" they were getting into. In Jackie's case a more sophisticated requirement or level of understanding had seemed necessary: how to

make the “dull” and “robotic” part of your strategy for making work. In James's case too an expectation of knowledge of the course, pushing and elbowing your way in order to “convince us to take him”. During wider discussions, Rick, Joe and Alex had suggested that there was “no excuse for not being informed about contemporary work”. “I mean we hand out a lot of stuff at Open Days” or you could find it in “Sunday Supplements”. This apparent ease of access to particular kinds of knowledge and understanding also found its place in an analogy to football:

Some little kid who was wanting to be a signing for Rangers [...] he'd know all the footballers...you know, you'd find out, you'd be keen enough on the subject to actually find out about it.

It seemed it was not only what information you could access, but where and how you could access it. It sometimes came across as simple: knowledge was out there, all you had to do was go to the right places and sources. While many selectors did grapple over the level of access available to people, on this occasion with Rick, Joe and Alex, there was no consideration of who reads the Sunday Supplements. Neither was there any distinction between the potential accessibility of football and footballers within many people's experience as opposed to contemporary art. Whether living locally with art and galleries on your doorstep would necessarily make physical and intellectual access to these things any easier never entered this conversation. While many selectors did struggle, ideas of access took various forms. They were considerations that were sometimes spoken out loud yet were applied distinctly by and to different people or sometimes not applied at all.

Im/maturity

Im/maturity also folded into readiness and sometimes this formed part of the decision to in/exclude. Older in age may mean more fixed as a learner and younger, more open to teaching. Older might mean fewer chances and less time, for example, Jill and Rona had really struggled with Angela “because [...] she has responsibilities and she is older”, while younger could mean more chances, time to change direction and try again. Im/maturity in the visual work might be disrupted by im/maturity in the person and visa versa. Im/maturity itself may have no link with age: older, you may have immature work and younger, the work might be more mature. New work could look old and older work could seem new. Nothing was simple, it was neither one way nor another.

Ethics and emotions

Ethics surfaced as part of the readiness discourse, alongside emotions and responsibilities and these too shifted across selectors. Ewan's ethics regarding Sue and Alicia, where they came from and the limited chances he presumed that they had seemed to have a kind of benevolence. Similarly with Angus, there had been a somewhat one-sided ethical interjection about the need to consider his impoverished education that did not, on this occasion, extend to other applicants. Ethics meant for some selectors that selection was the “most emotional job” they had to do, with recognition of the “blood sweat and tears” that applicants put into an application. There was also the ethical dilemma of applicants having potential but not being ready for acceptance, where:

We're saying [...] they're a candidate for an access course, portfolio course...which is kind of implying that they're a potential candidate for the degree course [...] an' that's looking to kind of take the responsibility away from the school and on to other courses.

Feelings played an important part in the process. From the almost pained responses to visual work, to the excited and captivated “wow”, and the less certain “gut feeling”, decision-making was not always a detached or rational process but was emotional. In the face of uncertainty over an applicant, feelings about the person were often what were gone on. Many of the cases had shown this: “You know you come across portfolios which, which you're not troubled by emotionally because they're clearly, don't really give a shit kinna portfolios”. However, when you came across the “kinna...immature and weak” but “not don't give a shit portfolios” the problem was:

The emotional aspect of this is you can't access these people, 'cause they're not gonna get the interview, [...] it's just a horrible feeling when you see [...] all that hope, but you can't tell them.

Yet for other selectors this kind of emotional ethics never seemed to surface with anything like the same kind of intensity. It was a more straightforward invitation for applicants to “convince” us. This complex of the portfolio and what applicants' statements and references said was important for many selectors to really try to understand. It often allowed them to see the “hope” and figure out what an applicant needed to do, yet compounded the emotions of not being able to act on that knowledge. Jill and Rona raised this specifically with Angela when they identified the kinds of advice and support necessary and signalled their frustration that there were no

mechanisms to let them do that. All of that potential left a sense of “shame” and were the very cases that many selectors struggled over. The kind of applicant who was not “too sophisticated and not too unsophisticated” might get an interview and get in; riskier applicants like Kristina might also get an interview and find a place. However, it was unclear what those applicants who may really need and benefit from support and advice, and that many selectors wanted to reach, were likely to get from the process. While the discussions suggested that there sometimes is or could be feedback, the process came across as informal and those that did not ask were left “where they don’t really know [...] what you should do [...] it just means they didn’t get in”.

SHIFTING PROCESSES AND KINDS OF LOOKING

Any sense of predictability in decisions, such as exclusion of the uncertain lower scoring borderlines and inclusion of the more certain high scores was disrupted by all of these cases. It seemed that “the problem is there's no exact line where you say they don't get an interview”. It had been “difficult to generalise about it and you are looking for those little things in the portfolio, those little things in the form that just let you say okay, interview”. This looking at the paperwork had moved around too. Some selectors only looked at references “if there's a lot that we think are...mediocre” but these did not “mean as much as they should [...], because obviously they're all going to be positive”. Yet for others “a good reference” made them “think twice” and “teachers at schools that we know [...] that you can sort of get to almost trust the references.”

Alongside the different uses of the paperwork, the purpose of interview also seemed to shift. Where the visual work had convinced selectors of the person, such as with Katie, an interview could just be “the icing on the cake” or to “confirm our faith”. However, as Ray’s discussion showed it could also be a much more critical part of the process, where perhaps the work had been weaker and the interview was necessary “to find out what kind of person” the applicant was, if they were “actually [...] more mature” than the “work represents”. For some selectors the rationale for interview was different again and the criteria came down to a more basic: “I think if somebody shows that bit of competence in drawing then it's at least worth an interview”.

All of these cases signalled clearly that “there's no formula” of what gets in or not. It was a shifting combination of factors, bound up in what selectors and applicants brought to the process; a fine-tuning between what was known and unknown, what seemed certain and uncertain. For some selectors it was a struggle to look beyond the influences and background that could equip a portfolio and person with different levels of literacy. For others there was recognition that the “odds” of in/exclusion might mean different things to different people. Many selectors had relayed that perhaps some applicants had fewer and more limited opportunities with more to lose in the process. At other times as in the review of Jackie and James, it seemed that it was up to the applicant to make selectors notice and persuade them to take you.

Selectors also frequently descended into a specialist discourse of departments, courses and processes that reflected the needs and demands of the specialism. However, here too there were paradoxes as this was often butted alongside a desire for applicants

to be able to undertake a breadth of learning, such as that offered by First Year. For example with Katie, while the interest was in the breadth of her work, they were also looking ahead, “trying to think is this someone [...] who'll sit within the department”. Likewise, with Kristina, perhaps too broad for First Year, however, neither was there a “heavy [...] weight of [...] evidence” to “support her application” to the specialism and that was a “mark” held “against her”. Angela prompted another specialist angle; perhaps she was too departmentally focused at this stage and might not fit into “a broad based First Year course”. Conversely, selectors might be concerned that an applicant could feel “they're beyond the kind of learning they would have in the First year”. While others again might think that applicants “hadn't been [...] exposed to [...] other possibilities” and wanted to “open them up towards [...] other ways of mediating these ideas”. It seemed that views on what the First Year experience offered to different kinds of applicants and how this related to their fit within more specialist study also played a part in decision-making.

The selection narratives opened up the idea of different kinds of looking and suggested that some selectors seemed to look harder, more emotionally and more responsibly than others. There was often a strange mix of desire for certainty over an applicant's readiness and suitability, yet also looking for the unexpected and unpredictability: not too much, just the right balance. Within all of this, the combination of what worked for applicants in terms of their in/exclusion seemed to shift depending on who was looking; what led to rejection for one person could be the very things that included another.

REFLECTING INTO THE WIDER FIELD

FLUCTUATIONS AND CHANCE

These detailed cases gave valuable insights, suggesting differences in how selectors looked as well as what they looked for, but also left questions over how such shifts might play out across a wider field of applicants. As outlined in *Troubling methodology*, a large number of variables were explored that tested the effects of factors such as age, social class, ethnicity, type of school and postcode on applicants' scores, chances of interview and entry (Table 1).

As can be seen from the visual, the shifts within the narratives also played out in the initial bivariate work. Gender had an effect on score – males scoring slightly higher than females - but not on interview or entry chances. Similarly, domicile and type of school impacted on score, with applicants from other parts of the UK and those attending state schools outwith Scotland appearing to achieve slightly better scores, yet again this had no significant influence at interview or entry. Ethnicity, so prevalent in the review of Sue and Alicia, had no major effect at any of the key stages when looked at across all of the applicants. Likewise the discourse of maturity linked to age, highlighted with Angela, did not seem to impact on how well or badly an applicant was scored, whether they were interviewed or gained entry. Being qualified in English or Art⁷⁷, had significance across two areas: English jumped from score to entry and bypassed interview, while Art passed over score and had significance at interview and entry chances. Effects fluctuated across the process; however, one factor appeared constant

⁷⁷ At Higher, CSYS, A'level and in the case of English also including Communications 4.

and moved through all of the three stages – the effects of departmental choice. It seemed as with the narratives, that where you applied to and who did the looking might also have impact across all applicants in terms of their score, interview and entry chances.

(Non) significance

Before looking in more detail at the progress of all applicants through these stages, it seems important to note how the *trouble* with statistics that I had experienced earlier in the research process and raised by writers such as Gephart (1988), also followed me through into these latter stages. While the range of significance levels are of interest in allowing the shifts in effect to be charted visually across the various stages, the kinds of exclusions that arose within these set measures caused other kinds of questions to arise. Although no longer significant in this seemingly “orderly world represented by abstract rules” (15), the importance of areas such as social class, ethnicity and age did not go away because of their disappearance from the “conventional rules of significance” (Ibid:64). This very non-significance also offered potential meaning and “sources of insight into social processes” (Ibid:11).

The primacy of social class and type of school in relation to concerns to address in/exclusion prompted an interest, as Heshusius (1994) had suggested, in looking away towards other factors that slipped out of the significance range, considering what their non-significance might mean within and to this particular context. Social class was not significant in relation to any of the three key stages of the process. However, in an attempt to move beyond too fixed an idea of class in terms of occupation alone, it was

Social Class by target school

Social class	target school		T
	Yes	No	
• professional/intermediate	47.8%	58.5%	57.0%
• Skilled manual/non-manual	23.9%	21.3%	21.5%
• Semi/unskilled	15.2%	10.7%	11.1%
• Other	13.0%	9.5%	9.7%
	T 100.0%	T 100.0%	T 100.0%

% within target schools

n=633 valid cases 595

chi 2.289 df 3 p.515 (>0.05 n.sig.)

Note: 'Other' includes, unemployed, students, armed forces, housewife/husband, retired and inadequately described.
 'target' schools, only includes those in West of Scotland.

Social Class by target school entry

accepted Yes	Social class	target school Yes
	• professional/intermediate	40.0%
	• Skilled manual/non manual	33.3%
	• Semi/unskilled	20.0%
	• Other	6.7%
	T	100.0%

% within target schools

Table 2

Social Class by Post-code 200

social class	Post-code 200		T
	Yes	No	
• professional/intermediate	45.5%	60.4%	57.0%
• Skilled manual non-manual	27.3%	19.9%	21.2%
• Semi/unskilled	14.5%	10.3%	11.1%
• Other	12.7%	9.3%	10.0%
	T 100%	T 100%	T 100.0%

% within postcode 200 *

n=633 valid cases 603

chi 8.290 df 3 p.040 (≤ 0.05) significant
phi .117

Note: post-code 200 refers to 1-200 rank of deprivation in Scottish post-codes only.
 • applicant post-codes were merged to include ranking of both term and home addresses, with highest deprivation rank used.

Social Class by Post-code 200 entry

accepted Yes	social class	Post-code 200 Yes
	• professional/intermediate	44.4%
	• Skilled manual non manual	22.2%
	• Semi/unskilled	19.4%
	• Other	13.9%
	T	100.0%

% within postcode 200 *

Table 3

also looked at more dynamically through interaction with wide ranging factors such as gender, ethnicity and school type. Again, none of these were significant at this initial level of analysis and this non-significance spurred further questioning, in particular over how resources are targeted in terms of widening access to Higher Education.

This can be seen clearly in the following visual where social class was looked at in relation to specific schools identified as having low participation rates in Higher Education⁷⁸ (Table 2). In this instance, unexpectedly higher numbers of applicants from these schools came from professional and intermediate social classes, more than three times as many as those from semi and unskilled backgrounds. More specifically, when entry was layered, the majority of applicants gaining entry from this route were from social classes already better represented in Higher Education. In this instance, compared again to semi and unskilled backgrounds, twice as many applicants from target schools who gained entry were from professional and intermediate classes. Although in statistical terms the level of difference is not deemed significant, in light of such a strong focus of resources to encourage applications from these schools this is still of interest. It signals that the social make up of schools, even those targeted in terms of low participation, can be quite heterogeneous and potentially changing.

Similar questions were raised when social class was examined in relation to the postcode or geodemographic dimension of applicants and chances of entry (Table 3). On this occasion the relationship between social class and postcode was significant, with higher numbers of applicants living in the Scottish 1-200 rank, coming from skilled

⁷⁸ This specifically relates to schools in the West of Scotland.

Social Class and Portfolio Scores					
Portfolio Score	Professional/Intermediate	Skilled Manual Non-manual	Semi and unskilled	Others	T
One	37.5%	39.2%	35.4%	27.5%	36.7%
Two	19.7%	19.6%	27.1%	17.5%	20.3%
Three	27.3%	26.8%	27.1%	32.5%	27.6%
Four	15.5%	14.4%	10.4%	22.5%	15.4%
T	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

n = 633 valid cases = 449 *% within social class*

chi 5.000 df 9 p.834 (>0.05) not sig.

Table 4

Interview and Entry by Social Class					
Social class					
Interview	Professional/Intermediate	Skilled man. non man.	Semi and unskilled	Others	T
Yes	47.0%	53.8%	53.4%	52.0%	49.6%
no	53.0%	46.2%	46.6%	48.0%	50.4%
T	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Entry					T
Yes	29.4%	36.1%	46.6%	32.0%	33.0%
no	70.6%	63.9%	53.4%	68.0%	67.0%
T	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

n = 633 valid cases 606 % within social class

Interview/social class chi 2.160 df 3 p.540 (>0.05) not sig

Entry / Social class chi 7.215 df 3 p.065 (>0.05) not sig.

Table 5

manual/non-manual and semi and unskilled backgrounds⁷⁹. However, as the figure shows again, a much higher number of applicants than may have been expected living in these areas were from professional and intermediate social classes; this was more than three times as many as from semi and unskilled backgrounds. When entry was layered and again compared to semi and unskilled backgrounds, more than twice as many applicants living within a targeted postcode area who gained entry were from professional and intermediate classes. If postcodes, like target schools, are to be used as indicators for monitoring institutional and sector wide progress in relation to in/exclusion, then these figures pose important questions. Initiatives and forms of monitoring that focus on altering numbers in terms of single indicators have to be troubled by more complex work, looking more specifically at the individual profile of applicants and specifically at who actually gains entry from these areas.

Social class was also looked at in relation to portfolio scores to examine whether class seemed to lead to higher or lower scores and as (Table 4) shows, again this offered up other important considerations. Here, the non-significance is of interest as it potentially destabilises ideas that social class might be a factor in the quality of an applicant's work. In this context, overall, applicants from diverse social backgrounds did not score significantly differently from one another.

When social class shifted into both interview and entry chances as the visuals suggest, once *inside* the selection system, candidates' social class, particularly at interview, did not seem to have significant effect (Table 5). However, the imbalance of numbers of applicants specifically in terms of social class and ethnicity is a key issue.

⁷⁹ This ranking was based on Gibb et al's (1998) 1-200 rank.

Individuals from professional and intermediate classes accounted for more than five times as many applicants as those from semi and unskilled backgrounds. Likewise, in comparison with white applicants, submissions from black and minority ethnic groups accounted for a fraction - less than 4% - of all applications.

This disparity reinforces the need for more detailed work that engages with the kind of processes that might inhibit and encourage people to make a decision to study. For example, the research of Reay, David and Ball (2002) had emphasised the importance of understanding an individual's decision to move into study, and in particular the diverse factors that affect Higher Education choice. Gayle et al's (2003a, 2003b) work using Youth Cohort Data also introduced important ideas about the factors that influence the resolve to study as well as affect chances of entry⁸⁰. This multivariate analysis suggests that parental experiences of Higher Education are strong explanations for the in/exclusion of young people to and from A' level routes and subsequent entry to Higher Education, particularly in terms of social class. The decision to *enter* these routes by young people from manual, semi and unskilled backgrounds show significantly lower numbers than those with professional and managerial parents. Moreover, building on the work of Modood and Shiner (1994), Gayle et al's study signals that while the divide between white and ethnic minority groups may be closing in terms of entry into qualification routes, there is still wide variation in Higher Education participation across different minority ethnic groups.

⁸⁰ Youth Cohort Study collects information on young people's "experiences of education, training and work as well as [...] aspirations [...] family and personal circumstances" (Gayle et al, 2003b:2) as part of a major programme of longitudinal research that aims to monitor the decisions of young people as they progress through education and beyond.

These studies are of particular interest in this context as applicants to this institution made their longing and desire to be at art school and more specifically this particular establishment very visible, in personal statements, visual work and often at interview. In these cases, desire appeared to cut across social class, age, ethnicity and the spatiality of where someone came from. It seemed that in this context, stepping outside the focus of significance levels was critical in opening up wider forms of understanding of experience. Once inside the institution's processes, across the board and regardless of age, class or ethnicity, applicants may appear to be treated similarly. However, the challenge is really how to encourage a wider body of applicants to come forward. To do that also requires engagement with what it is that inhibits such a move and a commitment to developing those applications into entry. These are particularly important considerations. Social class is a prime indicator of institutional performance in relation to in/exclusion, as is type of school. However, as these studies and the work of others such as Callender (2002) and Reay (1998) suggest, there is a need to go beyond the one-dimensionality of targeting and identifying people in fixed and singular ways. The range of factors that might influence an individual's decision to study, as well as choice of institution and course requires wider forms of investigation.

This initial quantitative work suggested that any straightforward explanation of what affected applicants' chances of entry or selectors' decision-making, was also more complex when played out across the gamut of layers of the selection process. It posed questions as to how particular factors might affect entry more specifically, and in order to look at this more closely, applicants' chances of in/exclusion were explored in detail

Regression: Factors affecting portfolio score

Factor	Score	↑ ↓	Significance
(Constant)	2.592		
gender (male)	.117	↑	.309 (P > 0.05) NS
domicile (UK/overseas)	.124	↑	.124 (P > 0.05) NS
dept. a	.320	↑	.241 (P > 0.05) NS
* dept c	-.591	↓	.009 (P ≤ 0.05) sig *
dept d	.272	↑	.290 (P > 0.05) NS
dept e	.060	↑	.768 (P > 0.05) NS
dept. f	.065	↑	.889 (P > 0.05) NS
dept g	-.247	↓	.191 (P > 0.05) NS
dept h	-.072	↓	.728 (P > 0.05) NS
* dept i	-.591	↓	.000 (P ≤ 0.05) sig *
* dept. j	-.929	↓	.000 (P ≤ 0.05) sig *
School type			
1) State School - (not Scotland)	.462	↑	.166 (P > 0.05) NS
2) Independent	.040	↑	.837 (P > 0.05) NS
! not qualified English	-.553	↓	.018 (P ≤ 0.05) sig *
not qualified Standard	-.292	↓	.100 (P > 0.05) NS

Note: ① English qualification includes Higher, CSYS, A'level and Communications 4

② Standard qualification is the minimum requirement of standard qualifications for entry & includes Higher, CSYS, A'level

③ State school (not Scotland) includes all other UK and overseas equivalent

as they shifted and moved through the process. Multivariate work allowed variables to be looked at in other ways, using linear and logistic regression (Gayle, 2000b) to open up the initial individual significant variables, and extend insight by allowing further ways of considering their effects across the process.

Scores

During the selection observations it appeared that the portfolio score and what it meant to an applicant's chances of entry was again dependent on who was looking, and what they might be looking for. How these variations played out across all of the selection groups and the effects of any other factors on how someone was scored, was explored using linear regression and the shifts can be seen in the following visual.

Here, the effects and significance of a range of factors on an applicant's score can be seen (Table 6). As scoring ranged from 1 to 4, in this model we can see how this fluctuates up or down in relation to the average or constant of 2.592. While there is variation across a number of areas, only four are significantly different. In terms of qualifications, in comparison with an applicant who was qualified in English, the score of someone who was not qualified was lower by over half a mark. What is of particular interest here is that while English did figure in the scoring effects and appears in the model, whether someone was similarly qualified in Art, or came from a more specialist end route such as Further Education or Portfolio Preparation, had no significant bearing. Type of school appears and as can be seen in the visual, applicants from Independent Schools did not score significantly better than candidates applying from state schools in

Scotland. Likewise, while there was a difference between the scores of applicants from state schools outside of Scotland, including overseas, again the variance was not significant.

Additionally, within selection teams, in comparison with an applicant to Department B - one of the larger recruiters - the scores of applicants to Departments C and I were lower by just over half a mark. However, those to Department J, dropped by almost one. While over a scale of 1 to 4 these seem like significant shifts, it was clear, for example in Kristina's first choice review, that a high score did not guarantee interview or entry. Conversely, as in the case of Ray, neither did a lower score necessarily mean rejection. Also, some selectors, as could be seen with Ewan, did not score at all, while others appeared meticulous in their approach. There are a number of possible explanations for the departmental differences: a harsher criterion for scoring may have been employed; a lower standard of applications might have been received or selectors did not use the full range of scores available or complete the score section, particularly at a higher level. What these fluctuations suggest is the potential within selection groups for a difference in approach, again reinforcing the distinctions that surfaced within the selection narratives.

Interview and Entry: Odds and probability

The selection stories suggested that there might be a more specific selection group or departmental factor at work. This question of what it was that seemed to make some selectors grapple and struggle emotionally and take more or different kinds of chances

than others was still less clear-cut. One of the explanations raised by Colin during the cross-school triadic shed light on this:

It's a different context because we have a relatively low application for that subject and we need to interview more people so...it's a it's a relative thing again, so we're interviewing 'cause we're looking to find more interviews.

This idea of 'necessity' to interview suggested that an applicant's chances of in/exclusion might shift across selection groups in terms of numbers of applicants and available places. However, as with the portfolio scores, the selection stories showed that this did not always play out as might have been expected. For example, in Angus's case, for every available place there were roughly 5 applicants, almost exactly the same as with Sue and Alicia. While Angela's odds were slightly better at 1:3 and Ray's even higher at 1:1.5. Yet the discussions showed disruptions in the ease and difficulty of in/exclusion. Angus eased through into the institution with little struggle as did Sue and Alicia, while the discussion of Ray and Angela – as people and in terms of their work - were particularly fraught. Although Angela's odds sounded better on paper, she did not gain entry, however, the emotional odds of what in/exclusion might mean to her were really struggled over. Likewise with Ray, the deliberation on his entry went right to the edge, hinging on his interview and what qualities he brought as an individual. Again, it seemed that applicants' chances of in/exclusion could shift in unexpected ways depending on selectors approaches.

Multivariate analysis allowed this to be looked at in some more detail, exploring how the probability of interview might shift in response to specific significant factors. In

Regression: Factors affecting chances of interview

Factor	Chance	↑↓	Significance
(Constant)	1		
IF in post-code rank 1-200 (Scotland)	1.616	↑	.043 (p ≤ 0.05) sig
IF dept a	6.077	↑	.020 (p ≤ 0.05) sig
IF Portfolio preparation route	2.477	↑	.007 (p ≤ 0.05) sig
IF NOT qualified art	2.540	↑	.000 (p ≤ 0.05) sig

constant = -.387

Odds / Probability of Interview

(Constant)

NOT in PC 200
 NOT applying to dept a
 NOT portfolio route
 qualified in art
 $-.387 \rightarrow 0.679 \rightarrow \frac{0.679}{1.679}$
 $\rightarrow 0.40 \text{ 40\%}$

① NOT in PC 200
 * IF Applying to dept a *
 - NOT portfolio route
 - qualified in art
 $-.387 + 1.805 \rightarrow \frac{4.128}{5.128}$
 $\rightarrow 0.80 \text{ 80\%}$

② NOT in PC 200
 * IF applying to dept a *
 - NOT portfolio route
 * IF NOT qualified art *
 $-.387 + 1.805 + .932 \rightarrow \frac{10.485}{11.485}$
 $\rightarrow 0.91 \text{ 91\%}$

note: art qualification relates to Higher, CSYS, A'level

english qualification relates to Higher, CSYS, A'level, Communications 4

③ * IF IN PC 200 *
 * IF applying to dept a *
 - NOT portfolio route
 * IF NOT qualified art *
 $-.387 + 1.805 + .932 + .480 \rightarrow \frac{17.064}{18.064}$
 $\rightarrow 0.94 \text{ 94\%}$

④ * IF IN PC 200 *
 * IF applying to dept a *
 * IF Portfolio route *
 * IF NOT qualified art *
 $-.387 + 1.805 + .932 + .480 + .907 \rightarrow \frac{41.971}{42.971}$
 $\rightarrow 0.97 \text{ 97\%}$

addition to the positive effects of living in a Scottish postcode ranked 1-200 (Table 7) shows that in comparison with all other routes – such as school, Further Education in Art and Design, employment - an applicant from a Portfolio Preparation course stood a better chance of interview. Likewise, compared to someone who was qualified standard in Art, having no standard qualification in this area also increased applicants' chances. Interestingly, while chance fluctuated up and down across all of the selection groups only applications to one Department, A, significantly increased an applicant's chances of interview. As can be seen in the visual, these movements were transformed into probabilities to help articulate the sense of shift and change caused by different factors. In this model the probability of interview is around 40%⁸¹. However, if an applicant had applied to Department A, their odds of interview would have increased quite dramatically, to 80%, double the chance. If the effect of having no standard qualification in Art was added to the mix, then that applicant's odds increased even further, rising to 91% and further again, 94% if the applicant also came from within the Scottish 200 index of deprivation. When all the significant factors are brought into play in the model, the applicant's probability of interview increases to a staggering 97%.

This is particularly interesting when reflecting back on Department A's discussion of Ray, with Duncan's introduction of the idea of *risk* in relation to interview. "I'm kind of 50/50 [...] about risking an interview", he had said, only to be met by Colin's: "I don't think it's a risk to do an interview." It seemed now that perhaps this attitude also played

⁸¹ This is for someone not experiencing the effects of these factors i.e. not living in a post code 200, applying to any of the other selection groups, from a route other than portfolio preparation and qualified standard with art.

Regression: Factors affecting chances of entry

Factor	chance	↑ ↓	significance
(constant)	1		
IF dept. a	4.016	↑	.012 (p ≤ 0.05) sig.
IF dept c	2.513	↑	.014 (p ≤ 0.05) sig.
IF dept e	2.974	↑	.008 (p ≤ 0.05) sig.
IF not qualified art	3.272	↑	.000 (p ≤ 0.05) sig.
IF not qualified english	.319	↓	.004 (p ≤ 0.05) sig.

constant = -1.027

Odds / Probability of entry

(constant)

NOT applying to dept. a, c or e

Qualified art

Qualified english

$$-1.027 \rightarrow 0.358 \rightarrow \left(\frac{0.358}{1.358} \right)$$

$$\rightarrow 0.26 \text{ 26\%}$$

① NOT a, c or e

* IF NOT qualified art *

- Qualified english

$$-1.027 + 1.185 \rightarrow \left(\frac{1.171}{2.171} \right)$$

$$\rightarrow 0.53 \text{ 53\%}$$

② NOT a, c or e

- Qualified art -

* IF NOT qualified english *

$$-1.027 + -1.144 \rightarrow \left(\frac{0.114}{1.114} \right)$$

$$\rightarrow 0.10 \text{ 10\%}$$

③ * IF dept e *

Qualified art

Qualified english

$$-1.027 + .921 \rightarrow \left(\frac{0.894}{1.894} \right)$$

$$\rightarrow 0.47 \text{ 47\%}$$

④ * IF dept c *

Qualified art

Qualified english

$$-1.027 + 1.090 \rightarrow \left(\frac{1.063}{2.063} \right)$$

$$\rightarrow 0.51 \text{ 51\%}$$

⑤ * IF dept a *

Qualified art

Qualified english

$$-1.027 + 1.412 \rightarrow \left(\frac{1.469}{2.469} \right)$$

$$\rightarrow 0.59 \text{ 59\%}$$

⑥ * IF dept. e *

* IF NOT qualified art *

Qualified english

$$-1.027 + .921 + 1.185 \rightarrow \frac{1.074}{3.074}$$

$$\rightarrow 0.74 \text{ 74\%}$$

⑦ * IF dept c. *

* IF NOT qualified art *

Qualified english

$$-1.027 + 1.090 + 1.185 \rightarrow \frac{3.433}{4.433}$$

$$\rightarrow 0.77 \text{ 77\%}$$

⑧ * IF dept. a *

* IF NOT qualified art *

Qualified english

$$-1.027 + 1.412 + 1.185 \rightarrow \frac{4.806}{5.806}$$

$$\rightarrow 0.82 \text{ 82\%}$$

note: art qualification relates to Higher, CSYS, A'level

: english qualification relates to Higher, CSYS, A'level and communications 4

out across a wider field of applicants and was in stark contrast to some other areas. For example, Department B's deliberations over Angus and John, where despite Doug's interest in interviewing to "test out" John's "potential", Tim had been more hesitant: "See if you give that an interview, you'd be giving probably another 30% of [...] applicants an interview".

Odds were influenced by other factors again and took different forms when explored in terms of chance of acceptance. Interestingly, in this case, the influence of departmental choice on an applicant's chances of entry extended to three selection groups, A, C and E (Table 8). At this stage, the positive effects presented at interview of coming via a Portfolio Preparation route and living in a postcode within the Scottish 200 ranking, disappear. However, the significance of not being qualified in Art is still present, again increasing an applicant's chances of inclusion, while the influence of no qualification in English reappears, again with negative effect.

As with the interview, these factors and their effects were also considered in terms of odds or probability. As the various examples show, what this suggests now is that if an applicant, qualified in Art and English had applied to selection areas other than A, C or E, their probability of acceptance would have been 26%. Again, had they not been qualified in Art that same applicant's odds would have increased, this time to 53%, while the negative effects of not being qualified in English would have pulled their odds of entry down to just 10%. Looking at chance more specifically in relation to Departments E, C and A shows again how the odds shift. Had the same application been made to Department E, odds would have risen from 26% to 47%, rising again with C to

51% and even higher with A, 59%. The probability of acceptance by these three areas would have increased again had the applicant not been qualified in Art. In this instance, while an applicant to any of the other areas and not qualified in Art also had increased chances of entry, 53%, an application to Department E would have even better odds at 74%, Department C, 77% and Department A rising again to 82%. Even when the negative effects of not being qualified in English were factored in alongside the positive effects of no Art, the odds of acceptance within these areas remained higher than others.

This really begins to open up the complexity of how different factors in combination might affect an applicant's chances of entry, and interestingly have at their core the influence of selection groups. Moreover, there are clearly strong effects on chances of in/exclusion in relation to qualifications in English and Art. While this may have been the case across all of the selection groups, these three selection areas in particular may have been looking for or more willing to take a quite different kind of applicant, perhaps coming from a distinct route, with other kinds of qualifications, background or experience. This is not straightforward; a large number of applicants qualified in Art did gain entry and many of those not qualified did not make it through. This highlights the need to look more closely at the kinds of experience that applicants are coming from, in particular those candidates not qualified in Art, and what other factors might add to their chances.

This negative art effect also raises very different issues from those discussed by Jary and Thomas (1999), where the "cult of the grade" (Bourdieu and Passeron, In Brown and Scase, 1994a:55) was seen as a key factor in many applicants in/exclusion from

Higher Education. In this context, more surprisingly, it was an *absence* of qualification that seemed to increase chances. This reinforces the potential idea of distinctions in kinds of teaching, particularly in relation to Art, across and within different contexts, such as schools, Further Education and Portfolio Preparation. Indeed, selectors had often tried to see beyond the effects of teaching and courses; beyond the “chance” of a “good department”, to how someone showed themselves as an individual. Brown and Scase (1994a) make the point that qualifications often “convey [...] the individual’s ability [...] to jump through [...] hoops, to follow [...] regurgitate” (138). It seemed that here too, it might be how someone stepped outside of that influence, whether within schools, Further Education or indeed any other route that opened up chance.

However, what got someone in was not always or only the visual work. It was a shifting array of factors that appeared to be bound up in the breadth of a person, their teachability, how they elbowed, pushed and made their desire visible. It was also what selectors knew or thought they knew about an applicant and sometimes even a candidate’s ability to displace the very nature of learning and teaching; some wanted that, others did not. Williams’ (1997) and Schwartz and Webb’s (2002) sense of devolved practice amongst individual selectors and across areas was a key factor in this context. *Looking* could happen differently across selection groups and being looked at by different selectors could also cause an applicant’s chances of in/exclusion to shift.

Just as Brown and Scase (1994a) raise in their writings on employment selection, an applicant’s “suitability”(119) and “acceptability”(Ibid:130) was also part of a selector’s search for the individual. However, here the discourse of selectivity (Williams, 1997)

was also one of *readiness* particularly in terms of *teachability*. This individual was the lateral thinker, where “2 and 2 made 9” and yet was also strangely the “safe bet”, “dead cert”, the “banker” – someone who would be “dead teachable”. It seemed that challenges or “mavericks” (Brown and Scase, 1994a:132), such as Kristina might not come along that often and when they did, selectors could be both drawn to them and also cautious. This was the desire for risk and the unknown, yet also sometimes the fear of the other that writers such as Lupton (1999), Kristeva (1995), Sibley (1995) and Douglas (1984) had described.

Ethics and emotions were also central to how risk and chance were configured in the process. Selectors often came to an understanding in more multi sensorial ways, by looking, touching and feeling. The visual work had a physical effect; it could pull selectors in or push them away. Hatoum’s (In Archer, 1997) idea that we relate to “the world through our senses” (8), ontologically, was also very much a part of this process. The “bodily engagement” that Schostak (2002:2) writes of and that I had felt myself in the research process, was also how many selectors came to understanding. These were emotions that sometimes surfaced within the ethical struggles of decision-making. Some selectors seemed to grapple more than others with what the consequences of their decisions might mean for an applicant; they thought about the kinds of “chance” that a candidate had. Some only seemed to look at the consequences in relation to themselves and their courses. Some did not seem to wrestle with their conscience at all.

These selection stories and statistical work compound the *troubling* that Lather (1991) and St. Pierre (1997) propose is necessary in reaching other kinds of

understanding and ways of coming to know something differently. The narratives were often uncomfortable, as was my own sense of complicity in experience and the statistics only served to further that sense of *trouble*. As Gomez-Peña (2000) signals in his role as a dangerous border crosser, these kinds of crossings and this level of visibility present dangers. This is the “risky world of discourse” that Foucault (1972b:215) warned of and just as Levitas (1998) suggests, it requires an engagement with the multiplicity of factors in operation within processes of in/exclusion, as well as within our own practices.

If there was any thought that in/exclusion might be explained solely by where you came from, the route taken, social class, being too young or old, then this study suggests that it is more complex. All kinds of people from wide ranging backgrounds got it wrong and right. Nothing was fixed or set. In/exclusion seemed to hinge on the assemblage that Rose (1996) speaks of, different combinations of qualities that *applicants* brought with them as well as what *selectors* brought into the process and how these folded together could lead to very different outcomes. While access to the right kinds of advice and networks might help, it seemed that chance only really opened up if an applicant had developed a sense of self – as an individual. Someone who would fit into the context applied to alongside other individuals – different - but also just like them, capable of learning and making learning their own.

The sense of fragility in what holds experience together that writers such as Denzin (1997), Lather (1997) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) had written of, was even more potent now than it was at the beginning of this study. The difference was in my own understanding of what that meant and of the need to find different ways of coming to

experience in order to open up other kinds of meaning. In the words of one selector, decision-making was “a very subtle affair” and “perhaps” the frustration of that kind of subtlety was also a “necessary” and maybe even the most important “part” of it all.

INTRODUCTION

Harmless today, they may become dangerous tomorrow.
(Drs Lunier and Dumesnil, In Castel, 1991:283)

One of the aims of this study was to consider what might be understood *from* practice that could also have effect *in* practice and offer other kinds of approaches to in/exclusion. From my own personal and professional experience, it seemed that if institutions were to open up to a much broader range of people, then greater understanding and visibility of what goes on *inside* of their own processes had to inform and influence change. My interest was in making the practices of selection visible not only to those who already *know* that art and education is the route they want to follow, but also to those who *don't know*, who may never have considered art education a part of their experience.

However, the complexity of areas that surfaced in the study took me by surprise. I hadn't gone looking for risk or chance, yet these ideas emerged from the research, in the literature, policy, media representations, art practice and also within the empirical work of the selection process itself. Here especially, ideas of risk were shifting, sometimes ambivalent, often contradictory and always fluctuating. Who and what was a good or bad risk varied from selector to selector. Risk took on different appearances in the work, sometimes bold and obvious, other times small and found in the minutest of detail. It sometimes seemed to relate to where you came from, educational and cultural background, formal and informal networks and kinds of knowledge. Selectors often struggled with their own sense of what constituted *a risk*, to whom and in what ways.

The study signalled that the meld of the visual, written and individual attributes of an application is not set or simple and the combination of what gets someone in or not is not fixed, but changes and shifts across selectors and selection groups.

In this concluding section I try to reconfigure some of this complexity into propositions for what this study, and in particular the visual arts, might bring to in/exclusion, especially within the context of selection to Higher Education in Art and Design. Writing in *Labyrinths*, Borges (1970) suggests that journeys are “unlimited and cyclical” (85) and so it seems appropriate that this research journey should try to find an ending back where it began in ideas of crossings. The propositions outlined here are sketches that require the detail of further crossover with and between others in order to develop and grow. These are ideas that hope to encourage crossings of the visual and discursive in an attempt to open up other sites of “in-between” (Bhabha, 1994:2) within which new kinds of crossings between applicants, selectors and institutions might take place.

I am very conscious that these proposals may appear to focus on the institution as a key animator of change. While I recognise that applicants and providers such as schools, Further Education and Portfolio Preparation also have to take responsibility, this study was located in institutional practice and these propositions very much grow from there. However, they are considered in ways that I hope also have relevance for a broad range of people through the layers of involvement that they try to establish. Re-imagining art schools, Becker (1996) speculates on how to “challenge [...] the structures of [...] institutions” and their relation to a changing “society”(105). As the student body and the

nature of art practice alters, Becker argues that “institutions have not been as quick to adapt” (Ibid:102) or establish “meeting points” (Beuys, In Becker, 1996:104), spaces where broader communities and “ideas” can “intersect” and “collide” (Becker, 1996:104).

It seems that the arts and in particular Higher Education institutions have some tough questions to ask themselves about their role in in/exclusion. How might they begin to seriously influence debates? How might they move to a situation where the factors that seem to encourage a depth and care of practice, prevalent amongst many staff, might extend more widely? If applicants and providers seek answers on what to do in order to get in and funders want transparency and accountability in how decisions are made, what might this mean for processes of selection, where little seems fixed? How do institutions resolve the difficulty of making information and guidance more explicit without stifling the depth of what goes on in practice? The lack of external understanding of internal processes has to be tackled. Without this, there is a danger that the frustration of *not knowing* leads to a sense of disregard amongst applicants and providers, causing them to be lost, applying some where else or not applying at all. These propositions try to confront these needs in a way that enriches practice; not overly complicating things, but engaging with complexity and extending discussion to include a much wider and more diverse body of people as part of new *meeting points*.

PROPOSITIONS

VISIBLE CRITERIA

Where, why and how an individual decides or is encouraged to make any crossing, whether into art and design education or other spaces, seems at the crux of in/exclusion. Kinds of knowledge and information, where they reside, in what forms and how they are accessed are critical to how someone equips themselves not only to make choices, but with the specific kinds of knowledge necessary to undertake the journey. Getting on the right route was part of individuals' chances of entry. More specific information is now provided to applicants as guidance on how an application will be assessed and for the individual who knows where and how to access this material⁸², criteria for the review of portfolios includes areas such as *skill level*, *course work*, *personal work* and *potential*. However, there seems to be a very specific job to do in showing what criteria actually mean in practice, what they *look* like and how what is written relates to the visual as well as the complexity of possible interpretations, particularly of ideas of *potential*.

Examples of portfolios used to be available for public viewing, for example as part of the Open Day events, allowing potential applicants and others to see the kinds of work that gained entry. This no longer happens consistently for a number of reasons, including the difficulties of retaining portfolios intact, damage to work while on show as well as concerns that this might signal some kind of formula in what is looked for⁸³. Yet strategies like this offer an important means of making selection assessment criteria

⁸² Information can be found on the web and in booklet form available from institutions.

⁸³ The reasons given here came out of informal conversations with staff.

visually and discursively explicit, without becoming fixed. They offer space to articulate through the visual what it is that maintains selectors' interest; what different scores *look* like, showing "borderlines" with "wows", "hits and misses", where "things work" and "also things in the portfolio that didn't work". This proposition goes back to what was once done and tries to reconfigure it in light of this study by layering the visual with the discursive.

The development of a visual resource of application material could provide a critical reference source from which to develop discussion between wide ranging people such as selectors, applicants and teachers. Open Day could provide an immediate site for such an approach, however, this could extend in a number of ways, for example, as part of Continuing Professional Development (CPD), allowing professionals in other areas to develop understanding of selectors' processes of looking. This would not only offer a rich reserve of information on the visual articulation of assessment, but within the institution itself offers opportunity to chart shifts and changes in the kinds of applicant and visual material that gains entry. The importance of this latter area is significant, as there is no means of understanding how changes to selection processes may impact on the nature of visual submissions⁸⁴.

Events such as Open Day offer a potential space and site for more varied and targeted work, geared towards diverse audiences, teachers, applicants - curious passers by. Discursive strategies here might make space for smaller and more intimate

⁸⁴ How to do this requires more detailed discussion within and outwith the institution, however, one way would be to digitally record visual work from accepted applicants - with individuals' permission - forming the basis for an easily storable and accessible multi-media archive of applications.

conversations, where current students talk about their experiences of admissions to potential applicants. Staff from across selection groups might engage with staff from other sectors, exploring how initial admission assessment relates to the nature of learning and teaching on courses. If in/exclusion hinges in some way around an applicant being in the “right environment” and “peer group”, then this kind of visibility could help break down ideas of selection as an unspoken and unseen process, that only those few “led to look at the right things” can access.

DEVOLVING CRITERIA

The importance of crossover between selectors and selection groups, in terms of extending applicants’ chances of entry and challenging each others selection approaches, was another key area that the study made visible. Applicants didn’t always make the right selection choices and the dialogue across selectors as well as the potential of 2nd and 3rd choice looking, allowed space for these cases to be picked up. However, these crossings were often informal and there was no certainty of extended looking; some selectors did and others didn’t. While on the surface the development and availability of generic assessment guidelines as part of application guidance seems helpful, in this context it may bypass the diverse ways of looking which an applicant and their application undergoes. The kinds of looking across selection areas was varied and within UCAS, selection seems set to become more devolved, leaving important questions on how to address this loss of dialogue between selection areas, as well as the potential for extended reviews of other than first choice applications.

One of the dangers of overly devolved practice lies in the loss of more interactive, social and professional crossings, important to the selection process as a whole and in particular applicants' chances of entry. Differences in approach could become even more idiosyncratic and individualistic, making parity of procedures and methods difficult to achieve. Devolving practice has risks; how do you maintain oversight of a fragmented process? How do you ensure the same levels of care and responsibility across disparate selection teams? One solution might be to develop a dedicated admissions team that elevates the whole procedure of selection to a more reflexive and critical status within and outwith the institution. Selection may seem too important to be something that someone drops or chances in on and "tie breaks" and yet those informal moments also created opportunity. One of the challenges for such an assigned body of selectors would be how to bring some cohesion to the accidental. This kind of institution wide operation would require trust from across diverse department areas, relinquishing individual autonomy for a broader sense of involvement.

If increased devolution is the way forward then rather than avoid distinctions, perhaps one of the ways to progress is also to engage with *difference* across selection areas by developing and rendering visible departmental specific selection criteria and approaches. Making *chance* visible is also a critical part of this, allowing applicant understanding of the shifting odds of in/exclusion across selection groups. In making visible the differences in approach across selection areas, clearer understanding of the processes that an applicant and their work will enter into could be developed.

These ideas of visible and devolving criteria recognise that what it takes to come to *know* the institution is not evenly spread across applicants. Likewise, “assessment judgements” across selection areas are “not equal” (Schwartz and Webb, 2002:183). There is “no undifferentiated starting point” or “single point of departure. [...] No level playing field that thrusts us all, similarly equipped, [...] into the dark” (Culpitt, 1999:150–151); different people may need different ways of breaking into Higher Education and other kinds of engagement with selection processes. These are crossings that try to extend ways of including people in the circuit of information, making more informed choices and decisions about the institution and its courses and not only or always the institution making decisions on others. This pulling together and opening up of selection practices could form an important part in influencing applicants' choices and how to target their application more specifically, extending understanding of written criteria by becoming entangled in discussion that engages with the complexity of looking and what is looked for.

REFLEXIVE SPACES

Discursive space for selectors to reflect *on practice* and what change means *in practice* is also a critical proposition. Support and partnership working is needed to “engage in the level of development” necessary to share and question diverse skills and approaches (Stefani, 2002:46). Crossover amongst selectors, between selectors and administration and across out into a wider community could establish different kinds of internal and external crossings. Reflexive spaces could offer an opportunity for staff,

collectively and individually, to reflect on their own practice and perhaps some of the issues raised by this study. It seems key that any support for staff to do this should recognise the distinctiveness and complexity of the processes of looking, impacting on the nature of support and staff development. How might staff interview training be more geared towards the diverse functions that interview serves within this process? How could new staff be inducted into a portfolio review where the meld of the person with the visual work is often so central? As the process shifts to UCAS and a potentially increasing initial focus on the paperwork as a means of selection, what kind of support could be given to staff to even out knowledge and understanding of where an application comes from? Could greater integration between selectors and administrators help to reinforce ownership of changing practice through a more shared responsibility, where training and development becomes peer led and grows out of the highly specific nature of selection to the arts and design?

This also offers opportunity to engage with the kinds of power that this study made visible, where shifts in numbers of applicants and places available seemed part of what affected how selectors looked. Some *had* to look harder and longer than others and use the diversity of layers of the selection process to reach decisions. Conversely, some had less time to engage with the same intensity of looking. The study showed that there was often a schism in practice between selection groups and also in the kinds of application coming from diverse routes, such as schools, Further and Higher Education. Some selectors took responsibility to see through teaching influences and find the person, for others it was the applicants' responsibility to show how they fitted in. Amidst diverse

quality assurance needs, such as student retention and target numbers that *reach* but don't *exceed* expected staff student ratios, how might institutions support staff to take risks in selection, and what kind of risks would they support them to take? This study suggests the need for much more radical steps, extending beyond solutions that are based solely in increased and potentially over burdening criteria, towards an approach that challenges practice by supporting reflection and greater individual and institutional ownership of strategies.

WIDER CROSSINGS

Throughout this study the institution and selectors took risks in opening up their practice and it seems there is a lot to be gained from extending such an approach. Discursive strategies could widen links with others, where teachers in schools and staff from Further Education (FE) might shadow selection, assessment and learning and teaching practices of Higher Education (HE). Likewise, staff from HE could shift out and cross over into these other sites and gain understanding of what "skills", "potential" and "teachability" mean in different contexts. CPD, Cultural and Higher Education Co-ordinators all offer networks of contacts to potentially enable different sectors to work with and impact on one another's practice. What might these kinds of collisions offer to in/exclusion? They could extend ideas of articulation between courses such as FE/HE transition by perhaps questioning and troubling history: of numbers, practice and approaches to art making in different contexts. They could trouble why things are the way that they are and question how this might affect selection practices. Just as the

playing field for applicants in terms of access to information could be levelled, so too might the playing field for selectors and staff from other sectors.

As more resources are put into the development of widening access initiatives and encouraging those underrepresented in Higher Education to participate, this research reinforces that other kinds of work needs to be developed, particularly in relation to the arts. The complexity raised in the qualitative and quantitative work suggests a need and an opportunity to challenge the ways in which simple or single indicators may maintain patterns of in/exclusion through a lack of more complex analysis and ways of looking. Selectors often tried to look beyond the surface of applications and institutional determination to also look beyond and question the role and appearance of indicators could have an important effect; this could influence the allocation of resources and encourage new kinds of practice in addressing in/exclusion.

As well as discursive spaces for staff to explore these ideas, spaces that encourage applicants' to reflect on their experiences of selection could also add to understanding. How those who applied and gained entry and also importantly those who applied and didn't gain entry felt about their in/exclusion could add significantly to forms of research, applicant and student support strategies, as well as staff development. What did applicants think would get them in? How much did they understand about the process? What do they know now? Examining how selectors predictions and calculations of the "banker", "dead cert" or "50/50" actually played out in students experiences and progression would allow yet another layer of questioning of in/exclusion within selection practices.

This gathering of selection experiences could extend to even more diverse groups of people, not only entrants and non-entrants but also teachers and other providers, opening up further insights to the process. Artists, art educators and art schools' engagement in research that relates to the distinctive nature of assessment, learning and teaching practice could considerably influence the debate and approaches to in/exclusion, while also achieving much wider access to contemporary art. Crossings could extend into and between even more diverse sites and spaces, making broader areas of education visible. Schools, FE, HE, museum and gallery education, local authority services, community and grassroots initiatives might work together to make a more diverse arena of art education visible⁸⁵.

Information and practice could shift into unexpected spaces with prospectuses sited in shopping centres, kiosks, fast food restaurants, subways, and course advertisements on cable TV, local transport, grassroots newsletters and magazines, places where the *practice of everyday life* goes on (De Certeau, 2002). In/exclusion initiatives could widen from formal sites such as schools, to heterotopias (Foucault, 1998) such as Lacy's (1996) roof top garage space and basketball games or Heath's (Kuras, 2001) accidental audiences of city centre crawls. Practice could become more politicised and radical in its challenge to issues such as assimilation as with Tele-Vecindario's (Jacob et al, 1995) forceful questioning of the authority of in/exclusion practice and Ewald's (2000)

⁸⁵ This is not so off the wall. The Scottish Executive launched a National Debate on Education and each year Architecture hosts a "Doors Open Day" across local authorities, encouraging people into architectural spaces. In Mexico City libraries shifted their contents from street level edifices down into subways in an effort to make books and reading more accessible to a mass of people excluded from these forms of literacy (See Jordan, 2004). Art education could also develop wider crossings as a means of making its practices more public and visible.

facilitation of engagement with stereotype and difference. If these kinds of shifts got underway then it seems that any argument for individuals and applicants to also take responsibility and ownership for understanding, might grow from a much more persuasive basis.

OTHER KINDS OF TRANSPARENCY

The emotions and ontology of some selectors' processes was perhaps one of the most unexpected yet potent ideas to emerge from this study. For some selectors, the process was troubling and the emotions of selection were an ethical dilemma affected by their relation, ownership and responsibility to learning and teaching and caring what in/exclusion meant in that context. For others the struggle seemed much less complex and it is perhaps here that selection was most troubling and also requires to really be troubled. Foucault's (1984) notion of an "ethical substance" (353) through which decisions are mediated seems at the crux of what this study and this selection practice potentially has to offer. It is a substance that can be challenged and shaped by visual and discursive crossings that affect how people act, not upon, but with and in relation to others.

While applicants do need to come forward, make themselves visible and ask questions, these propositions recognise that knowledge and information has to be opened up to a much wider audience, placing potential applicants in a stronger position to consider how they want their work to be looked at and by whom. Do they want a careful construction of the paperwork alongside the visual, or would they prefer that one took

primacy over the other? What do applicants really know about the area they are applying to? Does being qualified in art really matter to who will be looking at their portfolio? Applicants and providers need a conduit through which to ask questions of the process and also feel that their opinions matter and can have influence. Selectors have to feel that too. They also need a forum to question and discuss. What does the institution expect of them in terms of in/exclusion? What guidance do they need? What processes are in place to allow them to feed back and support applicants, particularly those with all that “hope” that they can’t reach? Many staff wanted to act, however, the mechanisms to do so were not always there. This study shows that there is a lot to take heart from and also a great deal that can be done to build on the strengths of the process – in particular the diversity and care of looking by many selectors.

It seems clear that moving forward requires a shift from the “tyranny of transparency” that Strathern (2000:309) warns of and the breakdown in trust that arises when “visibility as a conduit for knowledge is elided with visibility as an instrument for control” (Ibid.). This is a movement towards a process where people also grapple with the ethics of their own actions; making themselves the subject and object of their own gaze. Without this kind of trust one of the dangers of increased subjection to external scrutiny is to become “caught in the almost irresolvable paradox” of “having ‘transparently’ to explain the efficacy” of what we were once entrusted and trusted others to do (Culpitt, 1999:69). Trust *in* and caring *about* processes and procedures has to be central to what happens in practice; without this, things fall apart.

Writing about the constant desire throughout history for institutions to make change, Foucault (1984) questions why “the solution of a problem” is always sought “in the solution of another problem” (343). He proposes that rather than erase one thing for another “problématiques” should be considered as conditions of danger (343). It’s “not that everything is bad” and so it should be changed, “but that everything is dangerous [...] If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do” (Ibid.). The “ethico-political” task is to not to eliminate, but to engage with these *dangers* directly, giving rise to more contextual forms of interrogation, thinking and practice (Ibid.).

The shifts in approach across selectors do not offer any easy answers. They do not offer the “clarity of having a position” from the beginning but often took “perilous and circuitous routes” to arrive “at a positionality”, “including the risks and dangers of being wrong” (Rogoff, 2001:3). This complicates attempts to understand and reinforces the need to discuss complexity in order to travel towards other kinds of understanding. Writing about these very difficulties, Eagleton (2000) suggests that “our full access to the Other is *ontological*, not merely epistemological” (96). This is what makes “access” to understanding so “difficult” (Ibid.). “Every culture [...] has an internal blind spot where it fails to grasp or be at one with itself” and it is this “self-opaqueness” in others and in ourselves that has to be discerned in order to “encounter [...] most deeply” and understand “most fully” (Ibid.)

These selection stories seem to reinforce this necessity. In a desire to understand and for things to be made more explicit, care also has to be taken not to erase the kind of complexity that can actually open up other possibilities for thinking and practice. A

more reflexive, emotional and ontological engagement with in/exclusion, could perhaps offer the kind of “participatory consciousness” (Heshusius, 1994:17) through which to challenge and reorientate thinking and approaches. Yet this tactile engagement with process, potentially so unique to art and design practice may be the very area that is jeopardised and bypassed through pressures of time, ill fitting criteria, indicators and more fixed ideas of accountability and transparency. Many strategies for in/exclusion seem caught in a bind where the concern is no longer really:

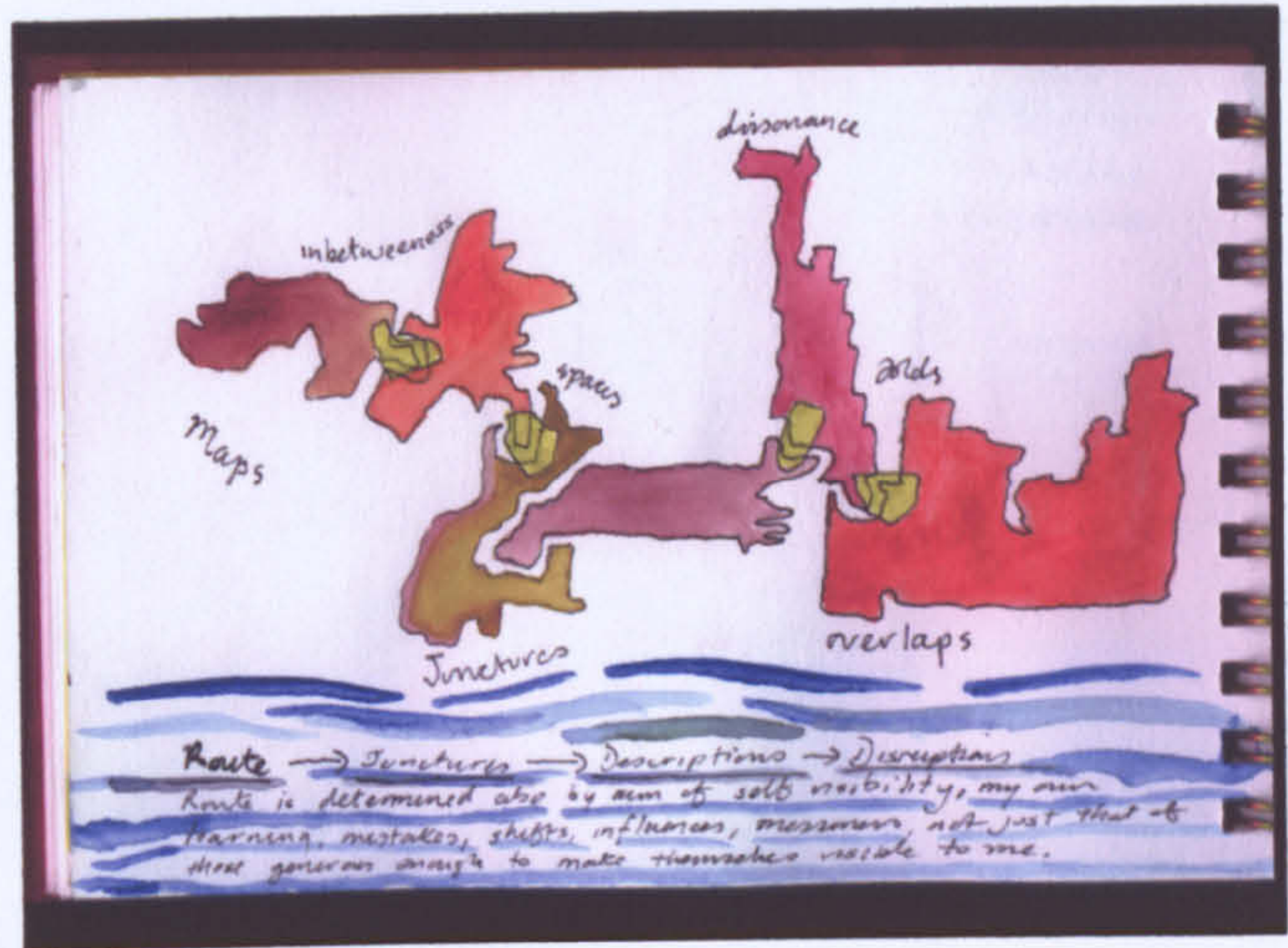
With attaining something ‘good’, but [...] with preventing the worst [...]. The dream [...] is that everyone wants and ought to have a share of the pie. The Utopia [...] is that everyone should be *spared* from poisoning. (Beck, In Culpitt, 1999: 95).

The propositions sketched out here are not easy; they try, however, to extend understanding and approaches to in/exclusion by questioning what people are being included into as well as the ways of in/excluding. It is an attempt to go beyond a discourse of in/exclusion that states “what ought to be, who has the right to be where and how it ought to be so” (Rogoff, 2001:3) and makes an approach towards a culture that supports a different relation to risk and risk-taking. Rogoff describes such a shift as a “contingent ethics of [...] emplacement” through which to “jointly puzzle out the perils of [...] belonging” and “not belonging” (Ibid.), where “mobilization of [...] discontent [...] is the driving force behind the need to arrive at new articulations” (Ibid:4).

The embroilment of art and art educators in the research and practice of in/exclusion could productively stir things up, crossing, colliding, folding and enfolding, with those who may not actually be looking but might become caught up accidentally, curious and

drawn in. If art can offer any new challenge to approaches to in/exclusion it seems to lie here, working with and within these very tensions.

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The Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs. Minneapolis, USA. URL: <http://www.hecua.org/>

The Visual and Public Art Institute. California State University, Monterey Bay, CA, USA. URL: <http://vpa.csumb.edu/worldwall/8vpa/>

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NOTE: While not cited in the writing, the following URL provided a valuable source of links to a diversity of artists, education programmes and articles.

Oddobjects. Art, education and cultural resources.

URL: <http://www.oddobjects.info>