Drawn from artists’ lives: An empirical study of the situation and realisation of professional visual art practices in the Western Australian Field of cultural production

Duncan Robert McKay

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DRAWN FROM ARTISTS’ LIVES

An Empirical Study of the Situation and Realisation of Professional Visual Art Practices in the Western Australian Field of Cultural Production

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Faculty of Education and Arts, Edith Cowan University

5th July 2013


**Abstract**

This thesis presents the findings of empirical research on the working lives of visual artists living and working in Western Australia. No detailed studies of this kind have previously been undertaken in a Western Australian context, though a series of national, economically framed studies have surveyed Australian artists working in a variety of art forms about their working lives on five occasions since the early 1980s. Collectively the reports published from these five studies make up the most comprehensive picture of artists’ economic activity that has been available to policy-makers and others involved in arts and culture in this country (Australia Council, 1983; Throsby & Hollister, 2003; Throsby & Mills, 1989; Throsby & Thompson, 1994; Throsby & Zednik, 2010). Seldom, however, has other suitable empirical data been collected from Australian artists facilitating the evaluation of the findings, methods and assumptions underlying economic research in this area. The detailed qualitative data collected for this research both augments and interrogates the findings of national quantitative studies, assessing their applicability to the particular circumstances of professional visual artists working in this state.

Artists’ working lives were examined using data in two forms: *Curriculum Vitae* (CVs) of 322 Western Australian visual artists, published on commercial gallery websites; and in-depth interviews with a diverse sample of 20 Western Australian visual artists. This data has provided access to what Florian Znaniecki (1934) has called the *humanistic coefficient*: the understandings that social actors have of the situations within which they are acting. Without this understanding it is not possible to properly account for social activity, such as professional art practice. CVs have rarely been used as a data source for research, so this study has taken an innovative methodological approach and has demonstrated the potential for further development of these methods and this form of social data. CVs of visual artists were used to examine the Western Australian field of cultural production, and to produce a network-map of the social values and the complex relationships between artists, commercial galleries and other entities in the field.
In-depth interviews with 20 visual artists, practising in different media, at different stages of their career and earning their living in diverse ways, have provided detailed accounts of how visual artists construct their professional artistic identities and sustain their creative practice in Western Australia. Through qualitative analysis of these accounts, a new conceptual model of the labour of visual art has emerged, in which artists’ work is considered across four interrelated kinds of cultural production. 1) Artists define their practice, making it real for themselves. 2) Artists create the conditions in which they can define and maintain their practice. 3) Artists attract validation of their practice, seeking to make it real for other people. Throughout their work to establish the cultural reality of their practice, 4) artists also strive to maintain the integrity of their practice, to ensure that they continue to recognise themselves within it. The development of this conceptual model, the CV study and the rich contextual material obtained through interviews have informed the multi-dimensional understanding of the work of professional artists presented in this thesis, challenging and building upon previous research.
Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of this thesis; or

iii) contain any defamatory material;

Signed: [Redacted]  Date: 25 September 2013
Acknowledgements

There are many people without whom this PhD and this particular research project would have been impossible. As a consequence I have a great many people to thank for the different parts they have played in the realisation of this study.

Most obviously I am indebted to twenty Western Australian visual artists who have very generously given of their time and frankly shared their experiences as professional artists working in this state. Without the willingness of these people to participate in the study, and their words, this thesis would be without the lion’s share of its value and vitality. Rebecca Baumann, Craig Boulter, Penny Bovell, Susanna Castelden, Oron Catts, Erin Coates, Barbara Cotter, Kevin Draper, Pippin Drysdale, Stuart Elliott, Dr Tom Gibbons, Nigel Hewitt, Peter Hill, Michael Iwanoff, Larry Mitchell, Regina Noakes, Dr Anna Sabadini, Monique Tippett, Cecile Williams and Caitlin Yardley have voiced concerns shared by many of their peers and have thus made an inestimable contribution to understanding visual art practice in Western Australia.

Throughout this research journey I have also had the benefit of a dedicated and enthusiastic supervision team, who have been supportive, encouraging and an excellent source of guidance in relation to the PhD and beyond. Professor Christopher Crouch, Professor Lelia Green and Dr Danielle Brady, with their different strengths and expertise, have collectively provided an ideal scholarly environment in which to nurture this project and a budding academic researcher. Other important collegial support has come from the camaraderie of sharing the PhD research journey we embarked upon together with my friend and colleague Kylie Stevenson, who has been a gracious correspondent and sympathiser throughout. My sessional teaching colleagues, Sue Starcken, Dr Matthew Jackson, Donna Franklin, Jacqui Monks, and Dr Jane Donlin have also been another valuable source of on-campus, community support during the often lonely work of PhD research.

I have also benefitted from the generous input of a number of other people and organisations in the development of this research. In the early stages of the project I was fortunate to be able to talk to Dr David Bromfield, Paula Silbert and Professor Ted
Snell who freely gave their time to bring to bear their many years of experience in Western Australian visual art in considering the shape of the research I was proposing. I have also had the assistance of staff at Artsource: Beverley Isles, Lisa Green and Theresa Plunkett-Hill have provided me with advice and information which has been invaluable to the project. Marty Cunningham of the State Government’s Department of Culture and the Arts has also made time to meet with me and assisted me in obtaining information of relevance to the study. And Lynda Dorrington, and FORM have generously provided me with access to some of their publications. Among many “firsts” within this project were my first attempts at using data analysis software SPSS and my efforts in this regard have been greatly helped by my supervisor’s enlistment of international help from Kjartan Olafsson (Iceland) and Con Ariti (UK). Professor Howard S. Becker (USA) also generously agreed to meet me while we were both in Europe and provided much useful advice for a novice sociologist and pointed the way towards some valuable literature that I would not have found otherwise.

The past three and a half years have seen many challenging events and circumstances at home, only some of which have been connected with this research. As well as a thesis, this period has seen the birth of baby girl, the replacement of two arthritic knees, car accidents, departures for new international and interstate residences, and all of the other joys and complications of family life in an extended family household. None of the opportunities offered by my scholarship at ECU, or emerging during the course of this research would have been open to me had I not had the support, encouragement and patient understanding of my wife Roslyn and my children Matilda and Quetta. Neither would it have been possible for me to make the most of the amazing privilege of study and travel on scholarship, if I (and we as a family) did not have the moral and practical support of my mother-in-law, Judith Connell and sister-in-law Leith Alexander. I would also like to thank our church family at Summerlakes Church for welcoming our family in 2010 and for their prayer and support throughout this study.

Finally, without my parents’ generosity, support and encouragement to pursue my interest in art from an early age and on into academia, it is unlikely that I would be in position today to be able to have done the work presented here.
I would like to dedicate this thesis to the memory of two academics. To Dr Tom Gibbons, who despite being very sick, jumped at the chance of participating in this project. It is my hope that he would have approved of the outcomes had he lived to see them. And to Ken McKay, my grandfather, in whose academic footsteps both my father and myself have followed.
INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................ 23
From the Poet’s Work to Drawing from Artists’ Lives ....................................................... 24
Research Questions ........................................................................................................... 27
Thesis Structure .............................................................................................................. 28
A Note on the Exhibits ...................................................................................................... 32

PART ONE: Preparing the Ground .............................................................................. 34
1.1 Primer (Literature Review) ................................................................................. 35
  1.1.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................ 35
  1.1.2 Field Work (Empirical Studies) ....................................................................... 37
    1.1.2.1 Western Australian Research ..................................................................... 37
    1.1.2.2 Australian Research ................................................................................... 41
    1.1.2.3 International Research .............................................................................. 45
  1.1.3 Studies on Three Motifs (Concepts and Approaches) ........................................ 50
    1.1.3.1 Art and Value ............................................................................................. 50
    1.1.3.2 Art and Profession .................................................................................... 57
    1.1.3.3 Art and Work ............................................................................................ 61
  1.1.4 Art and Social Science ....................................................................................... 64
    1.1.4.1 A Preliminary Note on Fields and Worlds ............................................... 69
1.2 The Creative Practice of Social Science (Methodology) ........................................... 70
  1.2.1 From Art to Znaniecki .................................................................................... 70
  1.2.2 The Cultural Sacred and a Scientific Vocabulary ............................................. 74
1.2.3 The ‘I’ of the Beholder ........................................................................................................... 76
1.2.4 Research Design ..................................................................................................................... 80
1.2.5 CV Study ............................................................................................................................... 83
   1.2.5.1 CVs as a Source of Social data .......................................................................................... 83
   1.2.5.2 Sampling ........................................................................................................................... 84
   1.2.5.3 Data Collection and Analysis ............................................................................................ 86
1.2.6 Interviews .............................................................................................................................. 89
   1.2.6.1 Analytic Induction ............................................................................................................ 89
   1.2.6.2 Sampling and Access ........................................................................................................ 92
   1.2.6.3 Developing the Interview Guide ...................................................................................... 97
   1.2.6.4 Anatomical Sketch of an Analysis .................................................................................... 98
   1.2.6.5 Approvals from Participants .......................................................................................... 101
   1.2.6.6 A Note on Referencing ................................................................................................... 102
1.2.7 A Representative Sample? .................................................................................................. 102

PART TWO: Drawn from Life: Findings from the Empirical Data .............................................. 108

2.1 Figure and Field: The CV Study .............................................................................................. 109
   2.1.1 Works on Paper: Artists’ CVs ........................................................................................... 109
      2.1.1.1 The Long and the Short: Formal Considerations ............................................................ 110
      2.1.1.2 CV as Social Instrument: Presentation of Self ............................................................. 111
      2.1.1.3 CV Content ..................................................................................................................... 115
      2.1.1.4 Attitudes and Issues ....................................................................................................... 116
   2.1.2 Vantage Points and Positions ............................................................................................. 118
      2.1.2.1 Considering Social Space ............................................................................................. 118
      2.1.2.2 Definitions of Terms ....................................................................................................... 121
      2.1.2.3 Spatial Values: Penetration and Extension .................................................................... 124
      2.1.2.4 The Value of Art Education: Qualifications and Institutions ........................................... 137
      2.1.2.5 Venue Case Study: The Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA) ............................... 147
   2.1.3 Drawing lines in the Sand: Western Australian visual art worlds ...................................... 154
      2.1.3.1 Mapping the Field ......................................................................................................... 154
      2.1.3.2 Measures and Maps ....................................................................................................... 156
      2.1.3.3 Network Map ................................................................................................................. 166
   2.1.4 Conclusion: Art Worlds and Fields of Cultural Production ........................................... 169

2.2 Contexts and Situations ......................................................................................................... 174
   2.2.1 Western Australia, Artists’ Impressions .......................................................................... 176
      2.2.1.1 Golden Ages in Western Australian Visual Art ............................................................... 176
      2.2.1.2 Pathways You’re Supposed to Take ............................................................................... 179
      2.2.1.3 A Small Business and a Fragile One ................................................................................ 183
2.2.1.4 On Isolation, Home and Homelessness ......................................................... 186
2.2.1.5 Conclusions: Doing it Anyway ........................................................................ 191
2.2.2 Artists’ Juvenilia and Points of Origin ............................................................ 192
2.2.2.1 I’ve Always Been an Artist ........................................................................... 193
2.2.2.2 A Worthy Pursuit or a Waste of Time ......................................................... 195
2.2.2.3 Recognition .................................................................................................. 199
2.2.2.4 Determination, Eliminations and Falling Onto Art ....................................... 202
2.2.2.5 Artists’ Juvenilia and Points of Origin: Conclusions .................................. 205
2.3 The Labour of Visual Art in Western Australia ................................................. 207
2.3.1 A Conceptual Model of the Labour of Visual Art Practice ............................. 208
2.3.2 Defining Practice ............................................................................................ 210
2.3.2.1 Signature Styles and Social Roles ................................................................. 211
2.3.2.2 Being One’s Own Harshest Critic ................................................................. 214
2.3.2.3 Going on a Journey ....................................................................................... 216
2.3.2.4 Having Something to Say/Offer ................................................................... 219
2.3.2.5 The Labour of Defining Practice: Conclusions .......................................... 223
2.3.3 Creating Conditions ....................................................................................... 224
2.3.3.1 Art School: Intensity and Support ............................................................... 225
2.3.3.2 Surviving ...................................................................................................... 228
2.3.3.3 Being Out in the World and Being in the Zone ............................................ 232
2.3.3.4 Investing in Art Practice .............................................................................. 236
2.3.3.5 Relinquishing Parts of the Profession ....................................................... 242
2.3.3.6 The Labour of Creating Conditions: Conclusions ..................................... 245
2.3.4 Attracting Validation ...................................................................................... 247
2.3.4.1 Not Being the Best Judge ........................................................................... 249
2.3.4.2 Credentials ................................................................................................ 253
2.3.4.3 A Trail of People ......................................................................................... 257
2.3.4.4 Being a Real Player ....................................................................................... 262
2.3.4.5 The Labour of Attracting Validation: Conclusions ..................................... 268
2.3.5 Maintaining Integrity ...................................................................................... 270
2.3.5.1 Different Ways of Being in it ....................................................................... 272
2.3.5.2 Commercial Imperatives and Taking on the Ambience of Contemporary Art 276
2.3.5.3 Keeping Distances ....................................................................................... 280
2.3.5.4 The Labour of Maintaining Integrity: Conclusions ................................... 285

PART THREE: The View from Here: Discussion ............................................... 289
3.1 The Research Questions ................................................................................... 290
3.1.1 Research Question 1 ...................................................................................... 290
3.1.2 Research Question 2 ........................................................................................................ 291
3.1.3 Research Question 3 ........................................................................................................ 293
3.1.4 Research Question 4 ........................................................................................................ 295
  3.1.4.1 Education and Training .............................................................................................. 296
  3.1.4.2 Career Progression ..................................................................................................... 299
  3.1.4.3 Work Preferences and Multiple Job Holding ............................................................ 301
  3.1.4.4 Creative Migration ..................................................................................................... 304
  3.1.4.5 Talent and Excellence ............................................................................................... 306

REFERENCES ...................................................................................................................... 311

APPENDICES ....................................................................................................................... 322

Appendix A: Tables and Charts from the CV Study ............................................................ 323
  A.1 Discussion: The Secondary Market .................................................................................... 329
  A.2 Discussion: Variance in Findings from Two Methods of Mapping ................................. 335

Appendix B: Gallery, Artists in Profile .............................................................................. 338
  B.1 Rebecca Bauman ............................................................................................................. 343
  B.2 Craig Boulter .................................................................................................................. 345
  B.3 Penny Bovell .................................................................................................................. 347
  B.4 Susanna Castleden ......................................................................................................... 349
  B.5 Oron Catts ..................................................................................................................... 351
  B.6 Erin Coates ..................................................................................................................... 353
  B.7 Barbara Cotter ................................................................................................................. 355
  B.8 Kevin Draper .................................................................................................................. 357
  B.9 Pippin Drysdale ............................................................................................................. 359
  B.10 Stuart Elliott .................................................................................................................... 361
  B.11 Tom Gibbons ................................................................................................................ 363
  B.12 Nigel Hewitt .................................................................................................................. 365
  B.13 Peter Hill ...................................................................................................................... 367
  B.14 Michael Iwanoff ......................................................................................................... 369
  B.15 Larry Mitchell ............................................................................................................... 370
  B.16 Regina Noakes ............................................................................................................. 373
  B.17 Anna Sabadini .............................................................................................................. 375
  B.18 Monique Tippett ......................................................................................................... 377
  B.19 Cecile Williams .......................................................................................................... 379
  B.20 Caitlin Yardley ............................................................................................................. 381

Appendix C: Contexts and Situations: Geographical Note .................................................. 383
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C.1 History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.2 Geography and Demography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.3 Art Galleries in WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.4 Higher Education in WA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix D: Documents Relating to the Interview Study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D.1 Information Letter Provided to Potential Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.2 Informed Consent Form as Signed by Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.3 Interview Guide (First Interview) and Demographic Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.4 Letter to Participants Seeking Final Approval of Interview Material</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix E: Documents Relating to the CV Study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E.1 Initial Inductive Coding Employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.2 Initial Inductive Coding Employed (Continued)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.3 Data Entry Worksheet Template for Transposition and Coding of CV Data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Figures

Figure 1: Diagrammatic representation of research project showing relationship between CV and interview sample and indicating project timeline ........................................................................ 82

Figure 2: Diagrammatic representation of the relationship between the sample of two empirical research projects and the greater population of Western Australian visual artists ........................................ 106

Figure 3: Percentage of total CV activity by Western Australian artists, displayed graphically by geographical location ................................................................................................................ 132

Figure 4: Percentage of CV activity in different geographical locations, by six Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts ........................................................................................................ 134

Figure 5: Percentage of CV activity in different geographical locations, by five Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts ........................................................................................................ 135

Figure 6: Percentage of CV activity in different geographical locations by six Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts ........................................................................................................ 136

Figure 7: Exhibition activity at Perth venues and its relationship to artists’ levels of qualification and study at Curtin University ........................................................................................................... 144

Figure 8: Representation in Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts and its relationship to artists’ levels of qualification and study at Curtin University ................................................................. 146

Figure 9: Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts plotted by rank against measures of secondary market and grants/funding activities .............................................................................. 159

Figure 10: Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts plotted by rank against measures of secondary market and grants/funding activities, including an indication of educational values ........................................ 160

Figure 11: Median number of activities recorded on artists’ CVs in seven categories from total sample of 354 WA artists’ CVs .................................................................................................................... 161

Figure 12: 17 Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts positioned in relation to six values in the field ............................................................................................................................................. 163

Figure 13: Force-directed display produced by Cytoscape software of network of 17 Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts and nine values deployed as indices in this study ........................................... 168

Figure 14: Representation of the flow of values within the Western Australian field of cultural production for visual artists .......................................................................................................................... 172

Figure 15: Diagram of conceptual model of the labour of visual art practice ......................................................... 209

Figure A- 1: Ranked Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts and exhibition activity Interstate and in Perth Metro A Venues ........................................................................................................ 332

Figure A- 2: Ranked Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts and activity in Higher Education and International activity (Extension) ............................................................................................ 332

Figure A- 3: 17 Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts, grouped by means of profiling of median cohort CV data in seven categories of activity .................................................................................. 333
Figure A-4: Rankings reduced from six tiers to weak and strong relationships to measures on chart axes
................................................................................................................................................... 334
Figure A-5: Diagrammatic representation of researcher's relationships with participants............... 340
Figure A-6: Metropolitan studio locations of interviewed Perth artists (Modified from source: Holiday in
Western Australia: Your Guide to Perth + Fremantle, n.d.)....................................................... 341
Figure A-7: Locations of regional artists interviewed for this study (Modified from source:auinfo, n.d.) 342
Figure A-8: Map of nine regions of Western Australia showing major towns (Source: Department of
Regional Development and Lands, n.d.) .................................................................................... 385
Figure A-9: Map of inner Perth metropolitan area showing corridor along which most art galleries are
situated (Modified from source: Holiday in Western Australia: Your Guide to Perth + Fremantle,
n.d.) ........................................................................................................................................... 387

List of Tables

Table 1: Career trajectory of a Mainstream Artist (CV# TG7): number of exhibition activities by year and
location...................................................................................................................................... 128
Table 2: Career trajectory of a Successful Mainstream Artist (CV# GF32): number of exhibition activities
by year and location .................................................................................................................. 128
Table 3: Career trajectory of an Upwardly Mobile, Emerging Mainstream Artist (CV #GdF3): number of
exhibition activities by year and location ................................................................................ 129
Table 4: Career trajectory of an Older, Well-Established Artist (CV# GH4): number of exhibition activities
by year and location .................................................................................................................. 131
Table 5: Career trajectory of a Prolific and Commercial Artist (CV# G(360)3): number of exhibition
activities by year and location .................................................................................................. 131
Table 6: Percentages of artists within commercial gallery cohorts recording art education activity at
different levels on their CVs ..................................................................................................... 139
Table 7: Frequency of exhibition activity at six Perth venues and their relative presence in the field over
time for Western Australian artists .......................................................................................... 148
Table 8: Percentage of 322 artists who have exhibited at six key Perth venues ...................................... 149
Table 9: Number of Western Australian artists in this sample whose work is represented in key Western
Australian art collections ........................................................................................................... 150
Table 10: Proportion of total exhibition activity and representation in AGWA collection by commercial
gallery cohort ............................................................................................................................ 153
Table 11: Key attributes of commercial gallery cohorts captured in this study (WA artists) .................... 156
Table 12: Correspondence between profile levels and CV activities in four categories ................. 162
Table 13: Cohorts' strong (+), weak (-) and neutral (0) positions relative to nine indices drawn from two
mappings of the field .................................................................................................................. 165
Table 14: Transposition of values from Table 16 used to produce network in Figure 15 .......................... 166

Table A-1: Percentage of Curtin University/WAIT graduates within Western Australian commercial
gallery cohorts and calculated proportion of graduates of these institutions representative of
greater population ........................................................................................................................................ 323

Table A-2: Percentage of artists within cohorts graduating from different art education institutions ... 324

Table A-3: 22 Most active artists at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, indicating number of exhibition
activities and presence in the collection .............................................................................................. 325

Table A-4: CV data in Exhibitions and Awards categories as originally coded, showing new values
following data reduction .................................................................................................................... 326

Table A-5: CV data in Education and Grants/Funding categories as originally coded, showing new values
following data reduction .................................................................................................................... 327

Table A-6: Ranking of cohorts’ Educational activity .............................................................................. 328

Table A-7: Ranking of cohorts’ Grants and Funding activity ................................................................... 328

Table A-8: Lots listed on Art Sales Digest, and number of artists with a presence in the secondary market
by cohort ................................................................................................................................................ 329

Table A-9: Ranking of cohorts’ relationship to the secondary market based on the percentage of artists
within cohorts with some presence in the secondary market .............................................................. 330

Table A-10: Ranking of cohorts’ activity at Perth Metro A Venues (penetration) .................................... 331

Table A-11 Ranking of cohorts’ interstate activity (extension 1)............................................................... 331

Table A-12: Ranking of cohorts’ international activity (extension 2) ........................................................ 331

Table A-13: Cohorts’ strong (+) and weak (-) rankings relative to six indices (mapped by ranking)......... 334

Table A-14: Cohorts’ strong (+) and weak (-) rankings relative to six indices (mapped by CV profile) .... 335

Table A-15: Variances (marked in orange) in findings indicating relationships of cohorts to three indices
utilised by different methods of mapping the field ............................................................................... 336

Table A-16: Artists and interview dates .................................................................................................. 339

Table A-17: Domestic student total enrolment, creative arts enrolments and completions in Western
Australian Universities in 2011 (Source: Department of Industry, 2012)) .......................................... 388

List of Exhibits

Exhibit-1: Rebecca Baumann, Confetti International, 2007, industrial fan, conveyor belt, coffee table,
12kg confetti, dimensions variable. Photographed by Tomasz Machnik ............................................ 22

Exhibit-2: Erin Coates, Immoveable Object Against an Unstoppable Force, 2010, salvaged car air bags,
found concrete slab, fan, 54cm x 120cm x 170cm. Photographed by Justin Spies ............................ 22

Exhibit-3: Anna Sabadini, Piero’s Discipline and Pierre’s Feeling, 2011, oil on board, 2 pieces each 60cm x
60cm. Photographed by the artist ..................................................................................................... 33
Exhibit- 4: Peter Hill, Under the surface, 2010, acrylic on plywood, 100cm x 30cm. Private collection.
  Photographed by the artist.................................................................33

Exhibit- 5: Caitlin Yardley, Pour 70: Woman as a Landscape, 2009, oil on canvas, 166cm x 127cm.
  Collection of Edith Cowan University. Photographed by Tony Nathan.........................33

Exhibit- 6: Nigel Hewitt, Death of a Landscape Artist, 1987, mixed media on canvas, 172cm x 187cm.
  Photographed by the artist........................................................................................................................................35

Exhibit- 7: Susanna Castleden, Visions Mt Misery, 2003, screen print on paper, 150cm x 200cm.
  Photographed by Acorn Photography ..............................................................................................................37

Exhibit- 8: Cecile Williams, Detained, 2010, recycled plastic with LED lights, 120cm x 35cm x 100cm.
  Photographed by Nic Duncan..........................................................................................................................50


Exhibit- 10: Kevin Draper, Fragment, 2009, forged, welded and painted steel, concrete, 600cm x 210cm x 210cm. Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi, NSW. Collection of City of Melville, Photographed by the artist. ................................................................................................................................. 107


Exhibit- 14: Monique Tippett, Forest Stand, installed 2011, jarrah and aluminium, 600cm x 200cm, Collection of Margaret River/Augusta Shire, Council Offices, Margaret River. Photographed by the artist ................................................................................................................................109

Exhibit- 15: Penny Bovell, Trace, 2011, acrylic on canvas, 120cm x 120cm. Collection of Department of Sports and Recreation. Photographed by Bo Wong ................................................................................................................................. 174

Exhibit- 16: Stuart Elliott, ATRA, 2011, oil on board with assembled wooden frame, 90cm X 160cm wide. Roeburn Shire Collection, Overall Winner of Cossack Art Award (Acquisitive), Photographed by Aaron Bunch ... ................................................................. 207

Exhibit- 17: Larry Mitchell, Broome Topography (left-hand panel of 2), 2009, oil on canvas, 240cm x 90cm. Collection of Coogee Chemicals. Photographed by Victor France. ................................. 288

Exhibit- 18: Regina Noakes, By the Water’s Edge, 2012, oil on canvas, 180cm x 130cm. Photographed by the artist. ................................................................................................................................. 288

Exhibit- 19: Craig Boulter, Rottnest Chairs, 2000, oil on canvas, 15cm x 13cm. Private collection.
  Photographed by SNAP Printing Fremantle................................................................................. 288
Exhibit- 20: Rebecca Baumann, Automated Colour Field, 2011, 100 flip-clocks, laser-cut paper, 130cm x 360cm x 9cm, duration: 24 hrs. (Edition of 3) Collections: Private Collection, Museum of Contemporary Art (Sydney), Art Gallery of Western Australia. Photographed by Andrew Curtis. Originally commissioned by the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art for NEW11 .......................... 344

Exhibit- 21: Craig Boulter, Fremantle Train Station, 2012, oil on canvas, 35 x 25cm. Photographed by SNAP Printing Fremantle ................................................................. 346

Exhibit- 22: Penny Bovell, Wind Tower, 2011, acrylic on canvas, 120cm x 120cm. Private collection. Photographed by Bo Wong ......................................................................................... 348

Exhibit- 23: Susanna Castleden, Making the World at the Correct Position and Correct Shape, 2012, screen print and water colour on rag paper, 55cm x 55cm x 55cm. Photographed by the artist ................................................................. 350

Exhibit- 24: Tissue Culture and Art Project, Victimless Leather, 2004, biodegradable polymer matrix, foetal calf serum, glass, dimensions variable. Scientific Collaborator: Professor Arunasalam Dharmarajan from the School of Anatomy and Human Biology, UWA. Photograph by the Tissue Culture and Art Project ......................................................................................... 352

Exhibit- 25: Erin Coates, Thirst [video still], 2012, HD video with sound, duration: 5:09 minutes, sound design by Stuart James .............................................................................. 354

Exhibit- 26: Barbara Cotter, Ring, 2012, enamel, fine silver, copper, 9ct, 18ct, 2.5cm x 3cm x 0.4cm. Photographed by the artist ......................................................................................... 356

Exhibit- 27: Kevin Draper, Threshold, 2012, forged, welded and painted steel, 230cm x 250cm x 140cm, Accepted for 2012 Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi, NSW. Photographed at Shelley Beach, Torbay, 2012, by the artist ................................................................................................. 358

Exhibit- 28: Pippin Drysdale, Spear Grass Burning: Tanami Mapping Series, 2011 Installation of 8 porcelain works, dimensions variable 13.5cm to 41.5cm (h). Photographed by Robert Frith, Acorn Photography ................................................................................................. 360

Exhibit- 29: Stuart Elliott, The Conveyory, 2001-2, Carved, assembled, painted and stained wooden architectural components, welded mild steel table and painted, varnished press moulded ceramic forms below it, 180cm x 180cm x 80cm. Collection of Lloyd and Elizabeth ....................... 362

Exhibit- 30: Tom Gibbons, Fromage- Hommage-Collage, 2011, cheese wrapper on postcard (postcard image by Miriam Stannage), [dimensions not supplied]. Photographed by the artist .................. 364

Exhibit- 31: Nigel Hewitt, Icarus Dream, 2012, ash on canvas, 136cm x 198cm. Photographed by the artist ................................................................................................. 366

Exhibit- 32: Peter Hill, Inheritance House, 2010, 50cm x 40cm x 40cm, books salvaged from my grandparents’ abandoned farmhouse, uncle’s shed, father’s shed. Collection of City of Swan. Photographed by the artist ................................................................................................. 368

Exhibit- 33: Larry Mitchell, Davis Island – Abrolhos, 2011, oil on canvas, 370cm x 90cm. Collection of Bagwan Marine. Photographed by Victor France ........................................................................ 372

Exhibit- 34: Regina Noakes, In Time of Need (The Good Samaritan), 2011, oil on canvas, [dimensions not provided]. Selected for 2012 Mandorla Exhibition. Photographed by the artist .................. 374

Photographed by Joy Lai. ........................................................................................................... 376

Exhibit- 36: Monique Tippett, Point of Return, 2012, jarrah and lacquers on board, 120cm x 105cm x 10cm. Collection of Mandurah Performing Arts Centre, winner of Corporate Award (Acquisitive).

Photographed by the artist........................................................................................................ 378

Exhibit- 37: Cecile Williams, Mad as a Cut Snake, 2011, ghost net, [dimensions not provided].

Photographed by Simm Neville. .............................................................................................. 380

Exhibit- 38: Caitlin Yardley, Chromatic Titration, 2010, oil in pipettes in mouth blown flasks, dimensions variable. Photographed by the artist............................................................... 382
List of Abbreviations Used, and Individuals and Organisations Referred to in this Study

In this thesis I will make reference to individuals and organisations who are locally or nationally significant in the context of the research presented. In the course of the research I have also developed a series of abbreviations that I have used in various places in this thesis. Here I provide the reader with a listing of relevant acronyms and abbreviations, and very briefly outline the significance of some individuals and organisations.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AGWA = Art Gallery of Western Australia.
AI = Analytic Induction
DCA = Department of Culture and the Arts, State Government of Western Australia
ECU = Edith Cowan University
FAC = Fremantle Arts Centre
PICA = Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts
TAFE = (Colleges of) Technical and Further Education
UWA = The University of Western Australia
WA = Western Australia
WAIT = Western Australian Institute of Technology, became Curtin University of Technology in 1987
WACAE = Western Australian College of Advanced Education, became Edith Cowan University in 1991
Introduction to Key Australian/Western Australian Organisations and Individuals

**Artsource** = The peak body for artists in Western Australia, providing support and opportunity and services to Western Australian artists.

**The Australia Council** = The Australian Government’s arts funding and advisory body, undertaking research and distributing federal funding for arts and culture in Australia.

**FORM** = A not for profit organisation, advocating for and developing creativity in Western Australia, with a focus on the craft and design sectors.

**NAVA** = National Association for the Visual Arts. The national peak body for the visual and media arts, craft and design sector undertaking research and providing advocacy, advice and services for artists.

**Paula Silbert** = Paula Silbert is a well respected Western Australian art consultant and advisor to government departments and other institutions. She has also been an advocate and promoter of Western Australian arts taking the initiative in obtaining sponsorship and presenting local arts content on local media.

**Dr David Bromfield** = Dr David Bromfield is an art historian and art critic who has been highly influential within Western Australian visual arts. For a time head of Fine Arts at the University of Western Australia and the outspoken resident art critic of *The West Australian* newspaper, he remains active as an art consultant, writer and researcher.

**Professor Ted Snell** = Currently Director of the Cultural Precinct at the University of Western Australia and Chair of the Visual Arts Board of the Australia council. An artist, critic for *The Australian* newspaper, arts writer, academic and administrator with a distinguished career in the visual arts in Western Australia and nationally.
### Abbreviations for Commercial Galleries from whose websites CVs were collected for this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Address</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BO</td>
<td>Boranup Gallery, 7981 Caves Road, Margaret River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL</td>
<td>Elements Art Gallery, 131A Waratah Avenue, Dalkeith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EM</td>
<td>Emerge ARTSPACE, 676A Beaufort Street, Mt Lawley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G(360)</td>
<td>Gallery 360, 360 Hay Street, Subiaco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GD</td>
<td>Galerie Dusseldorf, 9 Glyde Street, Mosman Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GdF</td>
<td>Goddard de Fiddes Gallery, 31 Malcolm Street, West Perth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GE</td>
<td>Gallery East, 94 Stirling Highway, North Fremantle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GF</td>
<td>Gadfly Gallery, 131 Waratah Avenue, Dalkeith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GH</td>
<td>Greenhill Galleries, 6 Gugeri Street, Claremont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GL</td>
<td>Gallows Gallery, 53 Glyde Street, Mosman Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GM</td>
<td>Gomboc Gallery Sculpture Park, 50 James Road, Middle Swan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JR</td>
<td>Jahroc Galleries, 83 Bussell Highway, Margaret River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L&amp;K</td>
<td>Linton &amp; Kay Fine Art Gallery, 299 Railway Road, Subiaco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LK</td>
<td>LK Galleries, Contemporary Fine Art Gallery, 123 Hay Street, Subiaco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG</td>
<td>Perth Galleries, 92 Stirling Highway, North Fremantle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Stafford Studios of Fine Art, 102 Forrest Street, Cottesloe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TG</td>
<td>Turner Galleries, 470 William Street, Northbridge</td>
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### Initials of Artists interviewed for this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initials</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Anna Sabadini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>Barbara Cotter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CB</td>
<td>Craig Boulter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CW</td>
<td>Cecile Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CY</td>
<td>Caitlin Yardley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Erin Coates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KD</td>
<td>Kevin Draper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LM</td>
<td>Larry Mitchell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MI</td>
<td>Michael Iwanoff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>Monique Tippett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NH</td>
<td>Nigel Hewitt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OC</td>
<td>Oron Catts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PB</td>
<td>Penny Bovell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Pippin Drysdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Peter Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RB</td>
<td>Rebecca Baumann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RN</td>
<td>Regina Noakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Susanna Castelden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Stuart Elliott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TG</td>
<td>Tom Gibbons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exhibit- 1: Rebecca Baumann, *Confetti International*, 2007, industrial fan, conveyor belt, coffee table, 12kg confetti, dimensions variable. Photographed by Tomasz Machnik.

Exhibit- 2: Erin Coates, *Immoveable Object Against an Unstoppable Force*, 2010, salvaged car air bags, found concrete slab, fan, 54cm x 120cm x 170cm. Photographed by Justin Spies
INTRODUCTION
From the Poet’s Work to Drawing from Artists’ Lives

One of the catalysts for this research project was a statement made by the narrator in one of Jorge Luis Borges’ fictions, *The Aleph*:

I realized that the poet’s work had lain not in the poetry but in the invention of reasons for accounting the poetry admirable; naturally that later work modified the poem for [the poet], but not for anyone else (Borges, 2000, pp. 121-122).

With my background in visual arts practice, the division of labour that is suggested by Borges’ narrator, between the proper work of the artist – the poetry – and the supplementary and debased work of inventing reasons for accounting the poetry admirable seemed an interesting proposition. It sat well with my idealistic conception (cultivated in University art studies) about what an art practice *should* be. However, my experiences in the world of Western Australian contemporary art also suggested that “the poets’ work” as a whole *must* involve the invention of reasons, perhaps amongst other kinds of work that were supplementary to what was considered the work of art proper.

Coming from previous studies in art practice, art history, and art and cultural theory, the work of art that I was accustomed to engaging with was generally a physical and/or symbolic product of creative processes, which were themselves not usually considered to be *work* in any conventional sense. To avoid confusion around this, I reframed my study as an investigation of the *labour* of visual art in Western Australia (WA). In the process I also repositioned myself from the stance I had taken in previous research as a practitioner, theorist, critic and historian of visual art practices (an insider) to being a social scientist (an outsider). In part I was curious about local and contemporary visual art and artists, subjects which had featured only incidentally in six years of visual art-focused tertiary education in Western Australian universities. I knew more about Max Ernst and Surrealism than I did about Robert Juniper and the Perth Group. Having never really successfully established and maintained a professional visual art practice myself, I was also curious about how artists achieved this in a local context. I was especially interested in seeing what kinds of labour artists did in relation to the real world outside of the studio, and how they achieved a balance between the invention
of reasons etc. and the poetry in their working lives. For these reasons I resolved to seek out and talk to Western Australian artists.

My initial investigations into existing research about the labour of visual art in Western Australia helped provide further reinforcement of the need for the study that I was proposing. There was very little local research capable of shedding much light on the ways that visual artists in WA created art and survived in the real world. The State Government’s Department of Culture (DCA) and the Arts commissioned periodical surveys about cultural consumption in WA (Patterson Research Group, 2012). A second report produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for the DCA disaggregated relevant Western Australian data from the census and other national surveys on arts and culture (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012c). FORM had undertaken some research into creativity in WA, within a creative industries framework (FORM, 2008, 2011). At the same time, local arts writing (art history and criticism) presented only a very fragmentary picture of WA artists and their activities, often in exhibition catalogue essays of limited scope and circulation and with a focus on works of art and individuals’ creative processes.

The most relevant existing studies, in fact, were the five economic studies of Australian professional artists’ working lives that David Throsby had undertaken with different co-authors since 1983 for the Australia Council (Australia Council, 1983; Throsby & Hollister, 2003; Throsby & Mills, 1989; Throsby & Thompson, 1994; Throsby & Zednik, 2010). These national studies surveyed artists working in all art forms, and looked specifically at economic factors in a very quantitative way. In the most recent of these reports (Throsby & Zednik, 2010), a total of 108 Western Australian artists across eight different principal artistic occupations were surveyed, which suggests that a very small number of Western Australian visual artists’ circumstances and perceptions are registered in this aggregated national picture. There was a gap in existing scholarship around detailed understandings of the circumstances and the labour of visual artists in Western Australia. Furthermore, through conducting research that filled this gap, there was an opportunity to critically compare and contrast the national and economically framed picture developed through Throsby’s work, with a finer-grained engagement with artists’ work in one art form and in one state.
As a novice social scientist, I also began to investigate previous work in the field and conceptual possibilities for the proposed project. My initial reviews of the literature led to an engagement with Pierre Bourdieu’s *The Rules of Art* (1996). There were a number of dimensions of Bourdieu’s work that I felt were of some relevance for the present study. In particular, I was interested in the possibility of being able to produce a map of the local field of cultural production in the way that Bourdieu had done for the literary field in early modern France (Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 121-125). Such a map, I thought, may help clarify the cultural contexts of local visual art activity in the absence of ready to hand and comprehensive art historical publications. Secondly, I thought that Bourdieu’s conception of artists being engaged in a specific labour in relation to milieu, producing themselves as subjects of their own creation (1996, p. 104), resonated with the multidimensional labour of the poet’s work that I was seeking to investigate. Whilst these notions seemed plausible, it remained to be seen whether they could be observed within empirical data and applied in contexts other than those that Bourdieu had examined.

These various stimuli and motivations have come together in shaping the PhD research project that I present in this thesis. The initial parameters for the project were as follows:

1. I wanted the findings of this study to be on some level meaningfully comparable and communicable with the findings of economic and quantitative studies that had preceded it. I considered it important that it was not only economists and statisticians who conducted research and wrote reports about artists that policy makers might read and take seriously. This essentially ruled out the possibility of writing a local art history, or an art critical/theoretical account of artists’ labour.

2. I was determined *not* to do a survey of artists’ perceptions and material circumstances, as this had been the dominant mode of data collection from Australian artists about their working lives.

3. I proposed to do an “anthropological” study of Western Australian visual artists, by which I meant that I envisaged engaging in fieldwork and the
collection of empirical qualitative data from artists themselves, analysing this data as inductively as possible.

4. I also realised that I needed to obtain some form of readily available data that might facilitate the mapping of the local field in order to understand local contexts on a broader scale than could be accessed through interviews. Shortly after submitting my proposal documents I recognised that artists’ CVs might provide such data.

5. Despite my own background and initiation into a very particular understanding of what constitutes good art and bad art (or non-art) I also determined to try to capture data from diverse artists who subscribed to different systems of value in their pursuit of a professional art practice.

From these initial precepts this project has evolved from its working title, The Poet’s Work, into the research as it now stands, under the title, Drawn from Artists’ Lives. Commencing in February 2010, this research has examined the circumstances in which visual artists are working in Western Australia, aiming to develop an understanding of the work that they do to establish and sustain their creative practice in this cultural environment. In order to capture contextual material and to map the field of cultural production one part of the study has involved the collection and analysis of the CVs of 322 living Western Australian artists. These CVs were all published on commercial gallery websites. To develop a detailed picture of the many dimensions of visual artists’ work to negotiate a place for themselves and their artworks in the field, I also undertook a series of in-depth interviews with a diverse sample of 20 visual artists living and working in Western Australia. Through these different modes of data collection I sought to obtain material that would enable me to address the following research questions.

**Research Questions**

1. In what kinds of circumstances and through what kinds of labour do visual artists living and working in Western Australia establish and maintain their professional creative practices?
2. Through what methodological avenues and from what data sources is it possible to undertake a mapping of the field of cultural production in Western Australian visual arts?

3. To what extent do values as mapped in the Western Australian field of visual arts correspond to those discussed by Pierre Bourdieu in relation to the French fields of cultural production?

4. To what extent are the circumstances and labours of Western Australian visual artists adequately represented in existing national research and reports as consulted by policy-makers?

**Thesis Structure**

The emphasis in this project has been on the collection and analysis of new empirical data in order to address the research questions. Correspondingly, I have collected a large quantity of data. I have also tried to present this material in a manner that preserves the voices of the interviewed artists, and presents the full scope of the possibilities opened up by my methodological innovations in the course of my analysis of artists’ CVs. In order to avoid cutting important sections of this material, I have allocated a significant portion of the available space in this thesis to the presentation of the new findings from the empirical studies. Also resulting from the nature and scope of the two different approaches to the collection and analysis of empirical data that make up this research project, it has proven impractical to structure the thesis using a more conventional chapter-driven framework addressing background, literature review, methodology etc. The thesis has been structured as follows:

1. **Part One: Preparing the Ground**

Within this part of the thesis I present the contexts from which this research project has emerged, and the approaches that I have taken in its realisation. Part one includes two primary sub-sections.
1.1 Primer (Literature Review)

I have presented this review of relevant literature in three parts. Firstly I engage with a range of empirical studies in the field, giving some consideration to international, national and Western Australian research. In the second part of the literature review I turn my attention to other texts that help introduce the key concepts that have some bearing upon the present research, and also review some different approaches to these concepts. In a final section I consider some theoretical approaches to the study of art as presented by several significant social scientists, in order to lead into the methodology which follows. By adopting this structure I hope to clearly highlight the challenges for research in the field, to observe the ways in which these challenges have been met in previous studies and to identify opportunities for my research to make a contribution.

1.2 The Creative Practice of Social Science (Methodology)

In this methodology section I begin with an introductory discussion which addresses key aspects of the conceptual framework employed in this research project, drawing on the philosophical and sociological work of Florian Znaniecki (1882-1958). In the second section I draw attention the apparent incompatibilities that exist between cultural practices such as art and the pursuit of scientific knowledge about them. In the third section I offer a brief account of my own background in order to position myself for the reader in relation to the study. I then provide an overview of the research design, indicating how the two empirical studies have been conceived so as to complement each other in the context of the overall research. Finally, I present the details of each of the two empirical studies (CV study and Interviews), in each case providing some background, a discussion of sampling, access, data collection, and data analysis procedures. Lastly in this section of the thesis, I consider the extent to which the findings of this research can be considered to be representative of a larger population.
2. Part Two: Drawn from Life: Findings from the Empirical Data

Part Two of the thesis comprises two large subsections each relating to one of the empirical studies involved in this project.

2.1 Figure and Field: The CV Study

The CV study is presented in four main sections.

2.1.1 Works on Paper – In this section I present material drawn from my interviews with artists that helps to contextualise artists’ CVs as a source of social data. Artists’ understandings, attitudes towards, uses of and approaches to constructing CVs are discussed, developing an understanding of these documents that informs the subsequent analysis of a large number of artists’ CVs.

2.1.2. Vantage Points and Positions – Over five subsections I present a range of findings drawn from different analyses of the collected CV data. In the first section I provide a brief conceptual framework in which the spatiality of social relations is considered and informs the understanding of CVs as social documents and subsequent analyses. In the following subsections I present a series of different analyses at macro, micro and intermediate levels demonstrating some of the possibilities for the analysis of CV data.

2.1.3. Drawing Lines in the Sand: Western Australian Visual Art Worlds – In this section I present and discuss the different maps of the field developed through the analysis of CV data.

2.1.4 Conclusions: Art Worlds and Fields of Cultural Production - In concluding the CV study I consider my findings in relation to the different sociological approaches of Bourdieu (1996) (the field of cultural production) and Becker (2008 [1982]) (art worlds) and present a final picture of the local field developed through this study.
The Interview findings are presented in two main sections.

2.2 Contexts and Situations – In this section I present material from the interview data that assists in understanding the ways that artists perceive of their contexts and situations in the past and present. In one subsection my focus is upon developing an understanding of the positive and negative aspects associated by artists with Western Australia as a place in which to make art and to pursue professional practice. In a second subsection I will offer a brief presentation of the different routes to a professional artistic identity that this study has revealed from artists’ accounts of their own first steps to being artists.

2.3 The Labour of Visual Art in Western Australia – In this section I present five subsections detailing the key findings drawn from the interview data. In the first brief section I present a basic outline and schematic diagram of a conceptual model of the labour of visual art in Western Australia developed from my analysis of the interview data. In this model I detail four distinct areas of cultural production in which visual artists are labouring. In each of the following four substantial subsections I provide a detailed account of each of these forms of artistic labour, and present relevant data drawn from the interviews.

3: Part Three: The View from Here (Discussion)

In this final section of the thesis I draw together the threads of my argument by giving systematic consideration to each of the four research questions at the core of this project. As the presentation of findings in Part Two of the thesis comprehensively addresses the majority of the research questions, I simply recap and summarise the findings of this research in relation to the first three research questions. In relation to the final research question I compare and contrast the findings of this research project with the conclusions drawn about visual artists’ working lives by recent and relevant
empirical studies such as Throsby and Zednik’s (2010) report, *Do you really expect to get paid?*

4: Appendices

Given the quantity of material to be addressed in this thesis, there is a significant amount of information that has been appended. Appendix A provides a range of additional tables figures and additional discussion of relevance to the CV study. Appendix B consists of a gallery in which each of the interviewed artists has been profiled and an image of their creative work has been presented. Appendix C provides the reader with further contextual material of broader relevance to the study in the form of a geographical note giving some basic information on Western Australia for readers unfamiliar with the state. Appendix D contains documents relating to the conduct of the Interview study including letters to participants, consent forms, and the interview guide. Appendix E consists of some documentation of relevance to methods employed in preparing and coding data for the CV study.

A Note on the Exhibits

Throughout the body of this thesis and in Appendix B I have included a large number of images of the creative work of 19 of the artists who have participated in this research. These exhibits will not be discussed in the text of thesis, but have been included as an important visual resource for readers unfamiliar with the artists’ work. Though this thesis has focused upon artists’ words, these exhibits provide an indication of how artists speak through visual media, which is their preferred medium of communication. These images also illustrate very effectively the diversity of practices in which the interviewed artists are engaged, and may serve to illuminate their quotations in various ways. One artist felt that it was inappropriate for his work to be presented in digital reproductions, see Appendix B.14 for a more detailed explanation of his position.
Exhibit- 3: Anna Sabadini, *Piero’s Discipline and Pierre’s Feeling*, 2011, oil on board, 2 pieces each 60cm x 60cm. Photographed by the artist.

Exhibit- 4: Peter Hill, *Under the surface*, 2010, acrylic on plywood, 100cm x 30cm. Private collection. Photographed by the artist.

PART ONE: Preparing the Ground
1.1 Primer (Literature Review)

Exhibit- 6: Nigel Hewitt, *Death of a Landscape Artist*, 1987, mixed media on canvas, 172cm x 187cm. Photographed by the artist

1.1.1 Introduction

Howard S. Becker writes of researchers and students being ‘terrorized by the literature,’ and also discusses some tendencies to use the literature as part of a ‘protective ritual that covers the author’s ass, but works less well to produce good or interesting scholarship’ (Becker, 1986, pp. 136-137). In the case of this research project, one of the key problems regarding the literature has another dimension also identified by Becker:
There are plenty of “schools” in which no education, under any construction of that word, is going on, and there are plenty of prisons, conversely, in which a lot of education is going on. The way most of our research is done is we pick a place – this is especially with field research, but it doesn’t matter, it can be any kind of research – you pick a place and say you’re going to study that place, as though you know what they did there. But what they do there has to be a finding, you can’t assume that you know that. (Quoted in Plummer, 2003, p. 33)

So, the question Becker asks is, what is the right literature? ‘Here’s the literature on the sociology of music, OK. But, you know, maybe that’s not the relevant stuff to be reading for your study, even though it involves musicians’ (Quoted in Plummer, 2003, p. 33). In the particular case of this research project one of the findings is that what artists do in the field of contemporary visual arts in Western Australia is irreducible to one right literature. In the first instance there is now a vast realm of literature concerned with the sociology of art, which approaches the social scientific study of art from a number of different angles, at different scales and with different emphases. In addition, the particular interest I have in this research in what professional artists do suggests that studies of professions and occupations may also be a key component of the right literature. On a more fundamental level, there is also a need to discuss the place of creative art practice in relation to literature that talks about and defines “labour” and “work” – in what ways is creative practice “work”? There is a growing body of research that treats the work of artists within a national industrial context, and develops a picture of creative industries, creative workforces and cultural workers. Alongside this literature there is a stream of social scientific endeavour that focuses upon economic activity and develops an understanding of what artists do in terms of economic decision making. Leaving aside the social science, there are also key ideas to be drawn from the literature on aesthetics, history and art criticism about what artists are doing, and what conditions are required for them to keep doing it. Finally, there is a need to address some aspects of the literature surrounding the theoretical and philosophical premises upon which a study of artists and what they do might constitute a “scientific” project and what may be gained from such an endeavour.

As a result of the breadth and scope of all the possible right literatures, the review of the literature that I present within this thesis must be indicative rather than exhaustive. Furthermore, whilst I have endeavoured to identify key and important contributions to the various fields over which my discussion will range, my selections
here are guided in the first instance by their import for and influence on the empirical study that I have carried out, in the light of the research questions. In this I take encouragement from Becker who says: ‘The doing is the main thing. Reading about Weber and Durkheim is not doing anything. I mean, it is doing something, but it’s not doing what you need to do to get your work done’ (Quoted in Plummer, 2003, p. 33).

1.1.2 Field Work (Empirical Studies)

Exhibit- 7: Susanna Castleden, *Visions Mt Misery*, 2003, screen print on paper, 150cm x 200cm. Photographed by Acorn Photography

1.1.2.1 Western Australian Research

The study of visual art in Western Australia has been in many ways a DIY project. Local artists, art academics, critics and gallery owners have undertaken research about local art history, which has predominantly been circulated amongst those who are producers in local visual art contexts. One need only look to examples such as the 1982 publication *Some Contemporary Western Australian Painters and Sculptors* (Hawthorn)
and the 1995 publication *Western Australian Artists in Residence*, (Woldendorp & Stringer) to see some evidence of WA artists and curators taking the documentation of art practice in this state into their own hands. The first of these publications, intended to be the first in three or four (unrealised) volumes in a proposed *Lexicon of Western Australian Painters and Sculptors*, set out to redress the issue that ‘there is very little material available for serious students of Western Australian art’ (Hawthorn, 1982, p. v). Rather than addressing the serious student, *Artists in Residence*, in coffee table book format, had the following stated aim: ‘Especially for people not expert in art, we hope to stimulate access, interest and understanding for the remarkable things happening in their community’ (Woldendorp & Stringer, 1995, p. iii). Significantly, both of these publications presented images and profiles of artists that focused largely on their studio practice and their creative works.

The limited interest in local contemporary practice has been felt by both artists and art writers in this state, and has been variously documented. Theo Koning, a Western Australian sculptor, stated in an interview first published in 1988 that:

> The great advantage artists working in other places have had over people working here is that their histories of art have been documented [...] There’s a lineage or linkage and people can point at something and locate themselves. Here there are no signposts. No history. (Quoted in Snell, 1991, p. 57)

Ted Snell says that:

> New groups of students at art school believe that they are setting out on their journeys with few if any role models, and it comes as a surprise to many that artists of rare quality and insight have worked in this sector of the Australian continent since white settlement. (Snell, 1991, p. 14)

And David Bromfield has observed about the reception of local contemporary art practice that:

> Artists here are exposed to the paradox of a dual exile. Their aspiration to a direct and original access to their experience has isolated them from the local audience whose eyes are firmly set on souvenirs of elsewhere whilst their very distance from art elsewhere has left them with little in the way of examples of what they sought to achieve. (Bromfield, 1987, p. 13)

Significantly, however, there is little evidence that this situation has changed in any positive way in the more than 20 years that have passed since these observations were
made. There have been no stand-alone publications since *Artists in Residence* that have attempted to ‘provide contextual background to the creative legacy of the current era’ (Woldendorp & Stringer, 1995, p. ii) in Western Australia to either a general or specialist audience. The vast majority of art historical writing in this state has been undertaken within the confines of exhibition catalogue essays or as review articles and has been focused on contextualising the particular artists or works on display (For example Bromfield, 2000; Fremantle Arts Centre, 2009). The few existing monographic studies of living Western Australian artists have, by and large, been the personal projects of scholars, critics and artists for which there is little demand and consequently few opportunities for publication and distribution (For example Bromfield, 2004; McNamara, 1998; Snell, 2007). A rare attempt by art writers to gather new information documenting the present-day situations of a large number of contemporary Western Australian artists, is David Bromfield and Pippa Tandy’s catalogue for the *South West Survey 2010* exhibition. The authors explain the relationship of this research to the accompanying exhibition in the following way:

> When we began work on Survey 2010 very little detailed information about the art and artists of the South West was to hand. It became necessary to take seriously the long cherished title of the exhibition. We chose to conduct a true Survey, rather than rely on the snapshot sample provided by the existing procedure. (Bromfield & Tandy, 2010, p. 1)

As they explain, in curating this exhibition as a true survey they ‘undertook to visit any and every artist who expressed an interest in exhibiting in Survey 2010 in order to see their work and discuss their circumstances and experiences as an artist’ (Bromfield & Tandy, 2010, p. 2). In all, Bromfield and Tandy saw the work of over 180 artists and selected work for the exhibition on the basis of ‘the overall profile of the visual arts and the extraordinarily diverse range of creative concerns that our journeys revealed’ (2010, p. 2). As in much Western Australian research in the visual arts, however, the detailed revelations of such a study are somewhat inhibited by presentation in the context of a catalogue essay whose focus is ultimately on contextualising the art works of 65 artists selected for the exhibition.

Beyond these writers and researchers who have made personal and professional investments in Western Australian visual art worlds, there are very few studies that
look from outside the art world in on visual art practice in this state. Of the various arts organisations operating in this state, the two most engaged in publishing research and reporting on cultural matters are the State Government’s Department of Culture and the Arts (DCA), and FORM. FORM describes itself as ‘an independent cultural organisation which works to enhance Western Australia’s competitiveness and creativity’ (2008, p. i).

The DCA periodically publishes a number of reports that present data about cultural activity in this state, most of them developed from data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the census (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012c). The only piece of research published regularly by the DCA and involving the collection of new data within the state is primarily a market research exercise focused upon cultural consumption and audiences in the state (Patterson Research Group, 2012). Very little of this published research can be brought to bear in any meaningful way on the working lives of visual artists in WA.

FORM have a distinctive creative industries agenda with an economic focus and in their reporting and research they have tended to take a very broad view of creativity and the relative significance of artists and visual artists within that. Several of their most substantial published reports have been focused on making comparisons between Perth and other cities, in Australia and overseas, in the attempt to assess the competitiveness of WA’s state capital with other destinations for creative workers (FORM, 2008, 2011). As is the case with the DCA reports, these publications draw on demographic and other data collected at a very large scale, and contribute little to understanding the specificities of art practice in Western Australia.

More recently, I am aware of new empirical research being undertaken as a part of the Creative Workforce Initiative based at Curtin University. At this stage the publications of which I am aware have been focused upon the spatial dimensions of creative work considering specific local circumstances within global networks (Bennett, Fitzgerald, & Rainnie, 2011). I anticipate future findings from the project to be of great interest in relation to my research. Dawn Bennett, director of that project, observes in her book Understanding the Classical Music Profession that ‘despite being at the heart of the cultural industries, little is known about visual and performing artists. The majority of
research on careers in the arts concerns the broad visual and performing arts sector, or the still broader cultural industries’ (2008, p. 36). Through this research project I seek to develop an understanding of professional visual artists in Western Australia that addresses this knowledge gap, which Bennett has addressed in her study of professional musicians.

**1.1.2.2 Australian Research**

In this project I seek to examine dimensions of art practice that have not often been addressed in an Australian context. In other contexts scholars over many years have examined both contemporary and historical art worlds from socially oriented perspectives. In Australia such projects have really only found their impetus with the implementation of Government funding for the arts, and especially through the establishment of the Australia Council for the Arts in 1968. Significantly, the first major socially oriented study of Australian artists was the *Individual Artists Inquiry* undertaken by the Australia Council, as a result of the council’s concern that ‘the needs of individual artists were not properly understood and were being neglected in its work’ (Guldberg, 1999, p. 2). This Inquiry was chaired by cultural economist David Throsby and resulted in an important report *The Artist in Australia Today*, published in 1983 (Australia Council). Since this first report, David Throsby has been instrumental in a further four studies of the economic circumstances of the working lives of Australia’s artists (Throsby & Hollister, 2003; Throsby & Mills, 1989; Throsby & Thompson, 1994; Throsby & Zednik, 2010), the report from the most recent study being published in 2010.

Data on Australian arts and culture is also collected on a still larger scale by the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ (ABS) National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics (NCCRS), under the guidance of the Cultural Ministers’ Statistical Working Group (established 1985). The ABS periodically publishes reports on arts and cultural data drawn from the census and from the other forms of data collection in which the NCCRS is involved. (For example Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011, 2012b) There are some well documented limitations to the use of census data for developing an
understanding of artists’ working lives, particularly around nominating art practice as a main job when so many artists may earn most of their income from other work (Cunningham & Higgs, 2010; Menger, 1999). In the main, the data collected on arts and culture provides an understanding of audience participation and expenditure on cultural activities but has very little to say about artists.

Other significant research projects in an Australian context have shed additional light on the situation of artists in Australia, most notably the Myer Report (Report of the Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft Inquiry) (Myer, 2002). The Myer Report is a significant document, gathering a different kind of material from the visual arts and craft sector in Australia than has been collected through survey studies. The many written submissions received by the inquiry offer important insights into many aspects of the workings of the sector and offer a valuable counter-point to more quantitative studies. However, as with other Australian research, the inquiry and its report resulted from the needs of government to ‘scope the [visual arts and craft] sector, examine its cultural and economic contribution, and make recommendations on key issues impacting on the future sustainability, development and promotion of the sector as a whole’ (Myer, 2002, p. 5). This broad brief and the primary means by which it obtained its data, through written submissions and consultation (for the most part with organisations and institutional stake-holders), have produced another overview which still needs to be reconciled with new empirical data collected from artists.

The majority of data collection about art and artists in Australia has been undertaken by surveys. These surveys have been used to collect data for statistical analysis within economic frameworks (Throsby & Hollister, 2003; Throsby & Mills, 1989; Throsby & Thompson, 1994; Throsby & Zednik, 2010), or else within the context of what have essentially been market research studies (for example Saatchi & Saatchi, 2000). Another more recent development in this regard has been the development of a new conceptual framework based around the Creative Industries thesis developed by Richard Florida (2002) and others. This has not, however, resulted in different kinds of studies examining the details of Australian artists’ working lives, instead the creative industries approach has tended to introduce new big picture research concerns such as geographical clustering (informing research such as FORM, 2008, 2011). In subsuming
artists as just one kind of creative worker amongst many (Cunningham, 2011), this scholarship places an emphasis on the economic productivity of the creative and cultural sectors (McGuigan, 2009; Oakley, 2009).

Whilst all of this research has made important contributions to our understanding of art and artists in Australia, it is clear that the majority of this work has been developed with an eye on the (often economic) concerns of policy-makers and those charged with the allocation of funding for arts and culture. This may be indicative of the key sources of funding for socially oriented research on artists, and also the comparative lack of interest in such research in other contexts, eg. within Australian art worlds themselves. However, the need for different kinds of studies about artists has been identified. The ABS document, *Arts and Cultural Heritage - An Information Development Plan*, for example, noted in 2008: ‘Research on the career choices and motivations of artists is needed, perhaps employing more qualitative methods, targeting artists in a variety of income and employment situations’ (p. 35). It is for this reason that in this study I have largely looked beyond Australian studies for examples of other models of research into artists’ working lives.

One important Australian research project focused on visual artists is the *Visual Arts Industry Guidelines Research Project* (VAIGRP) undertaken between 1998 and 2001 by the National Association for Visual Artists (NAVA). Three of the working papers from that project are of particular relevance to this study of artists’ working lives. *Working Paper No.1* (Throsby & Madden, 2001) proposes an *Economic Model of the Visual Arts Industry in Australia*. *Working Paper No. 2*, (2001), prepared by the Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training (ACIRRT) presents the results of a survey of NAVA members that focuses on the ways that artists allocate their time and earn income in relation to creative practice and other employment. *Working Paper No.8* (Anderson, 2001), considers a range of possibilities for the development of a system of professional accreditation for visual arts practitioners. Unfortunately, these papers offer a limited appraisal of the circumstances of visual artists on a number of levels.

In the first paper, Throsby and Madden begin by isolating the economic concerns of their analysis from ‘a basic mapping of interrelationships between stakeholders, and [...] the exchanges of cultural value’ (2001, p. 1), which they suggest requires separate
treatment. There are some issues with the notion that cultural and economic values can be addressed independently of each other, most significantly, as in this instance, the problem is that quantifiable economic values receive attention, whilst cultural values do not. Amongst other findings, the second paper provides a typology of Australian visual artists classified on the basis of ‘relative shares of time spent and gross income by activity area’ (Australian Centre for Industrial Relations and Training, 2001, p. 10). Once again, it is worth underlining the particularly economic basis of this typology, and that there is scope here to consider typologies based upon other systems of value that ultimately impact upon artists’ decisions about the allocation of their time and other resources. Also limiting the relevance of this survey, given the Western Australian focus of my study, is that NAVA membership is skewed towards artists based on the eastern states of Australia, and New South Wales (NSW) in particular. In 2001, 77% of the NAVA members surveyed for the VAIGRP study lived in NSW or Victoria (Vic) (Australian Centre for Industrial Relations and Training, 2001), and in their 2011 annual report NAVA indicated that just 3% of their members lived in Western Australia (p. 31). Finally, Anderson’s paper (2001) seeks to address the issue that survey researchers find most insurmountable in dealing with artists; that is the difficulty of defining the professional artist. However, Anderson does not approach this issue by talking to artists about how it is that they currently distinguish themselves from amateurs and lay people. Instead, he looks to a range of apparatus and criteria that might be deployed in an institutional system of accreditation. What is most significant, I think, about the VAIGRP papers is that they provide evidence of the dominance of particular modes of investigation in Australia. Even in studies and reports commissioned by a body that champions visual artists we can see the economic framework underlying other Australian research in the field.

Throsby’s reports on the economic circumstances of professional artists in Australia undoubtedly provide an important resource widely used by ‘policy makers, bureaucrats, arts organisations, artists themselves and the wider community’ (Throsby & Zednik, 2010, p. 7). The five reports collectively track the longitudinal development of a number of specific measures of significance to artists’ working lives, focused on, ‘how artists allocate their time, how they earn money, what factors support or inhibit the achievement of their artistic goals’ (Throsby & Zednik, 2010, p. 13). However, I
suggest that in the pursuit of ‘comparability with previous surveys’ (Throsby & Zednik, 2010, p. 97), the opportunity to develop genuinely new understandings has been foregone in favour of producing measurements that chart progress (or its absence). Ultimately, important questions that have significant bearing upon the findings of these studies remain unanswered, such as the problems of defining a professional artist. It is assumed that the definitions and criteria proposed by the researchers are adequate, and as ‘fair and as stringent as they can be’ (Throsby & Zednik, 2010, p. 14). But it seems that little attempt has been made to critically evaluate these in relation to empirical data, or even to pursue qualitative research that may help in understanding how professionalism functions in art worlds. There are, I suggest, significant opportunities for the collection and analysis of different kinds of data in an area of study which:

has grown stagnant, has pursued the investigation of a few variables with ever increasing precision but has received dwindling increments of knowledge from the pursuit. When this occurs, investigators might well proceed by gathering personal documents which suggest new variables, new questions and new processes, using the rich though unsystematic data to provide a needed reorientation of the field. (Becker, 1970 [1966], p. 69)

1.1.2.3 International Research

In order to find models for such a renovation of Australian studies of visual artists, it is necessary to look to international contexts where visual artists and the art worlds in which they participate have been studied independently of the reporting needs of administrators and governments (Belfiore, 2009; Karttunen, 2012). Predominantly, the kinds of studies that offer some potential in this regard are those that have been undertaken within the broad disciplinary context of the sociology of art, though there are also human geographical (Bain, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2006, 2007), anthropological (Myers, 2002), and ethnographic (Deener, 2009) studies. Whilst the sociology of art is an extremely wide ranging field of endeavour, encompassing many different goals and approaches, there are comparatively few empirical studies that might be seen to offer direct models for an empirical study of Western Australian professional visual art practices. Here I will review just a few quite specific studies that
have been selected because they examine visual art worlds that operate at a distance from the major art centres, such as New York, Paris, London, Chicago etc. The distinguishing feature of these art worlds is often a level of marginality in relation to national and international art markets, resulting in different forms of value-building and social stratification. All three of the research projects that I will discuss here are North American studies: Michal McCall’s study (1977) of the art world in St Louis, Missouri, USA; Henry C. Finney’s study (1993) of an unidentified, small North Eastern State Capital City art world in the USA; and Alison Bain’s study (Bain, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2006, 2007) of visual artists in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Most importantly, all of these researchers have taken a primarily qualitative approach to their studies, with McCall and Finney collecting data through participant observation in the art worlds they were studying, and Bain through a large number of semi-structured interviews with Toronto artists in their studios and workspaces. What is especially significant about studies such as McCall’s and Finney’s is that they have drawn attention to the ways in which artists have to negotiate their positions as serious practising professionals in places where there simply is not the same infrastructure of validation as in recognised major art centres such as New York or Chicago. McCall, for instance, says that in St. Louis there are:

- few dealers, fewer commercial dealers’ galleries, and no gallery district. The St. Louis art museum seldom exhibits and does not collect local contemporary art. There are few private collectors in St. Louis, and fewer who buy local work.
- Artistic value is created socially by alternative means. Art schools and their faculties take the place of dealers, collectors, museums and critics in the local production of art, the creation of artistic value, and the determination of artistic status. (1977, p. 33)

Furthermore, McCall suggests that because of the alternative means by which St. Louis artists establish their credibility and professional status, these locally significant credentials are not recognised in larger art centres, where a more conventional art world and art market operates. Also important amongst McCall’s findings is that ‘St Louis is a small enough city, and its high art world is marginal enough, that the picture painting art world competes with the high art for scarce resources – clientele and institutional support’ (1977, p. 38). Picture painting has been described by a number of authors (McCall, 1977, pp. 37-41). Raymonde Moulin has used the term ‘chromos’
(1994) or ‘junk painting’ (1987 [1967]), for these works which she describes as ‘repetitive and interchangeable paintings which are the product of conventional craftsmanship. From the standpoint of scholarly culture, these are illegitimate paintings, [...] paintings to which all specialists deny the dignity of art’ (1994, p. 5). In art worlds such as the Parisian one which Moulin studied, ‘both worlds exist, but with little awareness of one another’ according to McCall (1977, p. 40). In St Louis, however, the absence of a large clientele for high art forces artists into competition with picture painters.

Finney’s study is concerned with the ways in which artists are positioned in different social strata in the context of ‘the visual art world in a small north eastern American city’ (1993, p. 403). Finney’s study found that artists’ ‘art world standing was determined by [...] art education, jury and gallery acceptance, “circle” centrality, sales, style (including secondarily, medium), and professionalism’ (1993, p. 404). Using these different characteristics Finney was able to identify five strata of artists in the local visual art scene: naïfs, hobbyists, serious amateurs, preprofessionals and professionals. In broad and general terms, the first three of these strata include artists who don’t perceive of their art practice as a career. Hobbyists and serious amateurs typically work in conventional media such as pastel and watercolour and perhaps oils, and ‘overwhelmingly prefer traditional and non-innovative realistic landscape or genre subjects’ (Finney, 1993). Serious amateurs tend to be members of local arts associations, and this helps distinguish them from hobbyists and naïfs. Preprofessionals and professionals, on the other hand, do perceive of their art practice as a career, or at least have an aspiration to do so. For these artists, art education is important, as is a consciousness of ‘big-city art world issues and trends’ (Finney, 1993, p. 420). Finney found examples of artists who ‘changed their style as they moved “upward” in the local art world, typically from more traditional to more modernist and formally sophisticated modes’ (1993, p. 420). In terms of what Finney calls professionalism, he says that for these artists ‘the reference group is the “profession,” or the “national art scene,” much more than the local art world’ (1993, p. 427), though such artists may also have differing orientations towards ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘local’ prominence.
Bain’s work has a slightly different emphasis and a more fine-grained focus on the different elements that contribute to artists’ personal identification as professional artists. Importantly, Bain’s research has gone beyond the identification of social conditions (such as class, gender, education, economic status, institutions etc) and their impact upon artistic status. Bain argues that:

The challenge of constructing an artistic identity [...] is met through the consumption of myths and the production of artistic labour. Every occupational identity has its share of myths and stereotypes. These ‘invented histories’ (Appiah, 1995) and idealized perspectives become symbols of collective identification and a means of demarcating the contours of group membership. By variously resisting and internalizing tailored versions of reality, artists can attempt to position themselves within the profession while scripting the degree of conformity they intend to display to it. For group membership demands some degree of consistency in what individual members do in practice, such that every member can independently ‘pull off’ their occupational identity. (2005, p. 42)

As an urban social geographer, Bain’s examination of the working lives of artists also takes on different frames of reference, from intimate examinations of the control of domestic and studio space for artists juggling gender roles, family commitments and professional art practice (2004a, 2007). In other work, she addresses the way that specific neighbourhoods in Toronto play different roles in artists’ identification and in artistic production generally (Bain, 2003, 2006). Bain’s work in her semi-structured interviews demonstrates a range of internalised, domestic and cultural dimensions to artists’ efforts to identify as professionals. She says, ‘I relied on the interview as my main data source because it permitted me to be sensitive to the interactive ways in which identity can be fabricated through narrative in particular social and spatial contexts’ (Bain, 2005, p. 31).

Collectively, these three approaches have demonstrated several issues of relevance to this study. Firstly they emphasise the specificities of systems of value to particular cultural and geographical locations, due to a whole range of logistical, social and historical factors. This is important in the context of the research reported here as I suggest that Perth and Western Australian art worlds may have more in common with St Louis’s, or Finney’s Regional City’s, art worlds than with the art worlds of Melbourne, Sydney or Paris. We need to consider that research capturing data on a national scale is unsuited to register these differences, and that we should be cautious
about importing understandings of art world value that apply to big centres to more eccentric situations. Secondly, such studies go a long way to demonstrating the availability and accessibility of information about the establishment and maintenance of professional artistic practices and the conditions in which this can be achieved. McCall’s, Finney’s and Bain’s research also shows that such research needs to be open and sensitive to capturing unanticipated dimensions and measures of value that operate in different art worlds, in which definitions are a potential outcome and not a starting point. Finally, Bain’s work points us in a socio-culturally constructed direction when she suggests that the problem of professional identity for artists is not confined to social dimensions, but also includes reference to underlying cultural images with long histories with which artists must negotiate in their present-day self- and public-image.
1.1.3 Studies on Three Motifs (Concepts and Approaches)

Exhibit- 8: Cecile Williams, *Detained*, 2010, recycled plastic with LED lights, 120cm x 35cm x 100cm. Photographed by Nic Duncan

Following on from Bain’s observations concerning the role of myths and stereotypes in visual artists’ self-identification and professional lives, it is of some importance to now turn to look more closely at a range of concepts that impact in different ways upon all of the research discussed to this point. Here I will review the relationship that the practice of contemporary visual art has to three important concepts; value, profession and work/labour.

### 1.1.3.1 Art and Value

In a contemporary context such as Western Australia, where public money is allocated for the production and administration of art, there is some importance placed upon understanding the value of art. Departments of Treasury would like to be able to show
on their ledgers the specific returns on investment in areas such as culture and the arts. Indeed, in recent times in response to a range of governmental pressures and approaches, there have been significant attempts to measure the contributions of the arts and cultural sectors to GDP, and to otherwise account for the wide ranging community benefits delivered by investment in these sectors. In these environments, arts organisations, institutions and advocates have increasingly sought to produce evidence of the value added through arts practices (Belfiore, 2009; Belfiore & Bennett, 2008, 2010; Karttunen, 2012; Oakley, 2009). With respect to the value of individual visual art practices, what is important is the recognition that there are multiple discourses around the value of art in contemporary western societies, such as Western Australia. Indeed, as John Carey writes in his book *What Good Are the Arts?* (2005) there does not even appear to be a satisfactory answer to the question “what is art?” After critiquing a range of different approaches offered by other authors to answering this question, Carey settles on the following definition: ‘something may be a work of art for one person and not for another. If you think it is, it is’ (2005, p. 31). This situation leads Carey to conclude that ‘it seems that none of us knows much about art, though we know what we like’ (2005, p. 31). So, then, is the value of art ultimately about a personal preference, what we subjectively like? Whilst this seems to be the only answer that everyone might ultimately agree on, arguments for the collective (and potentially even universal) value of art are an important dimension of art practice, with real impacts on the actions of practitioners, patrons and critics.

Whilst there is no clear consensus about the value of art and how it is to be understood and measured, there are some key themes and conceptual frameworks that have a bearing on the present study. In particular I will here talk about three different ways that the value of art has been understood and presented, and examine the ways in which these different understandings may play out in individual artists’ practices.
1.1.3.1.1 Art History, Aesthetic Value, and Autonomy

Alison Bain has drawn our attention to the mythological dimensions of contemporary artists’ professional identity. Whilst I understand the use of the word “myth” in this context, I prefer instead to think about the cultural and historical evolution of a social role; to think about a job description that has undergone various iterations over many centuries. There are several important elements to this job description, some dating back to the very first instances in the historical record in which artists were identified and their works written about. Robin Osborne (2010) writes that Pliny’s *Natural History* in effect initiated art history as we know it today, as a result of a need to support his evaluation of the progress of contemporary sculpture. Osborne writes:

> To show what is most extraordinary demands a ranking of sculptures in competition with each other, but the sculptures themselves cannot compete, and so sculptors are required to be the competitors. What is more, the extraordinary cannot but be original, and originality, too, demands a unique creator. (2010, p. 232)

Osborne goes on to say:

> We can certainly see modern writing on art history as in the tradition of ancient writing on art history. For all that he adds a level of biography strikingly lacking in Pliny’s catalogues, Vasari’s writings are unthinkable without Pliny’s example. (2010, p. 232)

Ernst Kris and Otto Kurtz also point out the existence of important polarity in Greek culture, which, ‘originating in mythology [...] permeated the writing of history:’

> The autodidact represents one side of this polarity, reflected in the elevation of the creative individual to the status of culture hero. The other side reflects the urge to anchor the individual’s achievement firmly in the dynastic succession, a process we might refer to as “genealogization.”’ (1979 [1934], p. 20)

There is, I think, a resonance here with the uneasy tension experienced by contemporary artists who must innovate to gain recognition by contributing something new, but must also find a place in the canon of artists, often by means of comparisons and tracing an artistic lineage. Giorgio Vasari, drawing on ancient models for his accounts of *The Lives of the Artists* (1550), produced ‘what is deemed the first text in art history,’ which remained ‘the foundation of art historical knowledge well into the nineteenth century’ (Hinojosa, 2006). Even today, as Osborne claims:
Art history turns upon artists. The *catalogue raisonné*, monographs and exhibitions devoted to works by individuals: these are the staples of art history. Scholars have been captivated by the personality of the artist and connoisseurship devoted to recognizing the individual’s hand. (2010, p. 231)

What is important is the recognition that building upon this historical foundation, a key element to the designation of something as art is in fact the designation of the producer as an artist (socially and historically). Furthermore, the value of the work of art is intimately tied to the exceptional capabilities of the creative practitioner. Creative innovation is that which distinguishes the artist from his/her less memorable contemporaries (Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 70-71), but it is also what s/he shares with the canon of great artists to which they must still trace their artistic ancestry.

In the 18th Century, the artist’s work was imbued with another level of distinction by virtue of Kant’s aesthetic theory, according to which the true work of art is set apart from life and not only extraordinary in comparison with everyday objects, but can in fact be universally recognised as being beautiful and pertaining to truth (Carey, 2005, pp. 9-10). As Tony Bennett writes ‘Kant produced the aesthetic as a zone of activity – a practice of the self – that could be conducted independently of any tutelage to [...] external authorities, a space of freedom’ (2011, p. para 2). A Kantian heritage registers in George Steiner’s definition of “creation” (fundamental to art and distinct from “invention”) as ‘*that which is enacted freedom and which includes and expresses in its incarnation the presence of what is absent from it or of what could be radically other*’ (G. Steiner, 2002, p. 108 Steiner's emphasis). It is also evident in Herbert Marcuse’s conception of high culture (art) as ‘the appearance of the realm of freedom: the refusal to behave’ (1964, p. 71), and in his claim that ‘its authentic works expressed a conscious, methodical alienation from the entire sphere of business and industry, and from its calculable and profitable order’ (1964, p. 58). According to such arguments the intrinsic value of art, that which ultimately makes it universally valuable for culture and society, is dependent upon its autonomy from social, economic and political functions and usefulness. For evidence of the pervasiveness of such positive correlations between freedom and the value of art, one need look no further than the contempt with which western art history and criticism has regarded the social realism of Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia and Communist China (Gombrich, 2000 [1991], pp. 250-253). In a more contemporary context, Bourdieu has made the claim that:
there are a certain number of conditions for the existence of a culture with a critical perspective that can only be assured by the state. In short, we should expect (and even demand) from the state the instruments of freedom from economic and political powers – that is from the state itself. (Quoted in Bourdieu & Haacke, 1995, p. 72)

This critical perspective, a contemporary correlative of Kant’s disinterestedness, is intimately tied to both the value of art and also to the relative autonomy of the artist. Indeed the conspicuous independence (economic, social, political and artistic) of the artist is perhaps one of the few guarantees artists have that they are capable of producing art work of value. So I argue, we need to consider the artist’s invocation of bohemian lifestyle or social eccentricity as more than a symbolic marker for artistic identity, we also need to consider that it may constitute a very necessary condition for the production of value in art, as perceived by art history and society at large.

1.1.3.1.2 Economic Value

Art has been valued and exchanged as goods and services for much longer than it has been aesthetically valued on the basis of its isolation in a realm of art for art’s sake. However, amongst other factors, romantic notions of the independence of the artist from any external influence have significantly changed the relationship between the value of art and economic values. Bourdieu quotes Flaubert: ‘If one does not address the crowd, it is right that the crowd should not pay one. It is political economy. But, I maintain that a work of art (worthy of that name and conscientiously done) is beyond appraisal, has no commercial value, cannot be paid for. Conclusion: if the artist has no income, he must starve!’ (1996, p. 82). As this quote indicates, there is an understanding that the value of art is ideally and fundamentally incompatible with exchange value, and even, as in Bourdieu’s market for symbolic goods, that the two are antithetical.

At one pole there is the anti-‘economic’ economy of pure art. Founded on the obligatory recognition of the values of disinterestedness and the denegation of the ‘economy’ (of the ‘commercial’) and of ‘economic’ profit (in the short term), it privileges production and its specific necessities, the outcome of an autonomous history […] At the other pole, there is the ‘economic’ logic of the literary and artistic industries which, since they make the trade of cultural goods
just another trade, confer priority on distribution, on immediate and temporary success, measured for example by the print run, and which are content to adjust themselves to the pre-existing demand of a clientele. (1996, p. 142)

Bourdieu maintains, however, that all kinds of cultural production operate at different distances between the two poles: ‘the two extremes are never, in fact attained - either total and cynical subordination to demand or absolute independence from the market and its exigencies’ (1996, pp. 141-142). Moreover, in economic discourse there has been a tendency to posit a more concrete distinction between economic and cultural values, partly on methodological grounds. David Throsby writes that ‘economists are deluding themselves if they claim that economics can encompass cultural value entirely within its ambit and that the methods of economic assessment are capable of capturing all relevant aspects of cultural value in their net’ (2001, p. 41). For economists the difficulty lies in adequately dealing with cultural values; ‘being multidimensional, deriving from a broadly cultural discourse and having no standard unit of account’ (Hutter & Throsby, 2008, p. 4). Throsby advocates for the admission of ‘cultural value alongside economic values in the consideration of the overall value of cultural goods and services’ (2001, p. 41). However, the separation of economic and cultural values also facilitates the pursuit of studies in which only economic conceptions of value are addressed, leaving the problem of accounting for cultural values to one side.

Aside from this issue it is important also to note the existence of a range of studies of art markets in which the complexities of the interrelationship between economic and cultural values have been revealed. Talking about Raymonde Moulin’s studies of the French art market, Becker suggests that the situation is not as simple as a conflict between aesthetic and financial values:

The two values may not conflict. In pursuing one you may simultaneously, and without difficulty pursue the other. Which seems a fine thing. But it may be, further, that one set of values has a low reputation. People prefer not to be thought of pursuing that particular goal and would rather be thought pursuing the second. Although one would like to be perceived to be pursuing just the one, that isn’t possible. (1994)

As Moulin writes:
Painters rationalize success and failure in terms that cast doubt on the verdict of the market: commercial success is contrasted with the success d’estime, overnight fame is contrasted with the slow growth of reputation, and success through compromise is contrasted with success through misunderstanding. The successful painter’s feelings of satisfaction are not unalloyed with feelings of resentment against the means by which success was achieved, as well as doubts to its significance. Regardless of artists’ ideological doubts, however, appreciation of the work is currently reflected in price. (1987 [1967], p. 179)

There are two important conclusions to be drawn from these observations. Firstly, that in appraising the value of art, cultural and economic values are inextricably ‘confused’ as Becker puts it. On the one hand a high quality work of art, recognised as such, does fetch a high price on the art market, but at the same time artists would prefer to be seen to be pursuing their work unaffected by the workings of the market, and may even see commercial failure as an indication of artistic success. It does not seem possible to give a purely economic account of the value of artists’ work, as even the economic values that can be measured (market prices etc) may influence the decisions of economic actors in both positive and negative ways. Secondly, with Becker, we might observe more generally that:

talk of values, in themselves or as explanations of conduct is highly suspect, unless that discussion is nuanced and qualified. People do on occasion refer to values as they act, but they can never be sure, and thus neither can we, that they know what behaviour can be attributed to what values. Not because they are confused or stupid, but because the situations they act in do not give them the resources with which to make such distinctions neatly and distinctly. (1994)

1.1.3.1.3 Instrumental Values

I will not dwell for long on instrumental values, ‘according to which culture’s principal value hinges on how it serves various strategies and political objectives of social improvement or development’ (Landry & Pachter, 2007 [2001], p. 10). However, conceptions of the instrumental nature of art have a long history, reaching back to the writings of Plato. Ernst Gombrich has identified two modes of thinking about the relationship of art to society. One he has labelled the ‘diagnostic’ approach in which ‘style is a manifestation or symptom of the age’ (2000 [1991], p. 241). The other he has called the ‘pharmacological’ approach in which emphasis is placed upon the ‘effects of
art, be it as stimulant or tranquilizer’ (2000 [1991], p. 241). Similar conceptions of the
efficacy of art have been used by both advocates and critics in many contexts, ranging
from the establishment of public art galleries and museums in Victorian England (T.
Bennett, 1995) to the purging of ‘degenerate’ modern art and artists from Nazi
Germany (Gombrich, 2000 [1991]). As argued by Eleonora Belfiore (2008), in
contemporary western contexts such as Australia and the United Kingdom, the value
of art is often presented in terms of its positive effects on the health and well-being of
communities and the cultural and economic wealth of societies and nations. What is
important to note, however, is that there is potentially a similar confusion between
aesthetic and instrumental values to that which exists between aesthetic and financial
values. As Marcuse puts it: ‘truth is incompatible with enslavement by socially
necessary labour’ (1964, p. 128). Indeed, the value of art is often perceived to be tied
to its autonomy – its cultural value (utility?) is directly proportionate to its lack of
instrumentality, the degree of its disinterestedness. But it is interesting to consider
that this critical perspective is often perceived in terms that at some level make it a
socially necessary labour, particularly in nations where artistic production may still
function as an important marker for advanced and enlightened civilisation.

1.1.3.2 Art and Profession

Pierre Bourdieu describes the social personality of the great professional artist as one
who:

combines, in a union as fragile as it is improbable, a sense of transgression and
freedom from conformity with the rigor of an extremely strict discipline of living
and work, which presupposes bourgeois ease and celibacy and which is more
characteristic of the scientist or scholar. (1996, p. 111)

In this conception, it is possible to see the seemingly contradictory combinations of
value that are manifest in art practice. In many quantitative studies, however, a great
deal of discussion has been entered into regarding the significant difficulties inherent
in defining professional artists for the research purposes. As Steiner and Schneider
write: ‘The only consensus that seems to emerge is that there is no a priori right
definition of artists because no criterion or combination of criteria qualifies everywhere’ (2012, p. 9). Throsby and Zednik’s view is that:

In some fields, the definition of a professional is straightforward. There may, for example, be certain qualifications that are essential for professional recognition, as is the case with accountants and architects. For practitioners such as doctors and lawyers, legal registration is required and acts as a certification of professional status. In other areas a looser definition might apply, based on whether or not someone earns a living from a particular calling – sportspeople, for example, are described as turning professional when they cease practising their sport as an amateur and begin to make an income from playing or coaching etc. For artists, any single test is inadequate as a comprehensive definition of professional standing. (2010, p. 14)

Here I do not intend to review the range of different a priori criteria that are proposed by such studies. I intend to consider instead the concept of profession more broadly and to highlight the ways that this connects, or not, with artists as creative practitioners.

The term “profession” itself is problematic, as Howard Becker wrote in 1962,

one term is being made to do two quite different jobs. On the one hand, we use profession as a scientific concept. Carefully defined, with a precise list of differentia, we mean the term to point to an abstract and objectively discriminable class of human phenomena. [...] But profession is not the sole property of the social scientist, [...] in the ordinary intercourse of our society, the term has another kind of meaning. Instead of describing and pointing to an abstract classification of kinds of work, it portrays a morally desirable kind of work. (1970 [1962], pp. 89-90)

Perhaps the problem faced by quantitative researchers who would like to use the class “professional” in a scientific way to describe their sample, is that in art contexts the term professional is primarily used to make a normative distinction between legitimate and illegitimate artists, between good and bad art? Perhaps this explains why ‘we know there is such a thing as a “professional” visual artist,’ without knowing necessarily knowing the ‘criteria by which they can be identified?’ (Jeffri & Throsby, 1994, p. 99). Whilst Jeffri and Throsby ask ‘what does the empirical evidence on the situation of individual artists tell us?’ they do not discuss the empirical evidence that might help them address the problem of defining a professional visual artist. Rather they compare the findings from two studies proposing two different a priori definitions.
David Sciulli, however, offers a more constructive approach to the issue when he suggests that in fact the activities of visual artists within academies of painting during the ancien regime might be considered to be the ‘earliest unambiguous case of a sustained professionalism project in Western history’ (2007, p. 122). Indeed, he argues, through the establishment of the Parisian Academe in painting, visual artists elevated themselves socially from artisans involved in manual crafts, to practitioners of a liberal art. Sciulli identifies six elements to this professionalism project. 1) The academy provided ‘expert services within structured situations in civil society, not at more fluid sites of commercial contracting or socio-culturally inconsequential diversion’ (Sciulli, 2007, p. 143). 2) Academicians ‘provide a place and purpose for themselves in civil society by elevating the discernment of lay patrons and supporters of their field of expertise’ (Sciulli, 2007, p. 143). 3) The academy combined ‘occupational training with more abstract, theoretical instruction, intellection’ (Sciulli, 2007, p. 144)– at a time when university instruction in Divinity, Law and Physic (Medicine) involved exegeses of classical texts. 4) The academy ‘provided instruction, in principle, in open view, not in workshops, laboratories, classrooms or other venues closed in principle to peer review and then commentary by informed outsiders’ (Sciulli, 2007, p. 144). 5) The academy was ‘rigorous and scrupulous in institutionalising the integrity of examinations and competitions based on anonymously submitted and scored submissions’ (Sciulli, 2007, p. 144). 6) The academy institutionalised ‘unambiguous epistemological (and often didactic) occupational standards and practices’ (Sciulli, 2007, p. 146). Sciulli proposes these six analytical qualities to be characteristic of ‘all professionalism projects, past and present, inadvertent (prototypical) and purposeful’ (Sciulli, 2007, p. 143 Sciulli’s emphasis). Most importantly, however, as Sciulli notes, such professionalism was essentially abandoned in the fine arts in the mid-nineteenth century, when artists sought freedom from the academy, as the academicians had done from guilds and other patronage before that.

One dimension to consider in this regard is what Everett C. Hughes refers to as occupational “license” and “mandate”. He says:

Society, by its nature, consists in part of both allowing and expecting people to do things which other people are not allowed or expected to do. Most occupations – especially those considered professions and those of the
underworld – include as part of their being a license to deviate in some measure from some common modes of behavior. Professions, perhaps more than other kinds of occupation, also claim a broad legal, moral and intellectual mandate. Not only do practitioners, by virtue of gaining admission to the charmed circle of the profession, individually exercise a license to do things that others do not do, but collectively they presume to tell society what is good and right for it in a broad and crucial aspect of life. Indeed, they set the very terms of thinking about it. When such a presumption is granted as legitimate, a profession in the full sense has come into being. (1971 [1959], pp. 287-288)

Whilst visual artists assume a certain wide ranging license – ideally artists may aspire to absolute autonomy – there is little consensus about how we are to understand the mandate that might be expected to accompany such a license. Indeed, as has previously been discussed, the duties implied by the concept of a mandate seem inherently linked to the concept of socially necessary labour and therefore incompatible with the broader truths that artists may be seeking through creative practice. It is plausible that for the visual artist, a professional identity of the kind that quantitative researchers are hoping for to aid in their sampling, actually represents a regression to institutional forms of regulation and societal obligations that were left behind in the modern period. Indeed, this is perhaps the very reason that Deborah Haynes in her book The Vocation of the Artist (1997), underlines a visionary and prophetic, rather than professional, role for contemporary artists, in which the mandate upon artists is perceived as being of a higher order. Like biblical prophets, however, perhaps one of the conditions of this creative autonomy is fending for oneself, trusting that a belief in one’s calling will ultimately provide. As Oskar Bätschmann writes of the modern (post-professional?) artist:

the development in exhibitions from an annual event on a public holiday to the exclusive medium for the presentation of art, the emergence of the public and public criticism, and the orientation of artists to exhibition work, was the most decisive and consequential change in the art world since the Renaissance. Artists had to define, legitimate and finance their work in public competition with each other [...] To be successful the exhibition artist had to be the subject of public discussion, had to find access to the media and project an interesting image to accompany his works. He was and is forced to win from the exhibition-going public followers of like mind, media support, buyers and patrons. (1997, pp. 9-10)
1.1.3.3 Art and Work

Following the preceding discussions, in which I have considered value and professions in relation to visual art, I now turn to the related topic of work or labour and its relationship to visual art practice. Ultimately, I argue, one of the key issues for any research concerning the working lives of visual artists is to understand what it is that artists produce through their labours. Common-sense might tell us that artists produce works of art, and indeed much research on the working lives of visual artists proceeds on the basis of just such an assumption. In the foregoing discussions, however, I have been suggesting that artists’ production is not limited to the creation of works of art; one of the key products of an artist’s labour is their own professional artistic identity or identities. Furthermore, these artistic identities are achieved through negotiations with a range of cultural patterns and conventions, mythological and historical, and artists’ contemporary circumstances across social, cultural, economic and geographic dimensions. I believe that there are also some conceptual, cultural and historical obstacles to developing an understanding of visual art practice as real and productive work.

There is an issue here connected with what Richard Grathoff has referred to as ‘conceptual sedimentation,’ whereby terms such as “work” and “labour” point in contemporary contexts to understandings of activities and modes of being that are through-written with the ‘philosophical categories and sociological conceptions’ of previous thinkers: ‘Theories of reality have readily been taken as real themselves’ (Grathoff, 1991, p. 373).

Axel Honneth writes:

The categories of “alienated” or “abstract” work, with which Marx criticizes the capitalist organization of work activity, have practically disappeared from the language of Marxist-oriented social philosophy, because there seems to be no criterion for humanly just, i.e., unalienated work which is independent of the norms of a particular culture. (1982, p. 46)

Beginning with the concept that there is only one mode of work in operation in the contemporary world (as Honneth suggests is the case in much contemporary thought), that all work is conceptualised as a version of alienated work, it is easy to see how art
practice may be difficult to place conceptually as “work”. ‘Ideally,’ writes Vandenberghe of unalienated work, ‘the work expresses and realises the personality of the worker: the worker recognises the work as his work and recognises and realises himself in his work products which, as Marx says, reflect the essence of Man as “so many mirrors in which our being shines forth”’ (2002, p. 31). Even so this (arguably utopian) understanding of human labour according to Marx has some significant resonance with the artist’s work, or at least the aspirations that might motivate it. As noted by McGuigan:

> The belief in the possibility of non-alienated labour in a cooperative system of production, not only associated with Marxist humanism, is easily dismissed as a romantic delusion, a hopeless wish that only the unworldly could possibly imagine realising. Yet it is not an uncommon desire and source of impulse in many working lives, especially working lives that come within a clearly demarcated category of creative labour. (2010, p. 325)

Many ‘empirical methods of industrial research’ (Honneth, 1982, p. 46) aren’t well equipped to register such self-determination and self-actualisation as motivations and outcomes for artists’ work, seeking instead for a measurable productivity (outputs) against labour (and other inputs). As Nick Zangwill writes, ‘the idea that art production is work like any other form of production, [...] is fair enough to an extent. But the general principle that all kinds of work have the same kind of explanation is dubious’ (2002, p. 208). It is for this reason that I have attempted to focus my study on considering the ‘actual claims and ideas about work held by the subjects who are engaged in social production’ (Honneth, 1982, p. 46).

So, I argue, the words “work” and “labour” and the contemporary concepts that they signal are themselves obstacles to be over-come in any attempt to characterise the activities, in many dimensions, upon which artists expend their energies in the establishment and maintenance of their professional creative practices. It can be difficult for those accustomed to conceiving of work and labour in ways that apply to industrial work, to recognise artistic work as real and productive. The concepts of immaterial, affective, and symbolic labour (Lazzarato, 1996) have arisen in recognition of some of these limitations, though not without criticism and debate (For example Gill & Pratt, 2008; Sayers, 2007). On the other hand, I suggest, there is a certain resistance and reluctance amongst artists to characterise their art practice as being work and a
real job in the sense of being gainful employment. Artists may feel that their creative practice has a fundamentally different kind of relationship to the world at large, and that the labour of its production is of a different order to that of the worker.

In this regard it is interesting to consider the distinctive conception of work, labour and action as presented by Hannah Arendt in her book *The Human Condition*. For Arendt, each of these terms references a distinctive mode of production in the world. Labour, she says is defined by ‘leaving nothing behind [...] the result of its effort is almost as quickly consumed as the effort is spent’ (1958, p. 87). In this way Arendt suggests that labour, while necessary (eg. to feed ourselves) is not productive. Work, on the other hand, is productive because through it human beings contribute enduring things to the world. ‘It is this durability which gives the things of the world their relative independence from men who produced them, their objectivity which makes them withstand, stand against and endure, at least for a time, the voracious needs and wants of their living makers and users’ (Arendt, 1958, p. 137). Finally, Arendt suggests that the highest form of activity available to human kind is action, through which she says:

> we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of original physical appearance. This insertion is not forced upon us by necessity, like labor, and it is not prompted by utility, like work. It may be stimulated by the presence of others whose company we wish to join, but it is never conditioned by them; its impulse springs from the beginning which came into the world when we were born and to which we respond by beginning something new on our own initiative. (1958, pp. 176-177)

Arendt herself contends that the practise of art is work, and not on the higher plane of action.

The reification which occurs in writing something down, painting an image, modeling a figure, or composing a melody is of course related to the thought which preceded it, but what actually makes the thought a reality and fabricates things of thought is the same workmanship which, through the primordial instrument of human hands, builds the other durable things of human artifice. (1958, pp. 168-169)

As Higgins notes:
Arendt concludes [using an aphorism from Paul Valéry] that it is the predicament of the true artist “to feel that he has become the son of his work,” in which he is condemned to see himself “as in a mirror, limited.” (Arendt, 1958) In sum, no line of work, not even that of the artist counts as action. (Higgins, 2010, p. 293)

Deborah Haynes, however, contends that:

Our time calls for a new conceptualization of the art-making process and for a new understanding of the vocation of the artist. Arendt’s concept of action – with its emphasis on unpredictability, open-endedness, and unfinalizability and with its implicit acknowledgement that work is a process of self-other interaction – provides a fine starting point for reconceptualizing the artist’s work. (1997, p. 46)

Arendt suggests that artists are precluded from operating in the realm of action because of their individual efforts to make themselves in the world, ‘the essence of who somebody is cannot be reified by himself’ (Arendt, 1958, p. 211). It is interesting in the context of this project to think again about the products of the work of artists. As has been suggested, an artist’s self-identity and professional identity, is not solely a project of independent self-realisation, rather these are developed through a process of inserting oneself into the world. If we recognise, as so many who have studied art from a social perspective do, that “great art” is not only a product of “great artists” but also the product of collective recognition and acknowledgement, the successful mobilisation of people, then perhaps there is scope for Arendt’s concept of action to inform our understanding of what artists do. Certainly there is a need, as is the case for value, and for profession, to seek out a clear understanding of what it is that artists perceive themselves to be producing through their work.

1.1.4 Art and Social Science

Arthur C. Danto writes that ‘to see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry – an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art, an artworld’ (1964, p. 580). Rather than pursuing the essential characteristics of art and art works, in the manner subsequently exemplified by Richard Wollheim’s Art and its Objects (1970), Danto proposes that what distinguishes between two otherwise indistinguishable objects, one of which is considered art and one of which isn’t, ‘is a certain theory of art. It is the theory that takes it up into the world of art and keeps it
from collapsing into the real object which it is’ (1964, p. 581). This conception was taken up by George Dickie and developed over a number of iterations of what he has called the Institutional Theory of Art. These philosophers have argued that the aesthetic values ascribed to works of art are themselves the product of cultural discourse, not properties intrinsic to specific kinds of objects. Dickie (2001) suggests that we are on the wrong track if we treat the concept of art as a physical term. Rather we need to consider that it has a cultural nature. He says we can’t determine the nature of art in the same fashion that we can determine that “gold” designates an element with the atomic number 79 with an intrinsic nature and properties (Dickie, 2001, pp. 16-20). However, there is ‘an intimate cultural connection between “work of art” and the nature of a work of art’ (Dickie, 2001, p. 31) which it acquires by ‘fitting into a cultural context’ (Dickie, 2001, p. 29). The means by which such a cultural connection may be discovered and developed into a definition or understanding of art is through a mode of investigation that Dickie ascribes not to the aesthetician but to the cultural anthropologist (Dickie, 2001, pp. 24-31).

Following on from Dickie’s suggestion that what we need to unravel the mysteries of art and value are the eyes of the cultural anthropologist, it is interesting to consider Alfred Gell’s contention that ‘anthropology is [...] considered good at providing close-grained analyses of apparently irrational behaviour, performances, utterances etc’ (Gell, 1998, p. 10 Gell’s emphasis). Anthropologists do this ‘by locating, or contextualizing behaviour not so much in “culture” (which is an abstraction) as in the dynamics of social interaction, which may indeed be conditioned by “culture” but which is better seen as a real process, or dialectic, unfolding in time’ (Gell, 1998, p. 10). This perspective constructs the problems of understanding value in art as problems of understanding apparently irrational behaviour, as Gell puts it. Certainly, this might be seen clearly in the problems that economists face in confronting art, as that discipline has a very particular understanding of what constitutes rational behaviour according to economic theory. However, the anthropological approach is also potentially useful in making sense of aesthetic, instrumental and cultural values as it emphasises the notion that values make sense only in certain contexts. We must be aware of the possibility that there are different art worlds in which different systems of value operate and, as highlighted by Danto, that such systems of value are changing. Importantly, however,
the viewpoint of social science facilitates the consideration of the claims of multiple and incompatible systems of value. This is not to claim the absolute impartiality or objectivity of social science (see Inglis, 2005a), but merely to suggest that only from a close vantage point on the outside is the observer in a position to take seriously all the different and even conflicting claims about value made by different actors.

Another point of interest in Gell’s conception of anthropology is that he distinguishes the discipline from other neighbouring disciplines on the basis of what he calls their depth of foci. Anthropology, he says, has a “biographical” depth of focus. ‘The view taken by anthropology of social agents attempts to replicate the time perspective of these agents on themselves, whereas (historical) sociology is often, so to speak, supra-biographical and social or cognitive psychology are infra-biographical’ (Gell, 1998, p. 10). To my mind there is a great deal of promise in what Gell calls a biographical depth of focus for studies of art and artists in particular as a means of coming to terms with artists’ own understandings of value, professional practice and work. However, before considering the particular advantages of a biographical frame it is worth looking at some social scientific approaches to the study of art and artists and also at the criticisms that such studies have drawn.

There have been many and diverse approaches to social theories of art. Arnold W. Foster (1989) presents an historical overview in which he groups these approaches according to their different emphases: 1) Biological and psychological emphases, 2) Broad social and cultural emphases, 3) Art as an aspect of communication, 4) Art as ideal, metaphysical entity, spiritual or moral force and 5) Non-aesthetic aspects of art. These groupings in themselves provide an indication of the range of different values that have been associated with art, ranging from instinctive human behaviour through to performing various kinds of social and cultural functions and on to mystical and moral dimensions of significance. In the context of this thesis I will not revisit the whole spectrum of work that exists in relation to the social scientific study of art, though such surveys have been undertaken by other authors (Harrington, 2004; Inglis, 2005b; Zolberg, 1990). In this instance I will focus firstly on those approaches that have been especially influential in relation to this study, and secondly I will address some specific criticisms that such studies have elicited.
I began my reading for this project with Pierre Bourdieu’s *The Rules of Art* (1996). In this work, Bourdieu undertakes to reconstruct the historical field of cultural production as it applied to literature and painting in early modern France. To my mind there were a number of attractive aspects to Bourdieu’s approach. In the first instance he emphasised that to understand the value of great works of art and great artists it was essential to consider more than the intrinsic greatness that art and artists shared with the established canon of western art. Bourdieu suggested that works of art and artists were not great in relation to other great works, but rather in relation to the forgotten majority of conventional and mediocre works and practices with which it was contemporaneous (Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 70-71). Being an artist, therefore, involved a competition for prominent and permanent places in a hierarchically organised social space (Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 164-165). As Bourdieu puts it, it involves producing oneself as an artist socially, in the process of producing and positioning one’s art works (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 104). For Bourdieu, then, what was important in studying art and artists was to reconstruct, as much as possible, the total situation in which the process of art- and artist-making could be observed as a jostling for different positions, and as a process of challenging old positions and establishing new ones (Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 183-184).

In contrast with Bourdieu’s view that at the root of artistic value was competition, Howard S. Becker in *Art Worlds* (2008 [1982]) suggests that art is the result of collective action, and social cooperation. Becker’s approach differs from that of Bourdieu’s in a number of ways, most obviously because he is less concerned with the artist as a special kind of social actor, and more interested in reconstructing the networks within social worlds in which artists are able to exist and operate. For Becker, what is of interest is the fact that artists are socially recognised as the exclusive producers of works of art, and yet his work demonstrates the significant formative influences and impacts that other social actors may have on works of art and artists’ reputations (Becker, 2008 [1982], pp. 77-92). In Becker’s estimation what art represents is not something that has greatness (or beauty or truth) as an intrinsic quality, or even in comparison with other art, rather art is a ‘collective activity,’ the result of which, ‘is something, perhaps, which no one wanted, but it is the best everyone could get out of this situation and therefore what they all, in effect, agreed
to’ (Quoted in Becker & Pessin, 2008, p. 379). In order to comprehend the social construction of art it is important to consider everyone involved in art worlds, and their interests, and for Becker this includes ‘people who are conventionally left out of [...] analys[es]: the technicians, the money people and all the people I have called “support personnel”’ (Quoted in Becker & Pessin, 2008, p. 384). Furthermore, by focusing his attention on marginal figures, such as mavericks, folk artists and naive artists, as well as on integrated professionals, Becker’s work emphasises the possibility that in social worlds, an individual’s actions are not comprehensively pre-determined by social structure or conventions. Rather social actors can often achieve their goals through unconventional means.

Studies such as these have consistently elicited critical responses around a few major issues. Ian Heywood maintains that social perspectives on art tend in fact to be ‘intrinsically – rather than casually, accidentally or idiosyncratically — hostile; neither is this hostility the product of conceptual or methodological mistakes of one kind or another’ (1997, p. 188). He argues that these theories do violence to the objects of their study in two ways; ‘first, they attack specific, key ideas and beliefs of art worlds [...] For example, notions of artistic quality, a canon of great works, expressive truth, integrity and vision as necessary personal qualities for an artist’ (Heywood, 1997, pp. 188-189). And ‘second, the attack often takes the form of an argument that these ideas are caused by social forces or circumstances, and that, as a consequence, they cannot be “true” or “valid” in the ways in which members take them to be’ (Heywood, 1997, p. 189). Another and related criticism of social scientific approaches to the study of art and artists is that too little attention is given to works of art themselves, though these are in fact important actors in art worlds.

Some solutions to these issues have been recommended by a number of authors, with Austin Harrington proposing that, ‘to reject reductionism and imperialism in sociology of the arts is to insist that all explanations of the actions and experiences of producers and spectators of art must, in principle, be capable of recognition by these actors as valid interpretations of their own actions and experiences’ (2004, p. 3). Other researchers have made a more concerted effort to come to grips with considering the artwork as a social actor within the framework of their studies (For example Becker,
Faulkner, & Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 2006; Danko, 2008; de la Fuente, 2007; Strandvad, 2012). Vera Zolberg, in her book *Constructing a Sociology of the Arts* (1990), points to issues around humanist perspectives and sociological perspectives on the arts, and ultimately suggests that ‘sociologists and humanists would do well to strive to achieve an interpretive framework that admits to partial closure and tentative synthesis’ (1990, p. 215). Zolberg, however, maintains that each of these perspectives continues to have important independent contributions to make and that ‘it would be a mistake to force social scientists and humanists into a factitious harmony’ (1990, p. 215). In this study I have considered an interpretive framework that draws on the humanistic sociology of Florian Znaniecki, which I will discuss in more depth in the methodology. Znaniecki’s work offers some promise, I think, because it adopts a “biographical” depth of focus, such as discussed by Gell, and it emphasises interpreting social interaction on the basis of the understandings that social actors have of their own situations. This kind of approach must, I think, begin to address Heywood’s criticisms and Harrington and Zolberg’s recommendations, and help to produce sociological research in which artists can recognise themselves and their actions.

1.1.4.1 A Preliminary Note on Fields and Worlds.

Throughout this thesis I make many references to the sociological work of Pierre Bourdieu and to the work of Howard S. Becker. Both these scholars have proposed different approaches to the study of art and especially to the manner in which the practice of art is socially organised in western society. These authors have also taken pains (Becker & Pessin, 2008; Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 204-205), to distinguish their own work from that of the other, holding that their different approaches are in various ways conceptually incompatible. This presents me with a challenge as in this research I have worked with elements from both approaches to the sociology of art. Distinct contributions are made to my study by the different concepts of the field of cultural production (Bourdieu) and the art world (Becker). In order to honour this difference I have tried to regulate my usage of these terms by referring to fields when concepts of social space are being considered and by referring to art worlds when the discussion revolves around networks of people.
1.2 The Creative Practice of Social Science (Methodology)


1.2.1 From Art to Znaniecki

In the process of investigating methodological possibilities for this project, I encountered the work of Florian Znaniecki (See also 1.2.6.1). Chief amongst the important ideas arising from the understanding of cultural reality (Znaniecki, 2010 [1919]) that Znaniecki developed in his early philosophical work is the concept that he called the humanistic coefficient:

[F]or the scientist this cultural system is really and objectively as it was (or is) given to those historical subjects themselves when they were (or are) experiencing it and actively dealing with it. In a word, the data of the cultural student are always “somebody’s,” never “nobody’s” data. This essential character of cultural data we call the humanistic coefficient, because such data, as objects of the student’s theoretic reflection, already belong to somebody else’s active experience and are such as this active experience makes them. (Znaniecki, 1934, p. 37)
Following Znaniecki, it is on the basis of the understandings and appraisals that participants make of the situations (their ‘definition of the situation’ (Znaniecki, 1969 [1919], p. 109)) in which they are acting that determine the actions that they will perform. One cannot begin to adequately understand the actions of social actors unless one also understands the motivations and meanings that inform those actions. The difficulty is to capture this humanistic coefficient as an integral part of the process of data collection and analysis.

Znaniecki’s own preferred approach to capturing data, including the humanistic coefficient, was to collect data in the form of ‘the autobiography written to order:’

[W]e cannot determine in advance on what problems such a document will throw light, for this depends not only on the kind of social experiences the author has had, but also on the standards consciously or unconsciously used by him in selecting for description certain experiences rather than others. On the other hand, there is no bias imposed upon him in advance, as in the case of the interview and the questionnaire; he is free to describe whatever he is spontaneously inclined to. (1934, p. 191)

*The Polish Peasant* (1918-20), a work on which Znaniecki collaborated with W.I. Thomas, is widely held to be a founding example of the use of such material for sociological analysis. So influential was this work that the US Social Science Research Council commissioned Herbert Blumer to undertake a review of *The Polish Peasant*’s methodology, and in 1938 a conference was held to discuss Blumer’s findings. Unfortunately, as Stanley (2010) and Thomas (1978) have noted, this critique significantly undermined the further development of the sociological use of the kinds of data and methods employed by Thomas and Znaniecki in their work. Hammersley quotes Blumer:

My own feeling is that this work of Thomas and Znaniecki presents a dilemma as far as social research goes ... in the following form: on the one hand, an inescapable need of including the subjective element of human experience, but on the other hand, an enormous, and so far, insurmountable, difficulty in securing devices that will catch this element of human experience *in the way that is customary for usable data in ordinary scientific procedure in other fields*. (2010, p. 72 Hammersley’s emphasis)

Ultimately, this public critique resulted in a ‘vanished opportunity, because sociology as it developed post-1940 could have been based on, or at least have contained within
it, Thomas and Znaniecki’s biographical sociology’ (Stanley, 2010, p. 148). Given that Blumer’s criticism is partly concerned with a dialectical opposition between subjectivity and science it is interesting to revisit the way that Znaniecki characterises the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity in human experience as laid out in *Cultural Reality*.

Actuality is [...] a dynamic center toward which in a process of subjectivation realities and thoughts converge by becoming data and associations of data and from which in a process of objectivation realities and thoughts radiate by ceasing to be data and by becoming rational and logical. (2010 [1919], p. 50)

Znaniecki’s project overall is to acknowledge the cultural in all areas of experience and knowledge. He does not subscribe to the view that objectivity is achieved by the ideal of disinterested appraisal. In Znaniecki’s picture, objectivity is a cultural product that social agents can be involved in creating, or that they can assimilate. Similarly in his work on social actions, Znaniecki writes:

When we take the action as it really is in humanistic experience, it proves to be not a process, but a dynamic system of values. And within such a system, there is no dualism of objective and subjective variables [...] Instead of a duality of variables, we find simply a double dynamic bond uniting certain values into a system which, though constructed by human activity, is eminently objective. (1967 [1936], p. 75)

It is this dynamic conception of human experience and cultural situation that is a distinguishing feature of Znaniecki’s work. As Halas notes:

Social action [is presented] as interaction constructed on the basis of the mutual exchange and adaptation of the interpretation of meanings of a situation by partners. It indicates the role of context of a situation and to trans-situational axionormative models in defining meaning. One can also see the pragmatic trait of Znaniecki’s thought. Interpretations of situations are marked out by the practical interest of an actor. That action is an interference into the social world and it has practical consequences. Therefore, interaction is not only a symbolic “game”, or an exchange of meanings. (2010, p. 106)

Conceptually the great value of Znaniecki’s work for this project is the way that he characterises the objectivity of the real world in which people are working. As was discussed in section 1.1.4 there are a number criticisms that have been levelled at attempts to engage with art and art practice through the lens of social science.

Blumer’s methodological reservations acknowledged, the collection and analysis of
social data with the inclusion of Znaniecki’s humanistic coefficient, may offer some resolution to these issues. If what Heywood identifies as being key beliefs of art worlds exist, then these constitute an important part of the objective cultural reality of actors within those art worlds and should inform explanations of the kinds of activities in which they are involved. In Znaniecki’s frame, these things are not discounted or undermined by being subjective on the one hand or structural on the other, but they are dynamically interrelated with the way artists understand and actively construct their worlds, which in turn gives the social scientist the best available avenue for understanding the kinds of things that they do.

Within the data that I have collected and analysed for this study I have tried, as much as possible, to obtain some access to the humanistic coefficient. I have not, as Znaniecki recommends, sought out autobiographies written to order of a minimum size of 100,000 words (1934, p. 191 [note]). Other researchers, also in an Australian context, have adapted Znaniecki’s approach to data collection for their own purposes. Smolicz and his colleagues in Adelaide adopted the method of written or oral memoirs, but with some modifications. Participants were asked to write (or speak) about those aspects of their lives and experiences in which the researcher was interested, rather than provide their whole life history. (Maniam, 2011, p. 88)

Similarly, the data I have collected shares some important characteristics with larger scale life-histories such as those sought out by Znaniecki. In the case of the CVs that I have collected these had been prepared (possibly not by artists themselves in all cases) for purposes other than this study. As I will argue (see 1.2.5.1) these social documents provide access to many of the social values and relationships that exist in the field in which they are intended to be instrumental on some level. The interviews that I have conducted are influenced by the peculiar social situation in which they occur and by the questions I have asked as a researcher interested in particular things. In structuring the interviews as I did (see 1.2.6.3 and Appendix D.3), however, I believe that I have obtained a kind of abridged life-history from each participant, and allowed some considerable leeway for artists to select and relate details as they were spontaneously inclined to.
1.2.2 The Cultural Sacred and a Scientific Vocabulary

Adhesion to the cultural sacred has not, allowing for exceptions, had to enunciate itself in the form of explicit theses, still less to ground itself rationally. There is nothing more certain, for those taking part in it, than the cultural order... It follows that it is not easy to find a systematic expression of the cultural doxa. (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 185)

This passage from Bourdieu usefully identifies the conceptual territory in which this study has its origins and which constitute some of the challenges facing it. I have been someone who has taken part in the cultural order, as a practising visual artist, and a university student of art practice, art history and art theory. This background is important in accounting for the genesis of this study on two levels. In the first instance this study stems partly from a personal curiosity about the tacit cultural doxa that Bourdieu discusses above, from a desire to reveal and understand more clearly the workings of the art worlds in which I have been a participant. Secondly, elements of Bourdieu’s notion of cultural participants’ resistance to such a project have some resonance for me, because ‘the very intention to write a science of the sacred has something sacreligious about it’ (1996, p. 185).

In approaching this study one problem was to proceed so as to produce and communicate findings that are capable of representing artists and their activities in a manner recognisable and acceptable to those artists. I thought it useful and important to experience first-hand the issues associated with the attempt to engage “scientifically” with a cultural phenomenon such as visual art practice. But I also sought to bring to bear my insider knowledge and sensibilities to cultural values in my observations and analyses.

A second problem is highlighted by quoting from one of the economic studies in which I did not, as a participant in the cultural order, recognise many of my own actions and experiences:

A survey of individual practising artists, whereby statistically reliable information is gathered from a random sample of respondents, is the only workable means for compiling an accurate and comprehensive picture of the living and working conditions of professional artists in Australia at the present time. (Throsby & Zednik, 2010, p. 15)
Thosby and Zednik here emphasise scale, mathematical precision and probabilistic impartiality as being the only route to accurate and comprehensive findings that policymakers can draw on to ‘understand the nature of professional artistic practice – how artists allocate their time, how they earn money, what factors support or inhibit the achievement of their artistic goals’ (2010, p. 15). One might here recognise a paradigmatic bias, which ‘assumes quantitative measurement, experimental design, and multivariate, parametric statistical analysis to be the epitome of “good” science’ (Patton, 1978, p. 203). Richard Rorty’s way of framing this issue as one not of method but of vocabulary (1982 [1981], p. 194) gives an important insight into the problems faced by the social scientist in particular. If we can deliver science only through a process of employing a vocabulary ‘devoid of metaphysical comfort, moral significance and human interest’ (Rorty, 1982 [1981], p. 193), then it is difficult to see how human actors are ever likely to be able to recognise themselves in these representations. Many thinkers and writers have drawn attention to the problems of normal science, but despite these articulate voices of dissent it is critical to recognise that in realms such as cultural policy and other forms of governance, numbers continue to carry more weight than alternative forms of accounting (Belfiore & Bennett, 2010, pp. 131-135).

On the one hand there is a need to produce a representation that has some correspondence with reality as experienced and understood by the artists whose working lives are being studied. On the other hand, in order for this representation to have the potential to influence those who make decisions that impact on artists’ working lives, I need to understand this “scientific” vocabulary and to make a case for the objectivity and the generality of my findings. In my research into possible approaches, it seemed that one of the most promising methods which could use qualitative data to deliver this combination of particularity and generalisation was called Analytic Induction (AI), to which I will return in more detail.

Informed by Znaniecki’s conceptions of cultural reality it is important to state that this research project is in itself an actualisation, a ‘dynamic centre’ (Znaniecki, 2010 [1919], p. 50) around which subjective experience is objectified, and simultaneously the objective is drawn into subjective experience. The science of culture and the study of cultural activity rests upon a serious consideration of the ‘objectivating creative
activity’ (Znaniecki, 2010 [1919], p. 52) of cultural agents. This thesis and the research that informs it is a cultural product like any other. What remains is to attempt to situate myself for the reader, as the motivations behind, the research activities that I have engaged in, and the interpretations that I have produced, all result directly from my own situation and my definitions of it. This acknowledgement is not intended to emphasise the subjectivity of this research project as a limitation, but rather to provide some access to the lens through which I have been looking at my data for the past three years.

1.2.3 The ‘I’ of the Beholder

Perhaps an appropriate place to start in situating myself is, ironically, in the words of someone else, a lecturer, writing about me indirectly, within the context of a group of graduating art students.

Now is the time for our third year to do their space walk. As always they will do it without life lines and way beyond the margins. They will need some compelling work to justify taking up any one’s time. This is deep space, where sexual politics, multiculturalism, post-modernity, arts administrators, cost accountants, Jacques Lacan and other menaces of the upper stratosphere have about as much relevance as a pool of dog piss on the moon. (Bromfield, 1997)

This quote has been taken from a statement made by a key senior academic and published within the catalogue that accompanied the 1997 graduate exhibition in which I participated, as an art student at the University of Western Australia (UWA). I have selected this quote to emphasise the profound ambiguity and uncertainty that is attendant in the completion of tertiary level studies in visual arts practice. Twice I have experienced the sense of deep space that David Bromfield alludes to, of passing through the airlock that marks the boundary between the capsule of the university art school and the constellations of the local art world and broader society beyond.

On completing my Masters at Curtin University of Technology (Curtin), there were a series of events/interactions that combined to help consolidate the notion that I was an artist. One of these was an independent online review of the Curtin graduate exhibition, SoFA 02 (2002), in which my work was mentioned specifically. Another was
an invitation to participate in a funded, themed group show, *Living Room* (2003) at the Breadbox Gallery, by artists/curators who I didn’t know, but had seen my work at Curtin. A third was an invitation from my former UWA lecturer, Peter Mudie, to reshow the Masters work at Kurb Gallery in 2004. Subsequently I produced a new body of work that was independent of my student work, though thematically related, and actively and successfully pursued some opportunities for solo exhibitions with this work (2004 and 2005). It was this growing contact and engagement with the world beyond the institutions at which I had studied, and the explicit leaving behind of student-hood (which wasn’t marked so much by graduation or qualification, but simply by departure and independence), that provided a sense of the value that my work possessed as art, as the work of an artist.

Within the context of my studies I had long been interested in the intersection of art and society, critiquing (implicitly or explicitly, consciously or unconsciously) notions of elitism and accessibility, and questioning the purpose and social values associated with art practice. In my various research projects, beginning with undergraduate art history/theory essays and moving on to my Honours dissertation and my Masters Exegesis I examined this connection between art and society in different ways. In my Honours dissertation the approach I took was art historical/critical and I produced a monographic study of the work of Australian artist Martin Sharp, whose art successfully operated between popular and high cultural spheres in the 1960s and 70s. In my Masters exegesis, my approach was primarily theoretical, considering useful parallels between visual and literary creative practices through engaging with some of the essays of JRR Tolkien and his writing on the invention of languages and the continuing cultural value of fairy stories in a modern world.

This doctoral research project follows on directly from this combination of personal experiences of emerging as an artist practising in Western Australia, and from the conceptual journey already undertaken up until this point, primarily in art history and theory. After six years of full time tertiary study in Western Australian art schools, my knowledge of art history and cultural theories, even my access to images and works of art, tended to be decidedly weighted towards an international cultural sphere (primarily European and North American). At the same time I was more or less
completely ignorant of the art history I was most likely to be a part of, and the cultural
contexts to which I was potentially going to contribute.

My brief period of activity as an emerging artist in Perth, independent of educational
institutions, highlighted the provisional and variable nature of how art is conceived and
defined. I observed what appeared to be the gravitational pull of particular institutions
and opportunities and began to understand some of the associations that drew lines
between what was perceived as good and bad art. In 2007 my wife Roslyn (an arts
management graduate), took a position as a gallery assistant with a local commercial
art gallery, Gadfly Gallery. Provided with this access to a different world of local art, I
was exposed to some aspects of the business of art dealing and a whole different set
of values that were often at odds with the understandings of good and bad art that I
had developed at university. It was becoming clear that defining art in any decisive and
singular way was very problematic, and that in practice the making of art involved a
great many activities that were not a part of the studio explorations and purely
creative concerns that had preoccupied my art practice and its appraisal within the
academy.

Florian Znaniecki notes that:

the scientist's personal experience is the primary and most reliable source of
information in sociology, just as in every other science, though it is naturally
limited. [...] The only way to experience a social system at first-hand is to be
active in its construction, for only thus are we directly aware of the tendencies
involved in its structure and the actual significance of the values included in its
composition. (1934, p. 157)

But E.C. Hughes adds the following consideration:

The unending dialectic between the role of member (participant) and stranger
(observer and reporter) is essential to the concept of field work. It is hard to be
both at the same time. One solution is to separate them in time. One reports,
years later, when one is at a distance in mind and spirit, what he remembers of
social experiences in which he was a full participant [...] the dialectic is never fully
resolved, for to do good social observation one has to be close to people living
their lives and must be himself living his life and must also report. The problem of
maintaining a balance between these roles lies at the heart of sociology, and
indeed of all social science. (1971 [1960], pp. 502-503)
As a social scientist I possess some of the traits of the member who is reporting, years later at a distance, having been at one time a full participant in the world about which I am reporting. Having been a full participant (up to a point) has also equipped me with ‘the language of the people [I] study; not merely the words and what they mean in the dictionary, but the language as expression of society and the culture’ (Hughes, 1971 [1962], p. 462). At the same time I am now an outsider in relation to the West Australian visual art world, as a lapsed artist whose last real activity as a creative practitioner was some eight years ago. Simultaneously, as Hughes suggests, the act of collecting data from people and reporting also makes me an outsider. One of the great positives of being an outsider in this instance has been the ability to engage with artists in different art worlds and to take seriously the different and sometimes conflicting systems of values that are at play, though I have been initiated into a very particular system of values through my university art education.

My experience of collecting data in this research has greatly benefitted from this insider/outsider stance. Without my knowledge of the specific importance of Curriculum Vitae in the contexts of many art practices it is probable that the study of these social documents that I have undertaken would never have occurred to me as possibility. Furthermore, my background has helped me both in knowing where to look for artists’ CVs, but also in the analysis of these documents. I believe my insider/outsider position has also made it easier for me to gain access to interview participants and also to engage them in conversation. Miscomprehensions and other barriers to understanding might have resulted had I been more ignorant of artists’ activities and ways of conceptualising and talking about creative practice in the visual arts. As a creative practitioner, rather than an economist or statistician, I may also have had some advantage in mobilising my participants, being more of an insider than other “outsider” researchers. Lastly, my previous participation and knowledge of the field has played an important role in this research as a touchstone against which to hold my research and to act as a basic test of the plausibility of the findings.

In other senses my insider knowledge might potentially be an issue as it has certainly informed the questions I have asked and the topics I have discussed with my participants. This might be seen as a useful expediency, as I have been equipped to
steer the discussion to areas that are potentially of interest, without covering a vast territory of unfruitful discussion topics. It is my hope that the questions I asked are broad enough and open enough to allow unexpected and unanticipated valuable material to surface around the ‘sensitizing concepts’ (Patton, 2002, p. 278) that informed my questionnaire. Furthermore, I deliberately tried to challenge my own sensitising concepts and the limitations of my existing understandings by approaching artists who work in ways and places that are unfamiliar to me. These participant artists articulate things differently and challenged some of my questions and assumptions, and in this way I don’t think that the data I have collected has been unduly or adversely affected by my insider knowledge.

1.2.4 Research Design

This design of this research project is on one level an experiment, though not entirely without precedents in kind. I have sought to make innovative use of freely available sources of detailed social data, in the form of a large number of artists’ CVs, published on the websites of the Western Australian commercial galleries who represent them. In this way I have engaged with a sample of 322 artists, and have been able to access a great deal of longitudinal information relevant to their working lives. Recognising the limitations inherent in sampling only from commercial galleries who publish the CVs of the artists they represent online, I also sought to collect more conventional qualitative interview data from a diverse sample of Western Australian visual artists. I have deliberately tried to ensure there is an overlap between the two data sets and, of the 20 artists interviewed, eight of them are also represented in the CV data. Simultaneously, conscious that not all artists operate within the world of commercial galleries, the remaining 12 interviewed artists are not a part of the CV data set, so I have captured the different ways in which other artists may be living and working. The emphasis upon the sample selection for the interviews for this study has been upon diversity and breadth, maintaining that common experiences across the variety of practices represented offer good grounds for generalisation.
As can be seen in Figure 1 the research design is multi-staged and mixed method, essentially qualitative in emphasis over all. In the absence of complete, published and accessible histories of contemporary visual art in Western Australia, a preliminary analysis of the CV data has been used to inform the researcher in approaching the interviews. At the same time I have used the interviews as an opportunity to obtain data about artists’ own perceptions and understandings of the significance of their CVs and their uses and thus conceptually ground my final analysis of the CV study. It was intended that the analysis of these two data sets would produce the means to query the results of each against the other, and that they related to each other in a complementary fashion. Robert R. Faulkner’s (1983) study of published film credits alongside interviews in his study of composers for films in Hollywood provides an example of this approach:

The quantitative data on [film] credits by freelancers uncovered a deeply etched pattern of inequality, but the meaning to freelancers remained unclear. The “hollow curve” indicated that something was going on, but not what that something was as experienced by freelancers. The obvious implication was to work from both [qualitative and quantitative] data, blending the methodologies so as to compensate for the weaknesses of each and thereby extend the insights of each. (1982, p. 89)
Figure 1: Diagrammatic representation of research project showing relationship between CV and interview sample and indicating project timeline.

Note: Not all artists were interviewed twice. For logistical reasons artists living in regional WA were interviewed in a single longer interview, hence the total of only 35 interviews.
1.2.5 CV Study

1.2.5.1 CVs as a Source of Social data

Though it had not been a part of the initial research proposal, early on in this project I had the idea that one way of looking at what was going on in Western Australian visual art was to look at artists’ Curriculum Vitaes (CVs). I was encouraged in the process of my preliminary consultations with local experts in Western Australian visual art worlds, Paula Silbert, David Bromfield and Ted Snell, all of whom thought this was an idea worth pursuing. One further advantage of using artists’ CVs as a source of social data was that there were a large number of such CVs published online, and therefore readily available for collection.

Further investigation revealed that CVs had not been much used as a source of social data in relation to any field, let alone the visual arts. The studies that had used them had employed CVs as a variety of self-filled survey. They were coded and analysed in an analogous fashion to survey research, ie in a very quantitative way (Cañibano, Otamendi, & Andújar, 2008; Dietz, Chompalov, Bozeman, O'Neil Lane, & Park, 2000). Though these studies looked at the career mobility of researchers, scientists and engineers specifically, they also gave some useful consideration to the possibilities and limitations of the CV as a data source for these kinds of projects. In a very different vein, I found two articles in which the authors had considered in largely theoretical terms what kind of social document the CV is. In one case, Andrew Metcalfe (1992) highlighted the use of the CV in academic contexts as a tool for institutional surveillance that encourages self-monitoring and discipline, in line with Foucault’s theories of power. In the other, Miller and Morgan (1993) drew important parallels between the CV and Erving Goffman’s (1973) studies on the presentation of self in everyday life, considering the CV as an important form of self-representation. The only instance I found of CVs being used for research in a visual arts context was in an unpublished Masters thesis in which a small number of artists’ CVs taken from a single exhibition catalogue were used to quantify Italian contemporary artists’ relationships with Italian contemporary art museums (Altea, 2001, pp. 21-23).
Within the more qualitative frame of my research project, I realised that the CV was more than a simple record of historical events that could be used to trace the career trajectories of individuals. In line with Metcalfe’s, and Miller’s and Morgan’s, discussions I realised that underlying the selection of information that was contained in a CV was a whole range of influential systems of social values. Individuals choose to include certain events on their CVs not just because they happened, but because they are significant in terms of conveying something positive about themselves. Indeed, whilst there is always an element of doubt surrounding the historical accuracy and veracity of CV data, it is the case that even a false or misleading piece of information has been included because it is intended to convey something specific in a certain social context. In other words, in Znaniecki’s terms, the CV is a form of data that is through-written with the *humanistic coefficient*, it has been produced in response to its constructor’s definition of a situation in which they are trying to present themselves to their own advantage. In this way I considered the collection and analysis of artists’ CVs to offer not only some access to a longitudinal picture of what has been happening in the visual arts in WA, but crucially also some means of revealing the underlying systems of social value that inform these representations of self.

1.2.5.2 Sampling

For the purposes of collecting artists’ CVs for this project, I took a very simple approach to the concept of the professional artist. I worked on the basis that if an artist had achieved sufficient recognition from a commercial gallery to have their CV published on that gallery’s website, then at least that business and their associated clients considered them to have attained professional standing in some measure.

Aside from the basic requirement that an artist’s CV had to be published on the website of a Western Australian commercial gallery, there were some other criteria that I employed in selecting the sample for this part of the study. Firstly, as many Western Australian commercial galleries represented artists who were not living or working in Western Australia, and in some cases even published CVs of artists who had died, I limited myself to collecting CVs from artists who were living and working in
Western Australia. In some cases it was difficult to ascertain where artists were currently residing, and in a very few cases I have become aware that I have collected CVs from artists who formerly lived and worked in WA but no longer do so. However, as the bulk of these artists’ activities occurred in Western Australia until very recent times, their CV data makes a relevant contribution to the study, despite no longer residing in the state.

Secondly, there were some very pragmatic considerations that impacted on the sample selection. I collected artists’ CVs that were readily accessible on the website of a commercial gallery, or accessible by a link on that website to the artists’ own websites (as was the case in a very few instances). I did not seek alternative sources for artists’ CVs where links were disabled or the documents corrupted or otherwise unavailable. There are professional artists who are not represented by commercial galleries, and commercial galleries who represent professional artists but do not publish the CVs of those artists. It was beyond the scope of this small part of the PhD to search for independent sources for the CVs of individual artists, though such sources may have been available. For the purposes of this study the aim was to collect as large a number of CVs as were available as efficiently as possible.

Finding the websites of Western Australian commercial galleries from which I collected CVs was helped by my own knowledge of many of them. In addition, I made use of the Gallery Circuit (The Association of Western Australian Art Galleries, 2010) publication, and also engaged in some internet research to find commercial gallery websites. In all I found Western Australian artists’ CVs on the websites of 17 Western Australian commercial galleries. 15 of those galleries were located in the Perth metropolitan area and two were located in Margaret River in the South West region of the state. From these galleries’ websites I collected a total of 354 CVs relating to the careers of 322 Western Australian visual artists, 153 males and 169 females. The disparity between the number of CVs and artists results from the fact that a number of artists had CVs published online by more than one commercial gallery.

It is also important to note that there are a number of commercial galleries that deal exclusively in Australian indigenous art, predominantly that produced in remote communities in the state of Western Australia. Given the very different art worlds
within which remote indigenous artists operate (Myer, 2002, p. 52; Myers, 2002), I deemed it beyond the scope of this small study to try and give adequate consideration to the distinctive circumstances of indigenous artists in Western Australia, as well as those of non-indigenous artists. So I have not sought out all of the commercial galleries representing only indigenous artists nor collected CVs from them. Some of the galleries from which I collected CVs represented both indigenous and non-indigenous Western Australian artists, and in these instances I have collected and analysed the CVs of 37 indigenous Western Australian artists.

### 1.2.5.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The CVs were published on the commercial gallery websites in a few different forms, including word documents, pdfs, html files and in one case within archived exhibition catalogues accessible as pdfs. In all cases I collected and filed electronic copies of these CVs, partly so that I had a complete and static data set that could be retrieved and reviewed during and after analysis (if required) and also to facilitate preparation of the data for analysis.

Having collected the data, there was a need to transpose the data into a consistent format and structure, so as to aid in analysis. To this end I created a template in Microsoft Excel in which I was able to record certain basic demographic/case details about the artist, where these were available from the CV or the gallery website, and also re-entered the CV data into a simple tabular format that I devised to assist in organising the data (see Appendix E.3). I also began to apply a number of inductive codes to the data, based on the headings within artists CVs as means of classifying the kind of activity recorded on the CV (eg. Exhibitions, Awards, Education, Commissions, Collections, Grants and so on). Within these classes of CV activity, I applied a series of values, again based inductively on the different kinds of values and distinctions that artists deployed in their CVs. For instance under exhibitions, relevant values included: ‘Solo exhibitions,’ ‘Group Exhibitions,’ ‘Group Exhibitions by Invitation,’ and so on. (Appendix E.1 and E.2)
During in this data entry and coding phase, I assigned each CV a unique code, and each line on each CV a unique reference, and each artist a unique number. Following this, I assembled a complete database of all of the CV data in five classes of CV activity (Exhibitions, Education, Awards, Grants and Collections). Data in five other classes of CV activity (Commissions, Publications, Work/Employment, Professional Memberships and Affiliations and Miscellaneous Activities) has not been collated and analysed in this PhD study – though these together constitute a small minority of the total CV data. I then prepared this database for analysis using SPSS software.

One of the largest tasks involved in this process was the effort to refine and edit the data, and not only because of the inevitable data entry errors occurring over 16000 lines of data. Because the raw CV data came from so many different sources there were many cases where the same piece of information had been labelled in a number of different ways on different CVs. For instance, the institution referred to as the Art Gallery of Western Australia, would be AGWA on a different CV, the State Gallery on another, or the Western Australian Art Gallery, and so on. Where it was possible to determine that all these labels referred to the same thing, I refined the data by giving them all the same name in the data set. Similarly, in some instances it was possible to fill in gaps in the data by cross referencing with other CV data. For instance, where an exhibition title and date was provided but no venue, it was possible to copy across these details if another artist in the data set had also participated in the same event and recorded it on their CV. Through this refining process it was also possible to see some of the variations and imprecisions that are inherent in CVs.

One of the great possibilities I saw for the analysis of CV data such as had been collected was that it could be examined at a number of levels. For instance there was scope to look at the data overall and establish a picture of activity from across the total data set. On the other hand, one could compare the data from individual artists, or even closely examine certain activities or particular venues. And in between, it was possible to look at the data collected from groups of artists, eg. male/female artists, artists of different ages, or artists represented by a particular commercial gallery. I saw a great potential for this kind of data to be examined through micro, macro and intermediate analytical units and frames of reference. Allowing for this analytical
flexibility, however, introduced an organisational challenge at the stage of data preparation.

The data had to be organised at the level of the smallest possible unit of analysis: the single CV activity. This corresponds to one line on a CV detailing one event etc. In order to allow for this level of analysis to connect with more intermediate analyses utilising individual artists as cases, it was necessary to link case information (ie all of the relevant information about the artist on whose CV the activity appeared) with each activity by duplicating this data alongside each activity. Broad brush analysis of the whole data set was also complicated by the presence of multiple (but often different) CVs for some artists within the data set. To resolve this I devised a means of selecting and deselecting duplicated data. This meant that in analyses where I needed to compare gallery cohorts duplicated data from multiple CVs would be included, but where I wanted to analyse the sample of artists as a whole duplications could be removed.

All of this data preparation took a number of months, and involved some significant false starts and trial and error. I also had the benefit of some assistance from several people along the way who were more familiar with SPSS than I was. Once the data had been imported to SPSS I used the program to facilitate a whole range of analyses based primarily around cross-tabulations and frequencies. In many cases I used SPSS to produce a cross tabulation from the data and then worked with these reports further in Excel, exploring other relationships, or to clarify and refine data for presentation purposes. More detailed discussion of the specific analytical approaches used to produce the findings presented in this study are discussed in section 2.1 of this thesis.
1.2.6 Interviews

1.2.6.1 Analytic Induction

The collection and analysis of interview data for this project was adapted from a methodological approach called Analytic Induction (AI) (Becker, 1998; Cressey, 1971 [1953]; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Znaniecki, 1934), which works towards the ideal of being able to develop sound generalisations, but does so by working inductively from the detail of a small number of cases. Analytic induction does not seek to collect multiple instances of cases within a population that confirm an explanation or hypothesis in a quantitative fashion. Instead the procedure turns its attention to the smaller number of cases that don’t fit, seeking out cases that challenge the explanation. For each new case considered, the analyst can either modify the explanatory hypothesis to account for the case, or can exclude the case as not being an instance of the phenomenon under investigation. The rationale is that by actively working with disconfirming and negative cases, the analyst can develop an explanation that takes account of all examined cases, as well as offering a clear definition of the cases to which such an explanation applies. (See also Hammersley’s (2010) comparison between analytic induction and grounded theory).

My further reading on the method resulted in a number of significant discoveries. The most significant of these is that it led me to the work of Florian Znaniecki, who had written about the method in his book *The Method of Sociology* (1934). Znaniecki goes so far as to suggest the redundancy of statistical method (which he calls ‘enumerative induction’); ‘analytic induction ends where enumerative induction begins; and if well conducted, leaves no real and soluble problems for the latter’ (1934, p. 50). There has been a significant and on-going debate about the various claims made for the method of analytic induction, and in particular concerning the method’s capacity to develop universal explanations of the phenomena under investigation. Such arguments have been put forward by scholars including Robinson (1951), Turner (1953), and more recently by Goldenberg (1993) that:
In analytic induction one begins with the concrete sample in reference to whom the proposition is known to be valid, but generalizes ambitiously to a population in respect of whom the sample is not known to be representative, reducing the generalization by one negative case each time one is discovered, rather than considering that the proposition may be valid only for the sample studied or for a sub-population considerably smaller than the universe. (Goldenberg, 1993, p. 16)

Aside from problems associated with relating the sample to a population, further issues with the procedures of analytic induction have been raised with respect to the circularity of its reasoning (Portes, 1998, p. 20 [note]), and also the limitations that the procedure has in dealing with complex networks of social activity (Becker, 1998, p. 201). With respect to the issue of circularity, this is not a problem unique to analytic induction, but to all scientific inquiry on some level and is due to the practical problem of having to define the limits of a ‘universe which is artificially isolated by premature specialization’ (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 184). Analytic induction has the advantage of recognizing that such definitions and limits may be in need of revision. With respect to the limitations of the procedure, it seems to me that Znaniecki’s own description of the procedure is not so prescriptive with respect to method as later formulations. He says:

First, discover which characters in a given datum of a certain class are more, and which are less essential; secondly, abstract these characters and assume hypothetically that the more essential are more general than the less essential, and must be found in a greater variety of classes; thirdly, test this hypothesis by investigating classes in which the former and those in which the latter characters are found; fourthly, establish a classification, i.e., organize all these classes into a scientific system based on the functions the respective characters play in determining them. (1934)

He also writes:

While both forms of induction tend to reach general and abstract truths, concerning particular and concrete data, enumerative induction abstracts by generalizing, whereas analytic induction generalizes by abstracting. The former looks in many cases for characters that are similar and abstracts them conceptually because of their generality, presuming that they must be essential to each particular case; the latter abstracts from the given concrete case characters that are essential to it and generalizes them, presuming that in so far as essential, they must be similar in many cases. (Znaniecki, 1934, pp. 250-251)

The key is that all initial classificatory schemes used to begin the research should come from the data; they must remain provisional and subject to refinement; their general
validity must be interrogated in the light of the data from other cases; and finally that the conclusions drawn are valuable to the extent that they allow us to work towards defining the essential characteristics of the cases examined. Becker (1998, pp. 207-212) and Taylor and Bogdan (1998, pp. 139-140) both suggest that the value of analytic induction need not be limited to the rigorous performance of a particular procedure. Rather, ‘the basic logic underlying analytic induction can be useful in qualitative data analysis. By directing attention to negative cases, analytic induction forces the researcher to refine and qualify theories and propositions’ (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 139). The problems with claims about the universality of the generalisations produced by the method are well founded and have been well argued. Even so, the shortcomings of statistical method that Znaniecki identifies are equally real. It seems to me, as argued also by Robinson and Turner, that the method of analytic induction performs a vital complementary role alongside more quantitative methods in the pursuit of scientific generalisations.

Analytic induction or some logical counterpart of the method is an essential aspect of research directed toward accumulating an ordered body of generalizations [... However], it is through conceiving the “essential” conditions in a closed system as the avenues through which correlated factors can operate as causes, [that] the generalizations about closed systems can escape their self-containment and probability associations may be organised into meaningful patterns. (Turner, 1953, p. 611)

In the light of these discussions I can see the value of pursuing this research project in the spirit of analytic induction, as proposed by Znaniecki. For a number of reasons, both practical and conceptual, I have not pursued the kind of step by step procedure that other proponents of the rigorous method have delineated (For example Cressey, 1971 [1953], p. 16), however, I have endeavoured to maintain the mind-set as a vital informing feature of the design and execution of the research. One of the outcomes of this project has been the development of inductive understandings of the working lives of visual artists that retroactively critique the definitions and classifications used by previous quantitative research. It is my hope that the understandings thus developed may be useful in the future to inform classificatory schemes, and develop new criteria for the collection of data from larger populations, giving access to meaningful generalisations.
1.2.6.2 Sampling and Access

One of the problems that has been identified with analytic induction is that its capacity to generalise is limited by its approach to sampling, in that there is no way of determining the extent to which the sample is representative of a population. To address this problem I have given active consideration to the sampling for the interview in this study. Firstly, I have deliberately tried to capture data from as large and diverse a sample of artists as was possible (maximum variation sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 28)). Patton says; ‘[a]ny common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon’ (Patton, 2002, p. 235).

Secondly, by identifying the participants of my study, there is the scope for external assessment of the sample interrogating the degree to which it may or may not represent a larger population. I also argue that by selecting a diverse sample of 20 cases my sample in some fashion performed the same role as sampling for negative cases, because my findings needed to account for all cases examined. My adaptation of analytic induction can be seen in the analytical processes described in 1.2.6.4.

Taylor and Bogdan write, ‘if researchers can demonstrate that they have examined a sufficiently broad range of instances of a phenomenon and have specifically looked for negative cases, they can assert greater claims regarding the general nature of what they have found’ (1998, pp. 139-140). As a complement to this approach I have also specifically selected some cases that challenged the sensitising concepts that informed this research project.

The first obstacles to sampling were definitional. Much existing research makes note of the great difficulties in defining criteria by which to assess who might be reasonably called an artist, and even more difficulty in deciding who of those might be professional artists (Bain, 2005, p. 26; Jeffri & Throsby, 1994, pp. 99-101; L. Steiner & Schneider, 2012, pp. 7-9; Throsby & Hollister, 2003, pp. 12-13). In addition to this fundamental problem, I also had the problem demonstrating the diversity of my sample. Given that it was my intention that this research project contributed to the future development of sound criteria for defining the professional artist, it seemed counter-productive to do too much defining a priori. As Znaniecki writes:
If you really do not know in circumscribing a class what are the common and distinctive characters of all the data of this class, you may be sure that there are no such characters; and consequently, that your class is scientifically worthless. Whereas, if you circumscribe the class by defining it, if you already know that all the data of this class are in certain respects essentially similar among themselves and essentially different from all the data of other classes, whatever common and distinctive characters you may find will be already implied in the exclusive similarity which has served as the basis of your definition; this means that your discoveries will be purely illusory, will consist at best in making explicit what was already implicit in the definition. (1934, pp. 222-223)

My approach to defining professional artists was to admit to the category artists who were, in some way, visibly performing that social role, and were recognised as doing so in various ways. The artists I interviewed have a history of public exhibitions, some have been featured in publications, some are represented by commercial galleries and some have had works collected by institutions. Some earn a living from the sale of their works, some are employed in academia teaching as artists. Not all artists that I interviewed were entirely happy with the appellation “artist” for various reasons, but in all cases it is possible to argue that they have a public presence as such. In most cases this public presence was something that enabled me to identify them as potential participants, through looking at exhibition catalogues, via web searches and through recommendations from colleagues etc. In terms of defining visual artists, I admitted to the category all the diversity of practices and media associated with contemporary art as well as more or conventional practices working in traditional media.

The problem of demonstrating the diversity of my interview sample was a little more challenging. In the first instance I proposed to build upon the idea of a sampling matrix as put forward by Miles and Huberman (1994, pp. 31-33). In practice, however, I soon realised that undertaking to classify artists according to the criteria I had proposed for the matrix was not easy to do before having collected data from my participants, nor was it likely to be constructive.

My pragmatic solution was to pursue a more open but essentially similar scheme by inductively using the kinds of information I had about artists from the outset – the sorts of details that were available on their CVs. In this way, I could demonstrate that I had captured data from people who are diverse when considered in terms of a range...
of different criteria. In all these acts of classification, I am mindful of Znaniecki’s caution. Some criteria and characteristics have been singled out as being significant on some level (especially because they are accessible \textit{a priori}), but the significance of these has yet to be tested, and it may well be true that other criteria emerge from the data that are ultimately more significant in defining and classifying “professional artists.”

I selected artists to approach about being potential participants for the project in a number of different ways. I initially arranged to meet with three individuals who have been significantly involved in visual art in WA over the past few decades, though not primarily as practitioners; David Bromfield, Paula Silbert and Ted Snell. I introduced my project to them, sought any advice they might have for me, and also asked them to recommend people who I might interview for the project. I had already begun to collect CVs at that stage of the project and so I had also been looking intently at a large number of potential participants. I also approached Artsource with my project and we discussed my sampling procedures and talked about possible interviewees, and I sought their assistance in making contact with some of these. More generally I had also been looking at exhibition catalogues and other publications on WA art, gallery websites, artists’ websites and searching the web and identifying potential participants in distinctive media or realms of practice.

I produced an initial short list of 33 artists who I had identified as potential participants. The informing rationale was diversity with a few guiding parameters. I wanted to interview:

- roughly equal numbers of male and female artists.
- artists who had studied at each of the key art schools in WA, and artists who had other kinds of training or were self taught.
- artists working across many kinds of media and practices.
- artists who were represented by different commercial galleries, and those who were not represented commercially.
- artists who had been active at different times across the 55 years of data that I had about the Western Australian visual art scene from the CV study.
• artists who were well established, and those who were relatively early in their career, and a range of artists at stages in between.
• artists working the Perth metropolitan area, and those working in other parts of the state.

There were many pragmatic considerations that had some bearing on the final selections. For instance there were not a large number of living artists in WA who had been practising since the 1950s. Comparatively speaking, there are a great many more painters working in this state than artists working in any other media. This is reflected in my sample with multiple painters, though a number of these work across different media too. In a few cases I elected to approach artists because I had had some contact with them in the past, or I could contact them through mutual acquaintances. Some potential participants were recommended to me by other participants, or by colleagues, supervisors and friends. Some artists were approached specifically because I knew that their inclusion in the study would help challenge some of the preconceptions and biases that I undoubtedly would have brought with me to the study. Ultimately I might have selected other artists; none of my selections imply that one individual is more particularly suitable than other potential participants. It is my hope that this will not be the last time that a sample of artists is sought for the collection of similar data, and I would hope that other perspectives and voices will be added to further develop the picture sketched here.

Amongst any other shortcomings that I am not immediately conscious of regarding the diversity of this final sample there are a few instances where I am aware of missing perspectives and experiences that would have added further to the richness of the data. There are no artists in my interview sample who:

• are from a generation that began practising as professionals in the 1960s.
• are working specifically with photography or performance art.
• have been educated in recent times in the TAFE system, though some participants came through Perth Tech and Claremont School of Art in the past.
• currently live and work in the North of the state.
• are indigenous artists, though, as discussed in more detail elsewhere, the exclusion from this study of indigenous artists working in remote communities
was a conscious decision made to limit the scope of this project to material sufficient for a single PhD.

The resulting sample was a product of these initial selections and also the nature of the responses that I got from the artists that I approached. In all I approached 39 artists about participating in the project. I got no response at all from 10 of these. I got a negative, non-committal or inconclusive response from 9 artists, leaving 20 artists (9 male, 11 female) who were willing and able to commit to the project and who I have subsequently successfully interviewed.

Access to the selected participants was achieved in a number of different ways. As previously mentioned, Artsource assisted me by providing me with email contact details for those artists on my shortlist that they had in their database. In a couple of instances I made contact with artists through the commercial galleries who represented them, or had done so in the past. Some of the artists had websites, and/or contact details on CVs that I was able to access online and through which I made contact. Still other artists were contactable through the institutions at which they were employed, such as universities where they were on staff. In a few cases artists were existing social contacts of mine, and contact was made through these personal connections. In one instance I was provided with contact details for a potential participant by another participant who recommended I approach them for the study. (See Figure A- 5 in Appendix B).

In all cases I made an initial approach to potential participants in writing, mostly by email, but in one case by letter as the artist did not have computer access. In the initial correspondence I gave a brief outline of the project and an explanation of what was involved in participating, and I requested an appointment to meet with them. If I got a response and it was possible to make a time to meet with the artist I did so, introducing myself, and the project, in person. At this first meeting I gave the artist a detailed information letter (Appendix D.1) and provided each with a consent form (Appendix D.2), which I left with them so that they might consider their participation in the project. If artists were in principle happy to participate following this initial meeting I also tried to make a time for a first interview, or at least to determine when in the coming months might be a suitable point to contact the artist again to schedule
that interview. I also requested that interviewees send me a CV prior to the first interview in order to assist me in preparing myself with some background, and to pre-fill some demographic information where possible.

There were a few instances where I did not meet the artists in person prior to the first interview. In one case the artist had requested that I post the information letter and consent form and we proceeded directly to the first interview on our first meeting in person. With five of the artists living in regional WA, it was impractical for me to schedule and travel to multiple meetings and interviews. In these cases I posted the information letter, and then made arrangements to travel to them and conduct a single long interview, rather than two shorter interviews as I did with artists in the metropolitan area. One regional artist I met and interviewed in Perth as he had travelled there for business, but I travelled to meet the other four artists where they lived and worked in the different regions south of Perth (Peel, South West, and Great Southern).

1.2.6.3 Developing the Interview Guide

The interview guide (Appendix D.3) for this project was designed not so much to produce directly comparable data in response to the questions, but rather to ensure that the interviews covered a certain minimum territory with each participant. There were a series of seven broad and open questions that all artists had been asked by the completion of the data collection process. The six questions asked in the first interview were as follows:

1. Could you tell me about how you came to identify yourself as an artist?
2. How do you gauge the success (or otherwise) of your work as an artist?
3. In your career as an artist to date, what personal and circumstantial conditions have had the most impact upon your achievements and levels of success?
4. Can you tell me something about your process of developing a new body of work or a creative project?
5. Are there any particular artistic or other influences that you consider especially significant for your creative work?
6. Can you tell me about how you earn a living and how this is related to your art practice?

All participants were also asked a seventh standard question at the time of the second interview, where there were two interviews, or within the longer first interview for regional artists:

7. Can you tell me about your CV, how you use it, how important is it to you and in what circumstances is it significant?

The two-phase interview process (for logistical reasons achieved only with the 15 participants living in the Perth metropolitan area), was designed to facilitate a significant expansion on the minimum territory covered by the first, semi-structured interview. A second interview provided an opportunity to pursue matters of interest and relevance and questions were developed from answers given in the previous discussion. (See Weiss, 1994, pp. 57-58). The collected data, therefore, contained a wealth of discussion around common themes and also captured the unique concerns and accounts of each individual participant to a large degree. Some consistency in the questioning must also have resulted from the fact that I was the interviewer in every case, though over the 10 months of interviewing I was an increasingly informed and more experienced investigator, which undoubtedly resulted in some differences over time. There were, however, a great many unscripted questions and expansive and tangential responses and conversations that made the collected data from each participant rich and unique. On the whole I felt that this interview process was generally successful. Whilst every one of the participants seemed to me to be generous and frank in their responses, it was certainly the case that some participants were happier than others to lead the conversation.

1.2.6.4 Anatomical Sketch of an Analysis

At the proposal stage of this research I had intended to undertake some analysis as soon as I had data, and throughout the ongoing process of data collection. However, I am encouraged by Robert S. Weiss’ observation that for most investigators, ‘it is likely
to be only after interviewing has ended that the investigator can give full attention to analysis and writing’ (1994, p. 151). Whilst the bulk of analysis waited until I had a complete data set, many analytical directions were decided upon with the design of the research project and interview guide, and in real-time as I interviewed participants. Many early analytical decisions have been detailed in previous sections of this methodology, but others are more difficult to reconstruct, being the more or less spontaneous and perhaps intuitive choices I made on the spot as an interviewer.

My approach to analysis of the interview data does not at first glance much resemble the method of Analytic Induction detailed by Cressey (1971 [1953], p. 16) in seven steps. In Cressey’s version of the procedure, the researcher begins by proposing ‘a rough definition of the phenomenon to be explained is formulated’ (1971 [1953], p. 16). In this study the rough definition held essentially that artists engaged in whole range of different kinds of work, not just creative practice, in order to establish and maintain themselves as professional artists in Western Australia. Secondly Cressey suggests that ‘a hypothetical explanation of that phenomenon is formulated’ (1971 [1953], p. 16). The hypothesis in the case of this study was simply that there were multiple systems of value at play in the field, and that artists undertook significant labour to build value in relation to each of these different systems. From this point my procedures differ from Analytic Induction as described by Cressey because I did not proceed one case at a time, seeking out negative cases forcing the reformulation of the hypothesis or the redefinition of the phenomenon. Instead, I collected data from 20 artists, and analysed 20 cases at once.

The analysis itself was challenging, even though it was greatly aided by my intimate knowledge of the interviews, a result of being the interviewer in each case and also the transcriber. I quickly realised that it would be useful to devise some means of cutting up the data into more manageable pieces in a meaningful way. I was especially concerned to do this in a manner that kept me looking at all of the data, but which applied some sort of sensible order to the material so that I could address it in sections. I thought initially that since the artists had told me elements of their life stories in these interviews, perhaps I could organise the data in a chronological/developmental fashion, ie grouping accounts of childhood experiences,
accounts of art school experiences, accounts of first forays into professional art practice and so on. Through cutting and sorting with the aid of the qualitative data analysis software package NVivo9 (QSR International, n.d.), I was able to achieve some manageable sets of data that I analysed in order to produce early versions of the findings detailed in Section 2.2.2. Essentially, the analytical process involved the identification of common themes within the data, the selection of the most potent expressions from the data with which to label these themes, and then consideration of how relationships to these themes differentiated and connected all of the different cases in the sample.

After completing these early analyses, however, I soon discovered that this way of cutting up the data became difficult beyond artists’ discussions about their early careers. As artists discussed their present and recent circumstances the developmental progression ceased to be clear, and I did not want a spurious uniformity to be forced on the data. So I looked for another approach to cutting up the whole data set. I settled on identifying things in the data that artists had spoken about, eg. “Art Prizes”, or “Galleries”, or “Isolation” and so on, and once again I used NVivo9 to cut up the data into these thematic chunks centred on a theme or topic in the data. After working through all of the data several times my search through the data and my analysis became a little more clearly focused, as I realised that what I was looking for, specifically, were accounts of what artists did - their agency.

In an effort to step back from the intensity and myopia of the analysis, I decided to try and draw a conceptual model of the labour of visual art based on the overall sense and understanding that I had developed from the data. After working this out on paper, I reproduced this model in NVivo9 intending to use the elements of this model as new nodes and the basis for a new coding of the complete data. I also developed a brief summary statement of a ‘minitheory’ (Weiss, 1994, p. 159) (a re-formulation of my hypothesis, to return to the terminology of Analytic Induction), followed by a conceptual map that expanded on the statement of the minitheory and the model, identifying themes, and concepts that may be queried through further analysis.

This conceptual map had produced a model of what artists were doing in terms of three labours - the labour to produce a work of art, the labour to produce sustaining
conditions for creative practice, and the labour to produce oneself socially as a professional artist. I utilised the developing model and analysis to propose a new plan for the presentation of the findings. Drawing on the analysis I developed a table laying out some key themes and concepts under each of the three key labours detailed in the model. This helped me to identify a fourth labour which was constant across all three kinds of labour, and which related to notions of artistic integrity. I then engaged in close analyses of six diverse cases within the sample to see if the developing theory was intelligible in the light of the data. Following this I wrote a new statement of the minitheory now including the maintenance of integrity as a form of artistic labour.

Using the analysis done to date and the scheme I had developed I prepared a document in which I elaborated on the model by drawing on corroborating instances from within the data to produce a summary document. I then worked back through the data, drawing out relevant quotes from the interview data to further flesh out and test the summary, forming a useful distillation of the whole of the interview data. From there I created a more or less definitive statement of the minitheory and created a new diagrammatic representation of the model (See Figure 15, and section 2.3.1). The final stage of refining my findings once again involved tabulating my four themes and then proposing under each four or five key subheadings, each drawn from the data and describing an aspect of or approach to the particular labour being discussed. This table then formed the plan around which I wrote the thesis sections presented here. In each case the final test of the overall model being proposed indicating plausible generality across my sample was that I ensured that I had quoted each of the 20 artists at least once in relation to each of the four kinds of labour that I had identified.

**1.2.6.5 Approvals from Participants**

The final stage of the preparing the interview material for presentation in this thesis was to seek approval for the use of the quotes from each of the identified participants. In order to do this I sent each participant a copy of the relevant drafted thesis sections in which their quotes were highlighted and the quotes of other participants were de-identified. With this document I sent a letter (Appendix D.4) requesting that artists check all of the highlighted quotes and notify me of any concerns that they may have
or changes that they would like to make. I made the few changes that were required by participants and have received confirmation from all participants that they were happy with material as has been quoted. It has been encouraging that some participants who have had time to read the document have commented that they have been able to recognise themselves, and their circumstances as Western Australian artists in the findings of this study. (Shortly after Tom Gibbons passed away I was in contact with his wife about the approval process for this study and she indicated that she was happy for me to exercise my judgment in using his material and did not want wish to be involved in further consultation on his behalf.)

1.2.6.6 A Note on Referencing

Throughout this thesis I will employ a simple form of referencing when presenting material from the interviews. For each quotation I will indicate the source by means of a simple reference in the following basic form: [SE,2:13]. The two letters are the initials of the artist identified as source of the quote (in this example Stuart Elliott - see the list of abbreviations, p. xx); the number in front of the colon indicates whether the quote comes from the first or second interview; and the number/s following the colon indicates the appropriate page/s of the transcription that I have prepared for this study. In a very few instances I and/or the artist opted to withhold the identity of the source of a quotation. In these cases the quote has been altered to remove any references that may identify the source, and the quotation has been referenced as [source withheld].

1.2.7 A Representative Sample?

In this final section of the methodology I address the problem of relating any research sample to a broader population of visual artists, and in particular I query the notion of a representative sample. In approaching this issue I will compare the sampling approach used by and outlined in Throsby and Zednik’s (2010) economic study of professional artists in Australia. Throsby and Zednik’s study is different from my own on a number of levels; their study is primarily quantitative, whilst mine is essentially qualitative; their study surveyed artists working in a range of different art forms, whilst mine has only captured data from visual artists; their study surveyed artists across
Australia, whilst mine has focused only on Western Australian artists. Whilst these differences make it impossible to compare apples with apples, I think there are also a number of levels on which my more focused study is able to offer useful contrasts with the sampling procedures of Throsby and Zednik’s more broadly-brushed research.

A core part of the value of Throsby and Zednik’s study is the important notion that their analysis engages with a randomly generated sample that is statistically representative of a greater population of artists within Australia. Throsby and Zednik’s sampling strategy, as has been the case with Throsby’s previous studies, was to approach a range of arts organisations and other bodies involved with artists in order to obtain a list of artists from which they could generate a random sample to survey for their study (Throsby & Zednik, 2010, p. 18). The authors, and other scholars, point out that the total population of artists in Australia and elsewhere is very difficult to estimate, given the different ways in which large scale data collection instruments, such as the census, categorise individuals and their occupations and the difficulties associated with defining professional artists (Cunningham & Higgs, 2010, pp. 7-8; Menger, 1999, pp. 543-544; Throsby & Zednik, 2010, pp. 16-17). Throsby and Zednik reason that lists of names of individuals who are members of organisations for artists and/or service providers to artists, provide the most practical means of capturing as many artists as possible from the greater population (Throsby & Zednik, 2010, p. 16). It is the case, in any study, that limitations are imposed by the resources available to the researchers and many pragmatic considerations have some bearing on the findings produced. However, it is worth considering what the specific impacts of this approach to sampling might be.

It is not necessarily the case that in order to practice as an artist one must be an accredited and paid up member of some professional and regulatory body, as may be true of some other professions. For visual artists especially, membership and association with the organisations from which Throsby and Zednik obtained their lists is essentially a process of self-nomination and is largely discretionary. Given that the sample for my study had been gathered from different sources, primarily commercial galleries, I thought it would be interesting to see, as much as was possible, how the
lists from which Throsby and Zednik drew their random sample might have intersected with my own (both my CV study sample and the Interview sample).

Amongst a large number of arts organisations/bodies whose assistance Throsby and Zednik (Throsby & Zednik, 2010, p. 96) have recognised, I have noted just four who could have provided them with relevant lists of Western Australian visual artists specifically: The Western Australian State Government’s Department of Culture and the Arts (DCA); Artsource; Community Arts Network Western Australia (CANWA); and the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA). I made contact with each of these organisations in the course of my research into Throsby and Zednik’s sample, though in the end only two of them followed through in assisting me, making my findings incomplete. I requested assistance from these organisations in providing me with the number of artists in the sample of my study (334 in total) who were also members of their organisation or on their lists, and also their total number of members (in a relevant category for Western Australian visual artists). When I met with the two organisations who assisted me, I also asked them about why artists may or may not be members, and how/why they appeared on their lists.

The results of this inquiry were inconclusive without input from two of the relevant organisations, and also because, for reasons of confidentiality, it was not possible for me to find out which of the artists in my sample were on the list of each organisation. There are some interesting findings arising from this closer examination, however, with significant implications for claims related to the nature of the representative sample gathered by Throsby and Zednik.

At the time of my inquiry in August 2012, of the 334 Western Australian visual artists in my total research sample, just 107 were members of Artsource, while the organisation had a total of 972 members in five categories. Some of these members, in the associate membership category, were not artists per se but ‘individuals and organisations with a professional interest in artists’ (Artsource, 2012, p. 5). Of the 334 artists in my sample, only seven artists were on the list of just 25 visual artists who had opted for possible inclusion in Throsby and Zednik’s study from the lists provided by the Department of Culture and the Arts (DCA). The DCA lists included artists who had
applied for DCA funding in the visual art category in the two years prior to the lists being supplied for Throsby and Zednik’s study.

It is significant that less than a third of the artists in my research sample were represented in the August 2012 list of members of Artsource. Though this cannot be directly compared with lists of members obtained for Throsby and Zednik’s data collection in 2009, it is perhaps not unreasonable to assume a level of consistency in membership patterns and numbers over time. Given that the overwhelming majority (96%) of artists were included in my sample on the basis of their CV being published on the website of the commercial gallery/ies representing them, it is interesting that so many artists in business as artists are not represented on these lists. Whilst it is possible that two thirds of my sample may have appeared instead on lists of members obtained from the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) and Community Arts Network Western Australia (CANWA), I think that this is an unlikely scenario. What this points to (inconclusively) is the possibility that a significant group of WA visual artists did not appear on any of the lists from which Throsby and Zednik have drawn their random survey sample. It is possible that what these artists have in common is that they do not require the services obtained through membership of organisations such as Artsource and/or they are not dependent and actively drawing upon subsidy, institutional support or government funding. It certainly is not the case that my small study has adequately captured these other artists in a representative way.

Nonetheless the fact that I have been able to procure a different list of artists from other sources suggests that there are opportunities to shed still more light on what constitutes the population of artists in Australia.

Figure 2 graphically represents the findings of this comparison between the two research samples. Without the capacity to compare my sample to NAVA and CANWA membership lists, and with the possibility that artists may be members of more than one of these four organisations, the numbers presented here should be treated with some caution. The numbers cited for NAVA are based on membership information provided in that organisation’s 2011 annual report, and the total membership numbers for CANWA were given to me by the organisation at the time of my inquiry. On the basis of these very crude estimates, there may be as many as 15% of the Western
Australian visual artist population that were not on any membership lists obtained by Throsby and Zednik. Given the limitations of my own sampling, this figure may be quite conservative.

Figure 2: Diagrammatic representation of the relationship between the sample of two empirical research projects and the greater population of Western Australian visual artists.
Exhibit- 10: Kevin Draper, *Fragment*, 2009, forged, welded and painted steel, concrete, 600cm x 210cm x 210cm. Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi, NSW. Collection of City of Melville, Photographed by the artist.


PART TWO: Drawn from Life: Findings from the Empirical Data
2.1 Figure and Field: The CV Study


Exhibit- 14: Monique Tippett, *Forest Stand*, installed 2011, jarrah and aluminium, 600cm x 200cm, Collection of Margaret River/Augusta Shire, Council Offices, Margaret River. Photographed by the artist

2.1.1 Works on Paper: Artists’ CVs

Whilst talking to Western Australian artists about other aspects of their working lives and practices, I also took the opportunity to ask them about their *Curriculum Vitae* (CVs). Nineteen of the twenty artists I interviewed had a CV in some form, though their attitudes to and investments in the documents varied significantly. Given that a large portion of the collected data in this study comprises artists’ CVs, it was important to ascertain the significance and functions of these documents, as perceived by the artists who construct them. This small section of the thesis presents a synthesis and analysis of the discussions that I have had with artists about their CVs and informs the analysis of the greater number of documents that make up the CV study within the larger research project.
2.1.1.1 The Long and the Short: Formal Considerations

Artists’ CVs are constructed in various formats for different purposes, the key distinction being made between long CV and short CVs:

It’s at two levels [...] and one of them is the full-blown thing which gets up to, [...] mine, it’s 22 pages or something. But then there’s the short version which just basically tells people some of where your work is, what you’ve been doing and what you can do. [SE,2:1]

The artist’s long CV typically contains an exhaustive listing of all activities and achievements considered to have some relevance to their artistic practice and career and may be perceived to function largely in an archival or documentary fashion. The short CV is an edited version of the long CV, often cut to fit the stipulations of the different contexts for which it is required, eg. one page or two page CVs may be required alongside grant applications or submissions for award exhibitions.

It gets sent off with applications, it gets turned into one or two pages, depending on their specific demands. It’s on my website and I update it as things happen [...] remove less interesting things. [CY,2:1]

In contrast to the long CV, the short CV’s instrumentality is an integral part of its construction, and a number of artists said, as did Oron Catts:

I have different CVs, [...] for different purposes. [OC,2:1]

Different contexts demand different emphases in the selection of material to be included in the limited frame of the short CV, so that those viewing and assessing the CV would be most likely to respond favourably.

If I need to work with scientists, because of the nature of the work, I need to gain access to labs wherever I’m being invited to show work. I have a CV which is more to do with my so-called scientific credentials, although I stress I’m not a scientist. So I have a CV that lists all of the labs I’ve worked in, the level of research I’ve done, maybe a couple of scientific related publications, so that stuff is being sent alongside a request to go and work in the lab. [OC,2:1]

Whilst a few of the artists discussed the relationship between long and short CVs, most artists talked exclusively about the short CV, its uses and construction.

Aside from the length of the document and the impacts of the frame on the selection of content, other formal considerations in CV construction include the design, format
and relative professionalism of the CV’s presentation, and also the various conventions surrounding the organisation of the document.

When I’ve applied for grants and you talk to people at the Department for Culture and the Arts, they stress how well and professional these things have to be done. And in those contexts it all seems very, very important, and you have to really sell yourself and all that kind of stuff. But for me that’s like a different persona. [AS,1:15]

Some artists specifically mentioned the limitations that they perceived in relation to the presentation of their own CVs, and the links between projecting an appearance of professionalism and the CV were discussed at various points:

I don’t have a business card, I don’t have a website, I’ve got a crappy little CV with a very crude [...] Word doc template. It could be a hell of a lot better, I could look a lot sharper, but I just never get there. [PB,2:1]

2.1.1.2 CV as Social Instrument: Presentation of Self

That the CV constitutes a social self-representation, and the instrumentality of that representation, is clearly demonstrated in the discussions that I had with artists. In a number of cases, artists expressed concerns about the nature of the representation, suggesting that it was in fact a problematic or inauthentic representation of themselves, that it was unduly shaped by the contexts in which it was demanded, and that the values therein were divergent from their own. Several artists who had been practising for an extended period drew attention to the fact that at the beginning of an artist’s career the short and long CV are essentially indistinguishable, because all of their relevant experience fits into the short CV format.

You can start straight off from college and someone writes something very positive about your work in the Wyalcatchem Tribune, well then that’s all you got, so that goes in the short CV. But further down the track [...] you just don’t, you edit out. [SE,2:2]

As artists accumulate experience and are involved in practice over time they are able to select from a broader repertoire of material in order to represent themselves in different contexts.

[In] your earlier time, you develop a CV and you try to put everything down. It doesn’t matter whether it’s a St Hilda’s art show, or whatever. But as you go along you really end up throwing all that aside and you develop a one page and a
two page and sometimes a four page, depending. [...] You [...] just keep honing in on the most important factors, major collections, so that people can [...] look at even just one page and say, ‘oh, she’s in the V&A, she’s won this award or that award, she’s been supported by the arts bodies.’ [PD,2:7]

One consistent observation made by most artists I spoke to was that the CV is particularly important in specific contexts. These contexts are those in which artists perceive that guarantees are sought for the quality of the artworks produced by the artist or of the ability of the artists to execute the projects they are proposing.

The CV is just like a reassurance in many ways [...] for those people insecure about making decisions in responding to the visual work. That’s how I see it. [MI,2:1]

Several artists spoke specifically about the CV being significant in instances where buyers lacked confidence in their own judgements about the work, where it provided reassurances by drawing attention to the extent of an artist’s presence and stature.

Buyers who aren’t confident about their choice understandably think, ‘I really like this artwork but who is this artist?’ And if their opinion of the work is borne out by the credibility of the artist’s CV, then it just may make a difference as to whether they purchase the work or not. [NH,2:1]

Similarly, in applications for funding and specific opportunities, CVs assist administrators in managing the risks associated in distributing funds by demonstrating the proven capabilities of applicants.

They want to see that you have prior experience in the same category that it is you’re applying for. Because it comes back to this idea of risk management: Can this artist actually do this? Have they done it before? Because if they have, that tells us they’re more likely to successfully do it again. [EC,2:2]

Clearly in these instances the representation of the professional self, or artistic reputation, is required to act as guarantor for the creative work.

A number of artists stressed the relationship and subordination of the CV to the creative work in some contexts:

I’ve found that people [...] in private galleries are not particularly interested in CVs, it’s the work and whether they can sell [it]. It’s a marketable product, that’s what they’re looking [for] and you can have a really extensive CV, but if [the work’s] a bit tricky [...] they’re not really interested and that, of course, depends on the gallery. [MI,2:1]
Institutional buyers and collectors may require a CV for archival purposes;

I get a lot of criticism from dealers and archivists and people like that for not having kept up the detail of that sort of stuff. [...] The Museum of Art and Environment in Nevada want all my archives from all my traveling and water-based stuff. So I’ve got to rummage around and get all that together. I’m fairly [...] haphazard about all of that, the CV is part of that, or lack of it I suppose. [LM,2:1]

In some instances a CV may also serve to reassure and justify purchases to governing boards and stakeholders, particularly if the work is by artists whose reputations are not well established.

If someone’s acquiring your work on behalf of somebody else, getting the CV is part of that marketing tool. ‘Cause [if] you’re going to fork out $10,000 or $20,000, a thousand dollars for a work and it’s someone who’s never shown before, or comes from Meekatharra, you’d want to [...] get all the evidence you could to convince the buyer, on whose behalf you’re working, that they’re not doing their dough. [SE,2:1-2]

The importance of the CV as a representation of one’s professional self was underlined by artists in both positive and negative ways. As a positive thing, some artists talked about actively considering their CV when assessing which opportunities to apply for and in weighing up between various different courses that they could take in their practice.

I guess my CV does reflect how my public art practice is going and how I might be seen from an outside point of view. It matters to me in as much as it keeps me aware of what I have done on a yearly basis that could be measured by others. I’m always working on my own art in the studio but this work isn’t always able to be reflected on my CV. [NH,2:7]

[I think to myself] ‘It’s [a public art commission in a] big, prominent place and that would look so fantastic on my CV’. Do I go for something like that, that’s going to stress me out and take five years off my life? Or, [...] be happy with just plodding along in here and making a solo exhibition? [MT,2:14]

In this fashion it can be seen that the instrumentality of the short CV has the potential to influence the shape and nature of the long CV as an historical document. More negatively, some artists observed that not all of their work was considered equally valid in the contexts in which CVs were assessed.
It’s quite hard for me jumping in and out of these areas to, to apply for funding in the visual arts, because of that gallery thing; […] exhibiting, how many solo shows, how many this and that. So I’ve probably got too many eggs in too many baskets, and not enough eggs in one basket. [CW,1:16]

This was the case particularly where a career was divided between work in parallel or related fields such as community art, art teaching or public art where some of this practice might be viewed as time away from studio and exhibition opportunities, rather than an integral part of one’s artistic identity.

CVs have not always been an essential part of the operations of the WA art world, nor are they important in all WA art worlds. Craig Boulter has never had a CV, despite being active in the local commercial gallery scene in the 1970s and 80s, and he now exhibits annually from his home without needing a CV. Similarly, Tom Gibbons told me that the first time he had to have a CV was for his retrospective exhibition in the late 90s, after more than 40 years of art practice.

Everything is so much more professionalised these days, […] later generations have their eyes on this CV. Not for my generation [was it] all that important, I think. [TG,2:15]

Other artists, whose practices span 30 years or more, said that they had begun to put together CVs from the start of their careers.

I started getting one organised probably a couple of years after graduation, so that would’ve been early 80s [SE,2:1]

For Larry Mitchell, though CV building had been a part of his early career, he did not find it particularly relevant to his current way of working, nor to the art world in which he operates.

That climb through the ranks of the contemporary art world just ceased to be of any relevance to me, and the CV went with it, which is why I don’t update it. […] It just doesn’t seem to fit the sort of art that I do now or the art world that I’m in. [LM,2:1]

So in a contemporary context it can be seen that the relative importance of CVs varies between artists working in different ways, in different contexts.
2.1.1.3 CV Content

As suggested above, the content of a CV, particularly a short CV, is greatly influenced by the contexts and audiences for which the CV is intended. There are some consistent elements, however, in the way that most artists prioritise the content that they select for their short CVs.

Firstly currency. So it often has to be just your last ten years of practice because all the other things they ask for are not going to fit on one page. And secondly, priority in terms of your major projects, compared to your other projects. And I quite like to show on my CV that I do a lot of different types of jobs, so I have all of these categories. [PB,2:1]

Major, or significant achievements, may include solo exhibitions, juried and curated exhibitions, big institutional shows, national and international exhibitions, the award of grants, important art prizes and residencies.

I now try and prioritize things that are international or national, things that I know are juried, [where] I’ve been in an exhibition in which there’s been three reputable selectors. [SC,2:2]

Other important information includes: any qualifications, and the institutions and dates associated with study; collections in which one’s work is represented; and publications in which one’s work has been discussed. The relative significance of each of these items may be assessed by considering the standing of particular galleries or institutions at which one has exhibited or studied.

What gallery they exhibit through is a bit of an indicator or what kind of work they’re doing in a way. [BC,2:1]

The reputations of individuals with whom one has exhibited, or studied under or who judged or selected one’s work may be important as well as the prestige (and the amount of money) awarded for a prize, grant or residency. Also of significance are assessments about the readership and types of publications and the prestige and public prominence of different collections and collectors.

[The Collector]’s been a friend probably five, shit, maybe ten years now, and I knew her husband […], but then he gets an [international award] for his work in medicine so […] then, the collectors themselves have got a bit more juice. And coincidently in the meantime they’ve collected some major work of mine, so […] in those situations […] things move around a bit. [SE,2:2-3]
Oron Catts mentioned that his CV is closely tied to the annual reporting that is required by the University of Western Australia for the maintenance of SymbioticA, the artistic research centre he has established within the institution. In this case the emphasis is on research outputs and an international profile:

[I] ironically refer to a lot of activities as line generators. [OC,2:1]

Oron also suggests that he simply does not have some credentials that might be associated with other forms of art practice, such as art sales and representation in museums and galleries etc. For further discussion on artists’ credentials, such as those appearing on CVs, see section 2.3.4.2.

2.1.1.4 Attitudes and Issues

There are a few levels at which artists have expressed some negativity towards the CV. One objection is that the document is an inadequate and skewed representation of the self that either does not sit well in relation to an artist’s own self-image or does not present a valid professional self in the eyes of those looking at it in institutional contexts.

It’s just a necessary evil. [...] I don’t have enough interest in that kind of career hungry approach, I just don’t have it. So the CV is just something that I fill out because I’m asked to. [PH,1:12]

Another objection is that there is an ethical dimension to the presentation of CVs and their construction can be approached with varying degrees of honesty and hyperbole, they must always be taken with a grain of salt.

If you see the CV as a mark of history [...] in some way, like a record of history, you’ve got to be so careful. [...] Like what is a solo exhibition? One person will have six paintings, another person will have 60 paintings. [MI,2:1]

I do look at some people’s [CVs] that I know and you see how much bullshit [is in them]. [...] So I take them with a grain of salt to a degree. Because people can lie, well not lie, but it’s like posturing with your CV. [RB,2:1]

A third consistent objection is a significant level of uncertainty about whether and how these documents are actually read and understood by audiences and by those administrators who require them as an integral part of assessing applications and allocating funding and opportunities.
That’s the thing, you do send them off, you do wonder if they get read or not, or if they just get scanned, and what is important to have on it? [RB,2:2]

A final objection suggests that the CV is no substitute for the quality of the creative work, and there can be a telling gap between the posturing of the CV and different ways of assessing the performance of the work.

A lot of people have very good CVs. I met someone from Australia, […] in the Biennale, and she can’t get into a single gallery. Her CV’s pretty good, […] she’s done Masters of this, and Masters of that, but the work doesn’t sell. [RN,2:1]

Some artists have suggested that they have an interest in other artists’ CVs and do look at them in their employment in contemporary art institutions and also in other contexts. But, more generally, it has been suggested that CVs can provide and inform viewers about the contexts from which practitioners are working and thus add some additional dimensions to engagement with the creative work.

For a lot of people, they respond to the work but often they will actually like to have a look at the CV as an adjunct to that, and I find myself a little bit like that too. [SE,2:2]

Furthermore, one artist suggested that CVs can be a place to find references to interesting opportunities, such as residencies, that might be worth applying for:

I’m curious a lot of the time as well, for myself, I like to know, ‘Oh, look at that residency that artist got, maybe I should apply for that too?’ Definitely that’s part of it. Thinking about things that I could do, by looking at other CVs. [EC,2:1]

On the whole, CVs are viewed for better or worse as an important part of most contemporary art practices because they play a key role in gaining access to valuable opportunities and funding. Only those artists who have established reliable means of working, distributing and maintaining their practices by other means can genuinely afford to be disinterested or completely dismissive of the CV. Whilst there are clearly variations and different levels of understanding, it seems that there are some clear conventions about CV content and the way that details are organised according to hierarchies of significance. It seems clear that artists’ short CVs are a significant social instrument for the majority, though not all, of the visual artists I spoke to.
2.1.2 Vantage Points and Positions

2.1.2.1 Considering Social Space

In *The Rules of Art*, Bourdieu applies his concept of the field of cultural production to the specific historical cases of French literature in the 19th Century and French painting at the turn of the 20th Century. In his analysis, Bourdieu develops an understanding of each field whereby he suggests that the cultural and social values in those fields can be understood spatially:

Thus it is that the antithetical pairs of persons or institutions – of newspapers (*Figaro*/Nouvel Observateur or, on another level, with reference to another practical context, *Nouvel Observateur*/Libération, etc.), of theatres (Right Bank/Left Bank), galleries, publishing houses, magazines, fashion designers – may all function as classificatory schemas allowing one to give labels and to take one's bearings. (1996, p. 164)

One of the key ideas in Bourdieu's thesis is that there exist structural relationships (what he refers to as homologies) between various fields simultaneously in operation in any given context. In short, there are correspondences between the cultural field and in the economic, political, scientific and religious fields, and so on:

This sense of social orientation allows one to move in a hierachized space where the places – galleries, theatres, publishing houses – which mark positions in this space by the same token mark the cultural products that are associated with them, among other reasons because through them a public is designated which (on the basis of the homology between the field of production and field of consumption) qualifies the product consumed, helping to make it either rare or on the other hand vulgar (the price of being widespread). (Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 164-165)

Bourdieu proceeds to present various schematic mappings of the historical French fields of cultural production in which cultural products (and producers) are placed in relation to values such as economic and cultural capital and in relation to the 'field of power' (1996, p. 124). In one such mapping, this field is anchored contextually by sketching in the positions of particular theatres, literary forms/genres and artistic movements and specific authors (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 122).

Bourdieu's diagrammatic and conceptual representations of the field are resonant with aspects of my own experiences as a participant in a field as distant in space and time as
contemporary Western Australia is from early modern France. However, not all social theorists hold that society can be understood in spatial terms, especially not in terms (as Bourdieu does) that separate the particular concrete acts of social individuals from the forces and structures of the field within which (and arguably on which) they act. Indeed Howard S. Becker suggests that, ‘the people who act in a field are not flesh-and-blood people, with all the complexity that implies, but rather caricatures, in the style of homo economicus of the economists, endowed with the limited capacities they have to have to behave as the theory suggests they will’ (Quoted in Becker & Pessin, 2008, p. 374). Becker’s different metaphorical conception, art world, he maintains:

is not spatial. The analysis centers on some kind of collective activity, something that people are doing together. Whoever contributes in any way to that activity and its results is part of that world. The line drawn to separate the world from whatever is not part of it is an analytic convenience, not something that exists in nature, not something that can be found by scientific investigation. (Quoted in Becker & Pessin, 2008, p. 376)

As will become clear, my approach here seeks precisely to try to pursue an investigation of the hierarchised space in which artists in Western Australia take their bearings and achieve social orientation in the local field. This much of Bourdieu’s conception lies at the root of the analytical approaches that I have taken in dealing with the collected CV data. I believe that there is some value in pursuing an engagement with social values that includes an element of spatiality, as Znaniecki writes:

Nearly every spatial value within human reach is claimed as a possession by some social group... When a concrete space is experienced as a group value, any individual who stays within it, or even moves across this space is thus sharing the use of this value with the group. (1965, p. 53)

It seems to me that CVs offer an ideal source of social data that provides some access to these spatial possessions of social groups, and especially allows the analyst to observe the occupation of concrete spaces (in terms of exhibition venues, events, educational institutions) in which artists have shared in the use of the associated social value/s. I agree with Becker that the forces and structures of the field do not exist independently of the actions and interactions that reproduce it, but perhaps it is possible that social actors do take their bearings in relation to their perceptions of a comparatively objective field that they share with other actors? This is, ‘not the
absolutely objective and invariable spatial extension with which astronomy and geography are concerned, but the general, undetermined, and changing extension of empirical objects given in many here’s to many individuals’ (Znaniecki, 2010 [1919], p. 112 Znaniecki’s emphasis). Despite this mutability, this familiar social space and actors’ sense of personal orientation, which Thomas and Znaniecki have referred to as the ‘definition of the situation’ (1969 [1919], p. 109), is perhaps what facilitates the reproduction of “conventions” (Becker, 1995; 2008 [1982], pp. 40-67) (rather than “structures”) that Becker maintains produce the regularities of social worlds.

Key features of my analysis of CV data here follow the lead of Bourdieu, rather than Becker, both in the pursuit of a map of social space, and also because I have not sought to augment the picture of ‘people doing things together’ (Plummer, 2003, p. 25) by including observations and data from all the participants (other than artists) that make up the local art world. However, I have also tried to remain mindful that what social actors experience, ‘is not one universal abstract “space” as nonquantitative continuum, but many distinct concrete, qualitatively diverse, often partly overlapping spaces as empirical values irreducible to a common denomination’ (Znaniecki, 1965, p. 53). I have made every effort to try and discover whether the kinds of homologies that Bourdieu posits can be observed empirically in the local field. This means admitting more dimensions to my maps than can be readily represented with just two or three axes, or represented adequately in terms of exchanges between cultural and economic capital. By looking at diverse elements within the CV data and by employing different analytical approaches, I have tried to test the universality of Bourdieu’s model of the field, in addition to revealing some things about the art worlds existing here in Western Australia.

In order to achieve a mapping of the local field, and also in order to help me contextualise the material subsequently collected through interviews with artists, I recognised that artists’ CVs were a readily available, published source of the kind of data that might be required. I have discussed my methodology and methods in section 1.2.5 and the nature of artists’ CVs in detail in section 2.1.1. For the purpose of mapping the field the CV is an ideal source of documentary data, though not because it is a comprehensive and reliable historical record of a social trajectory, or career (often
CVs are not comprehensive or reliable). The events recorded on a CV are analytically significant because they have been selected by artists themselves as significant.

In the discussion that follows I will present some findings from my analysis of the data from 354 artists’ CVs, relating to the careers of 322 Western Australian artists. As there is sufficient material to present the CV study as a PhD thesis in its own right, I will here only present a limited selection of findings intended to demonstrate the scope for this kind of data to contribute to future research. My selection of findings within this thesis seeks to show that the CV data allows the researcher to perform analyses at different depth of foci, ranging from a ‘biographical’ to a ‘supra-biographical’ depth of focus (Gell, 1998, p. 11). More significantly, in between these extremes the CV data also gives access to intermediate units of analysis that allow the researcher to begin to situate the micro within the structures of macro, and to see how the micro is constitutive of the macro.

In the following sections I will first of all provide some definitions of key terms that will be used in the subsequent discussion. Secondly, I will present some detailed analyses relating to specific values that I have identified and examined in relation to the data, addressing spatial values, and then the value of art education. Thirdly, I will present a case study that closely examines data and findings relating to just one key institution in the field, the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA). Fourthly, I will present the mappings of the field that I have been able to produce from the empirical data. And finally, I will present a discussion that draws out some key conclusions overall from this CV study.

2.1.2.2 Definitions of Terms

Because CVs have not been widely used as a source of social data, and because (to my knowledge) there are no direct precedents for most of the particular kind of analyses I have performed on these documents, it is necessary to offer an introduction to some key terms that I will use throughout these findings.
1. **Activity:** The smallest unit of analysis deployed in this study corresponding to the data contained in a single line of information on an artist's CV. Activities may be events in which artists have been involved, such as exhibitions. In the case of an exhibition, for instance, the data associated with a single activity may include details such as the year of the exhibition, the venue for the exhibition, the title of the exhibition, and other values associated with the exhibition, such as whether it was a “solo exhibition” or a “group show”. Activities may be the actions of third parties in response to an artist’s work, such as the purchase of an artwork, the award of a prize or grant, representation by a gallery or collection, or the publication of a review or an essay or book, all of which artists may record on their CVs. Finally, activities may also be other records such as biographical information, details of artists’ education, employment and so on. Every line of information, on every CV I have collected constitutes a unique activity within the whole data set and can be traced back to the source document, to the artist and to the commercial gallery website from which the document was collected. In all the complete data set analysed in this PhD study is comprised of 16,135 activities in five categories (Exhibitions, Awards, Education, Grants and Funding, Collections).

2. **Gallery Cohort:** A group of Western Australian artists who are collectively represented by one of the 17 Western Australian commercial galleries from whose websites I obtained CVs. In some of my analyses I utilise the gallery cohort as a unit of analysis, allowing me to split the data set into 17 distinct sets of data relating to each of the corresponding galleries. The quantity of data associated with a single gallery cohort (see Table 11 in 2.1.3.1) depends upon the number of Western Australian artists represented by the gallery (the range across the cohorts is from 7 – 44 artists), and also the number of activities recorded on those artists’ CVs (the range is from two or three activities only, up to in excess of 390 activities, in the five categories analysed here, on a single CV). Some artists are represented by more than one of the 17 commercial galleries examined in this study and so have multiple CVs in the data set. (Some artists are represented by as many as three of the 17 galleries and have three
different CVs in the data). For the purposes of analysis, these multiply-represented artists are included within the cohort of each of the galleries from which I collected their CV.

3. *Venue:* The location of an exhibition or event, as detailed in relation to an activity in the data set. This may be a commercial or other art gallery, an alternative exhibition venue, an institution, a town or city and so on. The activity may also indicate further information about the venue, such as a geographical location, suburb, town, city, country etc. I will use the term venue within my findings, both to acknowledge that many visual art activities in the data happen outside of art galleries and also to make venues distinct from gallery cohorts (detailed above). As will be seen, the 17 commercial gallery cohorts are related to 17 commercial galleries also functioning as venues operating in the field.

4. *Span of Practice:* An indication of the period in years over which an artist has been practising as a professional. In most cases this span is measured (inclusively) between the year of the first relevant activity and the last relevant activity on an artist’s CV. I have elected to use this measure rather than artists’ ages, because I did not have all artists’ date of birth in the CV data, and also because many artists may begin to practise later in life, and so age is not an indication of their longevity as practitioners. In some instances, however, this inductive measure is problematic and the full span of practice may not be included in the CV data. This is the case where well established artists (with long standing practices) are represented in the data by truncated CVs including only recent activity, relating to the last 10 years for example (see the discussion in section 2.1.1.3). Similarly some CVs in the data were not up to date, and the year of the last activity on the CV may not extend to the present (which was 2010/11 at the point of data collection). In some cases I have also had to make a judgement about the relevance of activities, and have generally determined the first relevant activity as one which occurs outside of institutional contexts in which artists were active as students.
5. *Secondary Market*: The market for the resale of works of art through auction houses and art dealers. The majority of measures I utilise in this analysis draw directly on data that I obtained from the collection of artists’ CVs. However, I have also drawn on publicly available data from another online source, which is a listing of Australian art sales/auction data published by the *Australian Art Sales Digest*, (Furphy, n.d.) compiled by John Furphy. This website publishes a tally, recorded by artist, of works listed as offered for sale/auction at a large number of Australian and New Zealand auction houses over the past several decades. I have used this freely available information as a simple means of surveying the presence of Western Australian artists in the secondary market by cross-referencing the list of 322 artists whose CVs have been captured in my study, with the *Australian Art Sales Digest* data and noting the number of lots listed for each artist (the data has been recorded since 1969). (See further discussion in Appendix A.1).

2.1.2.3 *Spatial Values: Penetration and Extension*

The data provided on CVs often (though not always) provides additional information situating recorded activities in particular locations. The degree of detail can vary greatly, from no data at all or simply indicating the city/town in which the activity occurred, through to indications of the specific gallery space within a larger venue (eg. the Access Gallery at AGWA). It is this situational data from the CVs that I have used to examine spatial values as they relate to the field of visual arts in Western Australia.

My analyses have been performed with the aid of two key spatial concepts, which I have called *penetration* and *extension*. Penetration refers to the access achieved by artists or cohorts to key and significant venues at the (institutional) core of the local field of visual arts. Extension refers to the access achieved by Western Australian artists to venues and opportunities outside of the state, within Australia (interstate) or overseas (international). These concepts reflect some of the data collected in the interviews suggesting that there was a hierarchy of venues within the state, (see
2.1.1.3 and 2.3.4.2) and also suggesting that artists perceived that interstate or international activity was considered to indicate higher levels of attainment than local activity (see 2.1.1.3 and 2.2.1.4).

Extension beyond the WA field was comparatively simple to work out from the existing coding as the geographical location of CV activities had been captured from the outset (where data was available in the CVs). Activities within the state were coded as rural/regional (outside of the greater Perth metropolitan area) or metropolitan (within the greater Perth metropolitan area) activities. Interstate activities were coded according to which of the seven other Australian states/territories in which the activity occurred. And international activities were coded initially by country, and subsequently grouped into nine regions loosely based around continental divisions. From the coded data it was very easy to aggregate frequencies to produce a total for interstate activity and international activity respectively. In cases where artists immigrated or have relocated from other states, some activity performed outside of Western Australia, prior to artists relocating, may not be indicative of extension in the same sense that applies to Western Australian artists and so there is a level of uncertainty about the quantification of extension achieved.

In order to register the qualitative distinction between local venues required to examine penetration, I used the frequency of activity at venues over time, as a measure of the relative importance, or presence, of Western Australian venues. I achieved this by dividing the frequency of activity associated with local venues, by the total number of years that each venue had a presence in the field (calculated inclusively between the first and last years that the venue appeared in the data). This presence measure crudely indicated those venues at which comparatively more activity had occurred over time. To create an analytical threshold by means of which to examine penetration, I divided all the venues previously coded as Perth Metropolitan venues into two groups on the basis of their calculated presence measures. Those venues with a presence measure of two or greater (ie on average two or more CV activities recorded in the data per year of venues’ operational spans) were designated Perth Metro A venues (105 venues in total), those with a presence measure of less than two were designated Perth Metro B venues (529 venues). The Perth Metro A
venues thus defined included all of the key institutional art galleries and most long-lasting commercial galleries in Perth.

My analysis suggests that penetration and extension may indeed be considered key values at work within the systems of value that inform the construction of CVs. It has been possible to consider these values: at the level of the aggregated data from all 354 CVs; at a level that considers the data from each of the 17 commercial gallery cohorts whose CVs make up the total data; and even at the level of individual artists’ career trajectories, as indicated by the data from a single CV.

Remembering the instrumental nature of artists’ CVs as social documents, and their important role in particular contexts (such as competing for grants and other opportunities), it is clear that CVs are intended to present the best possible professional image of the artist from the available data. To look at the overall spatial trajectory of artists’ careers, I have developed a simple graphic display that is able to indicate the relative penetration or extension of artists’ activities as their careers advance. I have taken exhibitions and awards activities from artist’s CVs, distributed these in a table chronologically by advancing years, and coded each activity into one of five categories on the basis of the geographical location of the activity as discussed above. The tables display the spatial distribution of activities over time and also indicate access to more significant spaces and places considered in terms of penetration and extension.

2.1.2.3.1 Artists’ Career Trajectories

A telling comparison between artists’ activities, and especially career trajectories, is made possible when the CV data is displayed graphically. Here I will present examples of tabulated data from individual artists’ CVs as exemplars of career trajectories corresponding to three different ways that artists present their activity in the context of a CV. In labelling these different career trajectories I draw on the findings of the interview data presented in detail in 2.3.5.2. WA artists in interview have identified two primary modes of artistic work. 1) The mainstream, which involves the conscious building of a career in which the focus is upon the accumulation of particular kinds of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 170) seeing their goals as distinct from economic
concerns. And 2) the prolific and the commercial, in which artists unashamedly approach the production of art, at least partly, as a business activity, and achieve their freedom to pursue their artistic goals through the accumulation of economic capital. That Western Australian artists do not neatly fall into one of these two modes can be seen in the presentation that follows in which I present a third kind of career trajectory, that which corresponds to senior and locally well-established Western Australian artists.

Mainstream artists’ CVs produce a discernible climbing career trajectory registering activities of consistently greater extension, and therefore significance, and omitting activities that do not contribute to this picture of ascending achievement. The projection of this climbing trajectory from the data of a CV can be seen in Table 1, with early activities focused on local achievements and particularly the penetration of key venues (Perth Metro A Venues) and later activities focused increasingly on activities indicative of extension, ie interstate/international activities. Note also in Table 1 that as the career progresses in time and extension, that there is an increasing absence of local activity at lower levels (eg. Perth Metro B Venues, WA Regional). It is possible, however, that artists are still active at these levels, but don’t include them on their CVs.

One of the consequences of these spatial values and of the need to project consistent career advancement in order to be professionally competitive can be seen in the career trajectories of successful mainstream artists (Table 2) and some upwardly mobile emerging mainstream artists (Table 3). In these cases, the absence of any activity in Perth Metro B or Regional locations emphasises an orientation towards the pursuit of opportunity in interstate and international arenas.
### Table 1: Career trajectory of a Mainstream Artist (CV# TG7): number of exhibition activities by year and location

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### Table 2: Career trajectory of a Successful Mainstream Artist (CV# GF32): number of exhibition activities by year and location

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### Notes on tables:
- Colours: geographical location of each activity
- Red arrow: spatial trajectory of the artist’s career
Table 3: Career trajectory of an Upwardly Mobile, Emerging Mainstream Artist (CV #GdF3): number of exhibition activities by year and location

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Notes on table:
• Colours: geographical location of each activity
• Red arrow: spatial trajectory of the artist’s career

It is possible that there is insufficient depth in the local field to allow the artists whose career trajectories have been presented in Table 2 and Table 3 to continue to advance their careers whilst being active in Western Australia. Once they have had a solo exhibition at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (PICA), or a similar institutional venue, artists have essentially exhausted their options within the State to show at “higher” levels. So Western Australian artists for whom the career trajectory presented by their CV is important (those reliant on funding, subsidies and competitive access to funded venues to make and show their work) must look elsewhere for opportunities that will sustain the advancement of their careers to continue to be competitive professionals. Government arts funding (including State Government funding) may ultimately contribute to this need to look interstate and overseas because of the significance of CVs (therefore careers) within the application and peer assessment processes associated with the distribution of opportunity and funds. Institutional conceptions of excellence and advancement beyond certain limits may be values that artists perceive cannot be achieved at home.

Other artists’ CVs, however, do not show evidence of a climbing trajectory, suggesting the presence in the field of professional artists who do not pursue career advancement in the same manner as mainstream artists. These artists come in two main categories. Firstly there are older, comparatively well-established artists who have the advantage
of seniority and local recognition and perhaps achieved their local penetration prior to contemporary emphases on CVs and career building. These artists’ CVs (Table 4) may present a shallow climb or horizontal trajectory with consistent activity in Perth Metro A venues, indicating a strong local presence and penetration of key local venues. These artists often do not place as much emphasis on interstate and international extension in their CVs as do mainstream artists. This may indicate that interstate and international activity is more prevalent and possibly more accessible for mainstream artists today than it has been for Western Australian artists in the past. It may also indicate that these older artists do not necessarily rate interstate and international activity more highly than local activity, in contrast with mainstream artists, and therefore include local activity on their CVs that a mainstream artist might omit.

Secondly, the CVs of prolific and commercial artists don’t emphasise local penetration in the same fashion as either mainstream or older, well established artists. The CVs of prolific and commercial artists (Table 5) reveal fluctuating or horizontal trajectories and do not shy away from including “lower” level activities on the CV concurrently with “higher” ones. These CVs tend also to emphasise the number of activities, irrespective of their scale or relative importance and include activity associated with multiple venues of all kinds. Whilst the measure of penetration proposed earlier (see 2.1.2.3) considers presence to be a product of activity concentrated in significant venues, for these artists presence may be achieved instead by means of having a visible presence in a wide range of different markets and venues. For these artists visibility and presence is created by saturation rather than by relying on access to a prestigious or prominent venue to come to an audience’s attention.
Table 4: Career trajectory of an Older, Well-Established Artist (CV# GH4): number of exhibition activities by year and location

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Table 5: Career trajectory of a Prolific and Commercial Artist (CV# G(360)3): number of exhibition activities by year and location

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</tbody>
</table>

Notes on table:
- Colours: geographical location of each activity
- Red arrow: spatial trajectory of the artist’s career
2.1.2.3.2 Spatial Distribution of Gallery Cohort Activity

I will now compare spatial values as they relate to 17 Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts examined in this study. To display the data for these analyses I have developed another simple diagrammatic representation using a basic grid format, (Figure 3). Western Australian activity for the data set being examined is divided into three nested squares: at the left/top periphery are rural/regional activities; moving inwards and downwards are Perth Metro B venues; and at the centre of the diagram are Perth Metro A venues. Penetration is indicated by a high percentage of activity in the cohort’s data occurring in the centre of the diagram. Beyond Western Australia, interstate activity is displayed moving to the right of the diagram, outwards and downwards with seven squares corresponding to each of the other Australian States and Territories. A further level of extension is displayed by another nine squares corresponding to different geographic/international regions.

Figure 3: Percentage of total CV activity by Western Australian artists, displayed graphically by geographical location
Displaying results for the whole data set gives a clear indication of the overall geographical distribution of Western Australian artists’ activities. Nearly three quarters of all activity has occurred within the state, nearly a fifth of all activity has occurred interstate, whilst only a small fraction of activity has occurred overseas. One can also see that nationally, Western Australian artists have had more access to activity in the most populous states in Australia, New South Wales and Victoria. Internationally the strongest connections are with Europe, North America, the UK and East Asia (the most affluent regions). More than half of all Western Australian activity occurs in the 105 Perth Metro A venues, whilst the 529 Perth Metro B venues between them account for only a third of Western Australian activity.

Comparing each of the 17 commercial gallery cohorts from whom CVs were collected shows that for the six cohorts presented in Figure 4, nearly half of all activity occurred in Perth Metro A venues, with Galerie Dusseldorff artists recording nearly 60% of all activity in these venues. The Goddard de Fiddes cohort provides a particularly graphic representation of the values of penetration and extension in action, with just under half of all activity at Perth Metro A Venues indicating a relatively high level of penetration, and more than a third of all activity occurring interstate and overseas, indicating a high level of Extension. Only a little more than 15% of the cohort’s activity occurs in other places in Western Australia, so the cohort’s outlook is decisively biased towards penetration and onwards to extension.

Cohorts such as Greenhill Galleries and Gomboc Gallery (Figure 5) have a high proportion of older, well-established Western Australian artists. Their data displays indicate a very slightly lower level of penetration into Perth Metro A venues to those in Figure 4, and a smaller percentage of international activity. Cohorts represented by commercial galleries in regional locations, such as Boranup Gallery and Jahroc Gallery (Figure 6), display a much higher percentage of regional activity than other cohorts, reflecting the regional location of many of the artists within these cohorts. At the same time a number of metropolitan artists also show at regional galleries, such as Jahroc Gallery, in order to access a different audience/market of tourists, and the presence of these Perth artists in the cohort is reflected in the Jahroc cohort’s level of access to Metro A venues.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gallery East</th>
<th>Turner Galleries</th>
<th>Galerie Dusseldorf</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total WA</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total Interstate</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total International</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WA Regional</strong></td>
<td><strong>TAS</strong></td>
<td><strong>ACT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NT</strong></td>
<td><strong>SA</strong></td>
<td><strong>QLD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>WA Regional</strong></td>
<td><strong>TAS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NT</strong></td>
<td><strong>SA</strong></td>
<td><strong>QLD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>WA Regional</strong></td>
<td><strong>TAS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NT</strong></td>
<td><strong>SA</strong></td>
<td><strong>QLD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key:**
- Orange shading: Western Australian activity
- Blue shading: activity in other Australian states
- Maroon shading: international activity
- Deeper hue indicates greater percentage of activity

**Figure 4:** Percentage of CV activity in different geographical locations, by six Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts
Figure 5: Percentage of CV activity in different geographical locations, by five Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts

**Key:**
- Orange shading: Western Australian activity
- Blue shading: activity in other Australian states
- Maroon shading: international activity
- Deeper hue indicates greater percentage of activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gallery</th>
<th>WA Regional</th>
<th>Total Interstate</th>
<th>Total International</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gomboc Gallery</strong></td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Greenhill Gallery</strong></td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stafford Studios</strong></td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LK Contemporary</strong></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elements Gallery</strong></td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 6: Percentage of CV activity in different geographical locations by six Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts.

Key:
- Orange shading indicates Western Australian activity.
- Blue shading indicates activity in other Australian states.
- Maroon shading indicates international activity.
- Deeper hue indicates greater percentage of activity.

WA = Western Australia
NT = Northern Territory
SA = South Australia
QLD = Queensland
NSW = New South Wales
VIC = Victoria
ACT = Australian Capital Territory
TAS = Tasmania
Cohorts such as Linton & Kay and Gadfly Gallery (Figure 6) on the other hand clearly display more limited access to Perth Metro A venues, with much higher proportions of interstate activity and activity in Perth Metro B or Western Australian regional venues. As analyses in later sections will help show, the distinctive spatial distribution of different cohorts’ activities suggest that there is a much stronger correlation between interstate activity and cohorts who have a greater presence in the secondary art market. It might be suggested that there is generally more opportunity to access interstate art worlds for those artists who are commercially successful, and it is comparatively more difficult for mainstream artists engaged in practices reliant on funding and subsidy to access opportunity in the Eastern States.

2.1.2.4 The Value of Art Education: Qualifications and Institutions

The data provided on CVs about artists’ education and qualifications covered a wide variety of disparate activities. At the informal end of the spectrum were activities such as explicit statements indicating that artists were self-taught and had received no formal training and also dates and lists of locations to which artists had travelled on painting/study tours. The more formal end of the educational spectrum began with participation in technical workshops with named Master Craftspersons (jewellers, ceramicists, glass artists, woodworkers and so on) and culminated with Doctoral qualifications in creative practice. In some cases CVs also included qualifications (such as Science degrees etc) that weren’t within visual art or related fields such as architecture or design, or art teaching. In my analysis I have focused on art qualifications and qualifications in related fields. In some instances very little detail was provided, some CVs omitting the names of institutions or the qualifications or the dates of completion. Only 260 of the 322 artists represented in the collected data had provided information about their education and qualifications. Of the 62 artists’ CVs including no data at all about educational activity, 25 are the CVs of indigenous artists from remote Western Australian communities.
In considering the relationship between art education and other parts of the field, there are at least two levels on which connections can be examined. Firstly, the qualifications obtained, and the level of formal education undertaken by individual artists can be examined. Secondly, relationships between artists and particular educational institutions may prove to be significant in the field. Existing research has tended only to address the first of these dimensions associated with artists’ education, but in my analysis of educational values I have attempted to look at both of these dimensions.

The educational data obtained from the collected CVs is quite complex. It is difficult to simply compare frequencies of different educational activities as, for instance, it is difficult to establish any clear basis for equivalence between any number of one-day or weekend workshops over the course of a career and a single three or four year university degree. Many artists have completed multiple formal qualifications, sometimes at different institutions. An artist may be simultaneously a graduate of Claremont School of Art, Curtin University and RMIT University, and may hold a Diploma, a Bachelor’s Degree and a PhD. In considering access and opportunity over the course of a career, however, one must take into account which qualifications were held in connection with which institutions at the relevant points in time. University art schools have only existed in Western Australia from 1987 when the Western Australian Institute of Technology (WAIT) became Curtin University of Technology. While (associate) degree level qualifications were available from WAIT (established 1966), Bachelor’s degrees in visual arts were not the norm prior to the mid-1980s. Therefore a diploma held by an older artist may indicate the highest level of formal art qualification available to them at the time, so it is difficult to establish the effective professional equivalence of a 1960s or 1970s diploma and a contemporary diploma, which is today near the lowest level of available formal qualifications. Another complication in dealing with educational activity, and qualifications in particular, arises from the fact that artists may also be staff members in tertiary educational institutions. Consequently it is hard to know the degree to which higher qualifications are required by employers, in artists’ day jobs as teachers and lecturers, or whether
these qualifications are pursued primarily “for art’s sake” and seen primarily as contributing to their career as professional practitioners.

2.1.2.4.1 Artists’ Qualifications

In a partial resolution of some of the complexities discussed above, for some analyses I reduced the nuanced qualifications data to indicate artists whose highest qualification was at degree level or above (Degree+) and those artists with qualifications at diploma level or below (Diploma-). Artists with both degrees and diplomas (etc), were classified on the basis of their highest qualification as Degree+ artists.

In terms of general educational values there are some very telling relationships indicated by the data with respect to the 17 commercial gallery cohorts from whom the CV data was sourced. Using the simplified Diploma-/Degree+ distinction discussed above it was possible to calculate the percentage of artists in each cohort who were qualified to Diploma- level, to Degree+ level and also the percentage of artists for whom no educational data was provided in their CV (Table 6).

Table 6: Percentages of artists within commercial gallery cohorts recording art education activity at different levels on their CVs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>% Diploma or lower</th>
<th>% Degree or higher</th>
<th>% No educational activity listed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goddard de Fiddes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galerie Dusseldorf</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth Galleries</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerge ARTSPACE</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turner Galleries</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallery East</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements Gallery</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LK Contemporary</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford Studios</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallows Gallery</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jahroc Gallery</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenhill Gallery</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gomboc Gallery</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallery 360</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gadfly Gallery</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boranup Gallery</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linton &amp; Kay</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The relative importance of art education for artists in each cohort may be crudely indicated by the percentages relating to the absence of any educational activity. The two cohorts with the largest percentage of artists (around 60%) without any CV data relating to educational activity (Gadfly Gallery and Linton & Kay Gallery) are also cohorts representing a number of indigenous artists from remote communities. Clearly for these indigenous artists the knowledge and conditions required to make and sell their paintings are not derived from formal art school education, but rather from their ties to traditional cultural practices. See (Myers, 2002) on the complexity of this. Two other cohorts, Boranup Gallery and Gallery 360 also have comparatively high percentages (more than 35%) of artists without educational data, which suggests a level of ambivalence with regards to art education within these cohorts. Also interesting in this regard are Greenhill Gallery and Gomboc Gallery. Whilst these cohorts have the highest percentage of Diploma- qualifications, they also have among the lowest percentages of artists with no educational data. Knowing that these cohorts include a number of more senior Western Australian artists, I suggest that many of these artists achieved the highest qualifications available (a diploma) at the time of their studies. So there is a kind of equivalence that might be argued to exist, in terms of the perceived value of art education per se, between these older cohorts, and younger cohorts in which Degree+ qualifications are now prevalent, such as Galerie Dusseldorf and Goddard de Fiddes.

Focusing on artists within cohorts with Degree+ qualifications, the field can readily be divided into three main groups. There are six cohorts (Goddard de Fiddes, Galerie Dusseldorf, Perth Galleries, Emerge ARTSPACE, Turner Galleries and Gallery East) in which a significant majority of artists (71% and upwards) possess Degree+ art qualifications. There are seven cohorts (Elements Gallery, LK Contemporary, Stafford Studios, Gallows Gallery, Jahroc Gallery, Greenhill Gallery, Gomboc Gallery) for whom a combination of Degree+ and Diploma- qualified artists together make up a significant majority (more than 78%) of artists who have listed on their CVs some art education or training activities. Of the remaining cohorts, two include a significant percentage of indigenous artists from remote communities. The indigenous artists without educational activity in the data account for 45% (Gadfly Gallery) of and 40% (Linton &
Kay) of artists in these cohorts respectively. Considering these artists as a special case, and removing them from the total, the proportion of qualifications amongst other artists in these cohorts corresponds loosely with the final two cohorts. Gallery 360 and Boranup Gallery each have a weaker majority (around 60%) of artists recording educational activity at either Degree+ or Diploma- level and the remainder have listed no educational activity. The first group of Cohorts clearly emphasise art education, and degree level qualifications (or higher) in particular. The second group of cohorts clearly also value art education, but accommodate a wider range of educational activity and qualifications. The final group display the highest levels of ambivalence with regards to educational values, and it might be suggested that artists in these cohorts may succeed with or without reference to their educational activities and qualifications in their CVs.

2.1.2.4.2 Educational Institutions

I begin here by noting the abundance of educational activity in the data set associated with Curtin University (Curtin). Almost all of the activity associated with Curtin is at Degree+ level (163 activities), apart from a very small number of activities at Diploma-level (8 activities). Of all the Degree+ educational activities in the whole data set, Curtin is the awarding institution for 51%. Including degrees from Curtin’s institutional predecessor WAIT, the combined percentage is 58%. By comparison the next most numerous contribution is made by Edith Cowan University (ECU), awarding 11% of all Degree+ qualifications in the data set including those from WACAE, ECU’s institutional predecessor. Around 25% of Degree+ activity in the data is associated with interstate or international institutions. Of the 322 artists in the data set, 98 of these are Curtin graduates (30%), which is 38% of the 260 artists who have supplied data about their educational activity. Of the 166 artists in the data set with a Degree+ qualification, 55% are Curtin Graduates. Some figures providing more detail about recent creative arts graduates from higher education institutions in Western Australia are presented in Appendix C.2.

My analyses examining the relationship between educational institutions and the field assume that 55% of all Degree+ graduates are Curtin graduates, in line with the population represented in my CV study. Approximately this proportion of Curtin
Graduates should be present in any given situation, all things being equal. Different proportions may suggest the play of other values.

Looking again at the 17 commercial gallery cohorts, Table A-2 in Appendix A displays the percentage of artists in each cohort who are graduates of various institutions. (Note that in this table artists may be graduates of more than one institution, so the percentages may total more than 100% for each cohort). By drawing on the percentage of artists for the cohort who are qualified at Degree+ level (Table 6) and calculating 55% of that figure I have produced a threshold for each cohort indicating the expected percentage of Curtin Graduates, if the make-up of the cohort merely reflected the greater population of artists. In Table A-1 in Appendix A, of the first group of six cohorts emphasising Degree+ qualifications (identified in Table 6), five of them have a greater percentage of Curtin graduates than the calculated threshold, three of them by a very significant margin. This suggests that, for artist in these cohorts, not only do qualifications matter, but also that the institution from which they were obtained may be significant.

In the second group of cohorts for whom education is a significant value without emphasising degree level qualifications there are some things to note. Firstly one can observe that the two cohorts, Elements Gallery and LK Contemporary with comparatively high percentages (60%+) of Degree+ artists have comparatively low percentages of Curtin Graduates (20%+), also falling below the calculated 55% threshold. Secondly, one can observe that a significant proportion of artists in Greenhill Gallery and Gomboc Gallery cohorts are graduates of either Perth Technical College (25%+) or Claremont School of Art (around 40%). As these were the premier institutions for art education at diploma level prior to the establishment of Curtin (and the later emphasis on Degree level qualifications), it is possible that these cohorts represent the institutional elite of a previous generation.

Much the same analytical process can be used also to examine the connections between qualifications and venues and educational institutions and venues in the local field. For the purposes of this study I have chosen to examine relationships between education (qualifications and institutions) and just a few long-standing Perth Metro A
venues. In contrast to counting artists within cohorts, in looking at venues there is a
need also to consider the number of activities in which artists have been involved, in
order to get a real sense of the relative distribution of opportunity at these venues.
This makes the simple threshold concept employed above less operable; in addition
there are chronological complications as previously discussed. As a result of these
challenges these findings are more indicative than decisive and would benefit from
further analysis (beyond the scope of this study) for confirmation.

In examining venues’ relationships with education I plotted the percentage of activity
at each venue where the exhibiting artist had formal art qualifications at Degree level
or higher along the x-axis. (Figure 7) The percentage of exhibition activities at each
venue involving Curtin graduates is indicated on the y-axis. I then used these two
percentages as co-ordinates to plot the positions of 39 Perth Metro A venues (those at
which more than ten activities have been recorded in the total data). In addition to
plotting the venues on these axes, I have also marked a red diagonal indicating the
threshold of Curtin graduates that one might expect to see engaged in activity at these
venues, based on the percentage of activity at the venue involving artists qualified at
Degree+ level.

The very small number of venues situated below the marked threshold, indicates that
Curtin graduates do not dominate at these venues. The position of venues on the left
of the figure at which less than 50% of exhibitors possess Degree+ qualifications is not
a strong indication of the relative importance of an education at Curtin. However, for
venues on the right of the chart, at which the majority of exhibitors are qualified at
degree level or higher, venues’ positions on this chart are a potent indicator of
institutional ties. Perth Galleries is positioned quite close to the threshold, indicating a
proportion of exhibitors at the venue who are Curtin graduates that is representative
of the greater population. The positions of Turner Galleries, Galerie Dusseldorf and
especially Emerge ARTSPACE, however, indicate significantly higher levels of activity
involving Curtin graduates, though similarly placed on the x-axis.
Figure 7: Exhibition activity at Perth venues and its relationship to artists’ levels of qualification and study at Curtin University.
A number of the most prestigious institutional and state funded galleries for contemporary art in Western Australia are situated at the top right of this chart, and suggest disproportionate activity by Curtin graduates. These venues include Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Breadbox Gallery, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery (UWA) and John Curtin Gallery (Curtin).

In Figure 8 I have similarly plotted the positions of each of the 17 Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts. In this case the position of the cohort indicates the relative dominance of Curtin graduates amongst the artists represented by the commercial gallery at the time I collected the CV data. The positions of five of the cohorts (Goddard de Fiddes, Galerie Dusseldorf, Turner Galleries, Emerge ARTSPACE and Gallery East), in the top right of the chart, indicates not only a high proportion of Degree + qualified artists, but also disproportionately high representation of Curtin graduates. Almost all of the other cohorts are positioned within closer proximity to the marked threshold, indicating that the make-up of these cohorts corresponds to the greater population of Western Australian artists with Degree+ qualifications.

If one compares the position of commercial gallery cohorts in Figure 8 with the position of the corresponding commercial galleries considered as as venues in Figure 7 further relationships can be seen. The Galerie Dusseldorf cohort (Figure 8), currently represents a much higher proportion of Curtin graduates than is reflected in the data about activity at the venue (Figure 7). One interpretation of this situation (which applies especially to longer running galleries such as Galerie Dusseldorf) is that membership of the cohort has changed over time. Another is that the gallery is open to regularly exhibiting the work of artists not represented in the cohort. Both of these interpretations may apply simultaneously. Commercial galleries such as Galerie Dusseldorf may have previously been more accommodating of artists educated at lower levels and graduating from institutions other than Curtin, than the make-up of the contemporary cohort suggests is now the case. This may reflect the greater levels of selectivity exercised by a now well-established gallery with whom representation is highly desirable. Alternatively the same gallery in earlier times may have had different approaches and criteria for choosing the artists that they represented.
Figure 8: Representation in Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts and its relationship to artists’ levels of qualification and study at Curtin University.
In sum, there are some indications that the value of formal art education and qualifications generally has been growing in significance for artists entering the field since 1952. In line with the findings on career trajectories, the attainment of higher qualifications would seem to be another means of demonstrating artists’ career advancement. This may explain the strong correlation between those cohorts achieving comparatively high levels of penetration (especially) and extension and those with a high proportion of Degree+ qualified artists. There is also evidence that the institution at which a qualification is obtained may also have some bearing on the opportunities, access to venues, and even the cohorts within which an artist may be represented. Though imperfect, the analyses here suggest that graduates of Curtin seem to be disproportionately represented in some cohorts and venues, even allowing for the comparative abundance of graduates from this institution in comparison to others (See Appendix C.4). Importantly, there is evidence that even prior to the existence of Curtin and degrees in visual art, there were institutions that held comparable dominant positions in the field and there were also artists who similarly valued and pursued formal art education to the highest levels available. At the same time, however, it can be seen that institutional art education is not uniformly valued across the field, some professional artists managing quite well without it.

2.1.2.5 Venue Case Study: The Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA)

CV data enables the researcher to undertake a focused examination on small areas of interest as well as providing access to broad-brush analyses and value mapping. In order to demonstrate this potential, I will now present a detailed analysis of the activities associated with just one Western Australian venue, the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA). Whilst there are other important venues operating in the state also worthy of detailed analysis, I have chosen to investigate AGWA here because, as well as being the longest running venue in the data, this institution has been the subject of pointed criticism from a number of the artists I have interviewed. Therefore, it seemed an ideal object of study in this case, to see what light the analysis of CV data might shed on the operations of AGWA, and to consider the specific complaints of interviewed artists about the state gallery in relation to this different point of view.
Narrowing my focus from the whole data set to one concerned solely with a single exhibition venue/collecting institution raised a number of analytical possibilities. It is possible to look at which artists have exhibited at AGWA, which artists’ work has been collected by AGWA, which exhibitions featuring artists in the CV data have taken place at AGWA, and which commercial gallery cohorts have strong and weak affiliations with AGWA. These kinds of analyses offer some very interesting perspectives on the issues identified by interviewed artists and presented in 2.2.1. However, the primary complaints made by artists can be summarised in advance as: 1) that the gallery does not show enough contemporary local art work; 2) that the gallery does not collect enough contemporary local art work; and 3) that the gallery seems generally disinterested in contemporary local artists. (See 2.2.1.1 and 2.2.1.4 on these complaints).

In terms of frequencies, AGWA is the Western Australian venue at which the sixth highest number of exhibition activities occurred (Table 7).

Table 7: Frequency of exhibition activity at six Perth venues and their relative presence in the field over time for Western Australian artists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Frequency of Activity [A]</th>
<th>Venue's 1st Year</th>
<th>Venue's Span of Operation (Years) [B]</th>
<th>Presence Measure (=A/B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moores Building Fremantle</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fremantle Art Centre</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth Institute of Contemporary Art</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galerie Dusseldorf</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gomboc Gallery</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Gallery of Western Australia</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, taking into account the span of operation of each of these venues, which is registered in the significantly lower presence measure (indicating on average three exhibition activities per year involving WA artists), it is clear that AGWA is not a venue that is accessed as frequently as other venues in Table 7. It does not seem unreasonable, however, that opportunities to exhibit at this key institution (that must
divide its resources across a variety of programming) might be more limited for living, local artists than is the case for other venues designated more specifically for contemporary art, such as the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (PICA).

A significant percentage of artists captured in this CV study have had the opportunity to exhibit work at AGWA, broadly comparable to the other public galleries listed in Table 8. So, as was the case for exhibition activity, there is no evidence of a failure in programming by AGWA.

Table 8: Percentage of 322 artists who have exhibited at six key Perth venues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Percentage of total sample (322 Artists) recording some activity at venue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moores Building</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fremantle Art Centre</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth Institute of Contemporary Art</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galerie Dusseldorf</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gomboc Gallery</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Gallery of Western Australia</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The smaller figures for the two commercial galleries in this list – Galerie Dusseldorf and Gomboc Gallery – reflect the more limited scale and scope of these venues

Considering the charge that AGWA does not collect enough of the artwork of contemporary local artists it is possible simply to count the number of artists in the total sample who have recorded that their work is represented in the collection of AGWA. (Table 9)
Table 9: Number of Western Australian artists in this sample whose work is represented in key Western Australian art collections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art Collection</th>
<th>Number of artists from sample represented in collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art Gallery of Western Australia</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith Cowan University</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtin University of Technology</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artbank</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Perth Hospital</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Western Australia</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank West</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holmes a Court</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murdoch University</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Equity (Kerry Stokes)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the basis of these figures AGWA is the premier collector of contemporary Western Australian artists’ work. Admittedly the CV data provides no indication of the number of works, or the type or value of works collected for each artist, nor does being collected correspond to having work exhibited at the venue. Of the 86 artists who have recorded AGWA as an exhibition venue in their CV data, only 55% (47 artists) have also recorded that their work has been collected by the institution. On the other hand 34% (24 artists) of the 71 artists who have recorded that their work has been collected by AGWA, have not listed AGWA as a venue for exhibition activities in which they have been involved on their CVs. These figures provide some indication that in all 22% of the 322 contemporary local artists included in this study are in fact represented in the state gallery’s collection. However, figures indicative of the acquisition of artwork and artists’ exhibition activity at the venue seem to be at variance, perhaps suggesting that a significant portion of collected local work may not be exhibited, and much of it may not have been exhibited more than once.

The third charge levelled at AGWA’s programming is that the institution is generally disinterested in contemporary local artists and their practices. Many manifestations of the State Gallery’s interest in local artists (See 2.2.1) do not feature in artists’ CVs. However, there is one kind of event in the data which may offer some means of understanding artists’ perceptions that they previously had more access to AGWA than is now the case, and correspondingly that the state gallery previously took more
interest in local artists; art prizes and competitions. These include events such as the *Perth Drawing Prize* (1952-75), *Channel Seven Young Artists Award* (1975-1990), the *Mobil Pegasus Art Prize* (1981-84) and the *City of Perth Craft Awards* (1983). (Dates cited correspond to the collected data and may or may not reflect the full or historically accurate tenure of these events). Tellingly these five events, all occurring prior to the 1990s account for a full 30% of the total CV data recording AGWA as an exhibition venue. Key local art prizes such as these have subsequently been held mainly in other Western Australian venues, such as PICA (*Bank West Art Prize*), the Moores Building (*Mandorla Art Award*) and even non-art venues such as Perth Town Hall (*City of Perth Craft Awards*) and Lakeside Shopping Centre (*City of Joondalup Invitation Art Award*).

In more recent times the one major art award held at AGWA is open only to indigenous artists (*Western Australian Indigenous Art Awards*, 2008). Other specific groups of artists have also been favoured by recent programming, including high school students (*Year 12 Perspectives*, 1992-2002) and to a lesser degree, emergent contemporary artists (*Mix Tape*, 2003-2006). So generally one might observe that for artists who do not fit these quite specific demographics, that is non-indigenous, mid-career artists, there have indeed been comparatively few opportunities to exhibit at AGWA in the past 25 years.

It is worth noting, however, that removing these art prizes and recurring event exhibitions from the data relating to AGWA as an exhibition venue, the portion of local exhibition content (according to the CV data) is fairly consistently small throughout the period covered by the data. Ten recurring exhibitions and prizes account for nearly 43% of all the activity at AGWA. The remainder of AGWA’s programming, 71 other exhibition titles in the data since 1952, has involved small groups, or individual artists in more isolated events. This suggests that opportunity for Western Australian artists to exhibit their work at the State Gallery has decreased with the absence of art prizes accessible to the majority of local artists. Artists are then reliant upon curators at the state gallery to exhibit local work within the venue’s other programming, which the CV data suggests has not been a very abundant source of opportunity in the past six decades.
Although 86 artists have recorded some activity at AGWA, just one artist’s CV (Robert Juniper’s) accounts for 13% of all activity at AGWA, with the next most active artists at the venue accounting for only 4% of the total activity (Table A-3 in Appendix A). The median span of practice for the 22 artists considered in Table A-3 is 31 years, so the majority of these artists have shown work at AGWA only once or twice per decade that they have been practising. There is some positive correlation between long spans of practice, secondary market presence and representation in the AGWA collection, particularly in the top ten artists in the table. This I take to be some evidence of homologies between value systems informing what Bourdieu might call consecration (Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 154-159). Artists are recognised as significant partly on the basis of their seniority, in terms of artistic generations, and this recognition is reflected in both the secondary market, and in the collections of key public institutions, such as state art galleries. That seniority and performance in the (generally conservative) secondary market are not the whole story is evidenced also in the table by five instances (22%) where the work of younger contemporary artists (span of practice < 30 years) with no presence in the secondary market has been collected by AGWA.

In order to observe the other values systems that might be at play in AGWA’s approach to programming and acquisition it is useful to compare the activity of different gallery cohorts at the venue. Table 10 shows that almost all of the 17 cohorts considered in this study have had some connection with AGWA. Looking more closely at the particular exhibitions with which gallery cohorts have been associated, however, puts these connections in perspective.

All of the activities at AGWA recorded by artists in the Emerge ARTSPACE cohort, are associated with only two recurring exhibitions, Art in Bloom and Year 12 Perspectives. Art in Bloom involves the display of fresh flowers in response to works in the collection and lasts only a few days, while Year 12 Perspectives is an exhibition of the work of graduating high school artists. Neither of these popular exhibitions at the venue, I would suggest, reflects the typical programming or acquisition policies of the venue, and are instead aimed at encouraging access and attracting audiences who would not otherwise attend events at AGWA. Significantly, none of the artists from this cohort, nor any artists from other cohorts who have recorded participation in either of these
two exhibitions on their CVs have had their work collected by AGWA. This closer scrutiny reveals that, as measures of professional accomplishment, different exhibitions at the same prestigious venue may have quite distinct art world values. (Also recognised in 2.1.1.3). In some cases exhibition activity at AGWA might signal a high-level recognition of the exceptional value of an artist’s work, worth collecting. In other cases it might be read as a concession made by the institution to meet public policy requirements about community inclusion and access. In such an instance exhibiting at AGWA may say little about the quality of the work involved, and remains an investment in marketable public value rather than collectable art value on the part of AGWA.

Table 10: Proportion of total exhibition activity and representation in AGWA collection by commercial gallery cohort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>% Total Activity at AGWA from cohort CVs</th>
<th>% Cohort Artists in AGWA Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Galerie Dusseldorf</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turner Galleries</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallery East</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goddard de Fiddles</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth Galleries</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jahroc Gallery</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gadfly Gallery</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gomboc Gallery</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford Studios</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linton &amp; Kay</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenhill Galleries</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallows Gallery</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boranup Gallery</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements Gallery</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerge ARTSPACE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LK Contemporary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallery 360</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gallery cohorts who were shown previously to have achieved high levels of penetration and have an orientation towards extension, have been strongly represented in exhibitions at AGWA and the collection (Table 10). The anomalous figures for Jahroc Gallery and Greenhill Gallery result from the fact that these two
galleries represent Robert Juniper, who has been the most active exhibitor at AGWA within the CV data by some margin (Table A-3 in Appendix A).

The CV data seems to support the claim that AGWA does not exhibit enough contemporary local artwork on at least two levels. Firstly, the majority of programming including local artists seems historically to have been allocated to a few senior and well-established artists and other artists may have their work collected but not exhibited by the institution. Secondly, and most compellingly, is the finding that even the artists who have recorded the most activity at AGWA in this data set have had their work exhibited at AGWA at most only once or twice per decade over the course of their practice. The claim that AGWA does not collect enough contemporary local artwork is not supported, because AGWA’s collection represented the largest number of contemporary local artist of any collection across the CV data. In fact a full 22% of all the artists in the CV study sample claimed representation in AGWA’s collection. Finally, the fact that AGWA no longer hosts any major art prizes open to a wide range of local artists, may be a contributing factor to the perception that artists have less opportunity than in previous times to exhibit their work at AGWA.

2.1.3 Drawing lines in the Sand: Western Australian visual art worlds

2.1.3.1 Mapping the Field

One of the primary goals of my study of artists’ CVs was to map the contemporary field of cultural production for visual arts in Western Australia. I have presented findings that demonstrate a range of different ways that CV data can be used to look at the activity of visual artists: from the trajectory of a single artist’s career; to connections between artists, institutions and venues; and also detailed analyses of activity at one venue. In producing a map of the field my approach has been to focus upon the commercial gallery cohort as my key unit of analysis. The advantage of focusing attention at this intermediate level is that it is here that key relationships and negotiations between structure and agency in the field may be accessible. The key assumption that underpins my analyses at the level of the gallery cohort is that these
groups of artists are drawn together in a purposeful fashion around the commercial galleries who represent them. I work on the basis that each cohort is distinctive, and that the artists within that cohort share common values at some level. This is not to deny the individuality and diversity of artists represented within each cohort, but it is to maintain that artists and commercial galleries are not randomly or accidentally in relationship.

Using the CV data I have tried to measure the distinctiveness of each of the 17 commercial gallery cohorts within the Western Australian field along multiple indices. In this process of measurement it has often been necessary to make sharp distinctions where there exists nuance and gradation, but I have endeavoured to register the incremental differences as much as possible, for as long as possible, and to proceed with transparency about my analytical determinations. As will become evident, I have also avoided the presumption that there is just one best way to undertake the work of analysing and mapping the cultural values in question. The resulting maps are therefore the product of a kind of triangulation and have been assembled from several different approaches, which has the advantage of retaining some of the complexity of the art worlds being studied.

A snapshot of the total data set, and its relationship with data from each of the commercial gallery cohorts from which it is made up, provides a basic sense of the make-up of each of the cohorts, and an indication of the possible imbalances that may result from disparities in the quantity of data available from each cohort (Table 11). It is also worth noting that my analysis of gallery cohorts refers only to the group of Western Australian artists represented by each commercial gallery, which may in fact have larger total cohorts including artists from the eastern states of Australia and beyond. So, for instance, whilst there are only seven Western Australian artists in the cohort for Greenhill Galleries in my study, this is approximately a quarter of the total number of artists represented by the gallery. So my analyses here are not able to talk about each commercial gallery as whole; rather they specifically illuminate the position that they have in the field for the Western Australian artists they represent, and the Western Australian artists who may be seeking representation.
Table 11: Key attributes of commercial gallery cohorts captured in this study (WA artists)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gallery Cohort</th>
<th>No. of Artists</th>
<th>No. of Females</th>
<th>No. of Indigenous Artists</th>
<th>Median Span of Practice for Artists (Years)</th>
<th>Total No. Activities</th>
<th>Average Activity per CV</th>
<th>Span of Operation of Gallery (Years)</th>
<th>1st Year in Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Galerie Dusseldorf</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1333</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turner Galleries</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goddard de Fiddes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth Galleries</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>677</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerge ART SPACE</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallery East</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jahroc Gallery</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1849</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements Gallery</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenhill Gallery</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gadfly Gallery</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>851</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gomboc Gallery</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallery 360</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallows Gallery</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford Studios</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LK Contemporary</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boranup Gallery</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linton &amp; Kay</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.3.2 Measures and Maps

The mapping of the local field that I have achieved through this study is the cumulative product of two different approaches to analysis and to graphically representing the positions of different gallery cohorts in social space. By developing maps from the data in different ways I have been able compare the findings of different approaches to the same CV data and register the effects of these different analyses in the variance between outcomes. In this way I have achieved a kind of triangulation. The different approaches to mapping the field have also given me different vantage points for making analytical distinctions along a number of different indices. This has enabled me to produce an understanding of the field that measures cohorts’ positions relative to nine different indices and thus reproduces some of the complexity of the local field. As will be seen, I solved the problem of graphically displaying positions relative to so many indices by presenting a final mapping in the form of a network (Bottero &
Crossley, 2011). Prior to presenting the final network mapping, however, I will first present a brief outline of the two modes of mapping used to produce the reduced data used to construct the network.

2.1.3.2.1 Rankings to Mappings

In the first instance I produced a series of simple two dimensional plots based upon hierarchical rankings of the gallery cohorts that I had produced in relation to different aspects of the CV data. To produce the rankings I took six categories of the available data, and developed a numerical indication of the standing of each cohort based upon frequencies relative to each category in the data. Sorting the results of these calculations provided me with a hierarchical listing of the 17 commercial gallery cohorts, and each of these was allocated a rank between i and vi (i < vi).

The six indices I created in this fashion related to the following categories of the CV data:

1. **Education and Qualifications.** For this purpose artists’ qualifications were considered exclusively, and rankings were achieved by considering the proportion of all educational activities, at three different levels, which were drawn from the cohort’s data. The data reduction process employed is detailed in Table A-5 in Appendix A and the details of the achieved ranking can be seen in Table A-6 in Appendix A.

2. **Grants and Funding.** For this purpose rankings were achieved by considering the proportion of all grants and funding activities, at three different levels, which were drawn from the cohort’s data. The data reduction process employed is detailed in Table A-5 in Appendix A and the details of the achieved ranking can be seen in Table A-7 in Appendix A.

3. **Secondary Market.** Rankings were achieved in this case by interpreting the percentage of artists within a cohort who had some listings in the Art Sales Digest data as an indication of the importance of values informing the secondary market within each cohort. The data used to create this ranking is
detailed in Table A-8 in Appendix A and the details of the achieved ranking are
detailed in Table A-9 in Appendix A.

4. **Penetration.** Using the data presented on the geographical distribution of
exhibition activity in Figure 4, Figure 5 and Figure 6, I ranked the cohorts by the
percentage of represented artists’ exhibition activity taking place in key Perth
exhibition venues (Perth Metro A venues). The details of the ranking achieved
are presented in Table A-10 in Appendix A.

5. **Interstate Extension.** Using the data presented in Figure 4, Figure 5 and Figure
6, I ranked the cohorts by the percentage of represented artists’ exhibition
activity taking place in other Australian states. The details of the ranking
achieved are presented in Table A-11 in Appendix A.

6. **International Extension.** Using the data on the geographical distribution of
exhibition activity presented in Figure 4, Figure 5 and Figure 6, I ranked the
cohorts by the percentage of represented artists’ exhibition activity taking
place in outside of Australia. The details of the ranking achieved are presented
in Table A-12 in Appendix A.

On a simple chart, using the six tiers of the rankings as the intervals on the axes, I was
able to plot the position of cohorts relative to any two of these six indices. Figure 9
plots the positions of the 17 commercial gallery cohorts relative to Grants and Funding
activity on the x-axis and to the Secondary Market on the y-axis. This plotting shows
that gallery cohorts representing the highest proportion of artists whose work has
been listed for auction in the secondary market - Linton & Kay (L&K), Stafford Studios
(SS) and Greenhill Galleries (GH) – have been the recipient of grants and funding less
often than cohorts such as Galerie Dusseldorf (GD), Turner Galleries (TG) and Goddard
de Fiddes (GdF). The Galerie Dusseldorf (GD) cohort is strongly positioned in relation to
both grants and funding and the secondary market, which might be explained by the
representation of both senior Western Australian artists and younger contemporary
artists within the cohort.
Using this approach I have produced a total of three maps of the field, each plotting the cohorts in relation to two different indices. A plotting of cohorts in relation to Penetration (Perth Metro A activity) and Interstate Extension (Figure A-1) and a plotting of cohorts in relation to Higher Degree Education activity and International Extension (Figure A-2) are shown in Appendix A. One of the striking things about these charts taken together is the way in which cohorts are similarly positioned in each case. There appears to be a certain consistency about the cohorts that are positively positioned along the x-axes on the right of the charts, and those less strongly positioned, on the left of the charts. This hints at a connection between the penetration of key Perth venues, higher education and the receipt of grants and funding. Also interesting is that the cohorts who dominate in key local venues are mostly not the same cohorts who have ranked well in terms on interstate extension. Instead these cohorts appear to have a stronger relationship to the secondary market. It is perhaps also significant that the highest levels of interstate extension are associated with the cohorts in which indigenous artists from remote communities are represented; namely, Gadfly Gallery (GF) and Linton & Kay (L&K).
Figure 10: Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts plotted by rank against measures of secondary market and grants/funding activities, including an indication of educational values

In Figure 10 educational values are overlaid on the plotting shown at Figure 9. In Figure 10 I have indicated cohorts strongly ranked by formal art qualifications (ie ranked iv – vi) by grouping them within an orange rectangle. Cohorts ranked lower in relation to education and qualifications (ie ranked i-iii) have been group within a blue rectangle. Here it can be observed that higher levels of grants and funding activity coincide quite directly with higher rankings in relation to education, whilst lower levels of education do not preclude artists from having a strong presence in the secondary markets.

I will shortly return to the means by which I brought together all six indices in working towards an overall mapping of the field, but I will now turn to the second means by which I mapped the field.

2.1.3.2.2 Mapping by CV Profile

The rankings that form the basis of some of the above plottings are limited by the fact that analyses based on the share of the total CV activity data may be shaped in significant ways by the quantity of data available for each cohort (see Table 11). Thus it
is plausible that a cohort comprising a large number of artists, each of whom has a comparatively substantial CV (such as Galerie Dusseldorf) may consistently have a higher share of the total data in different categories than cohorts comprising small numbers of artists with less detailed CVs, (such as LK Contemporary). For this reason I also sought to pursue an alternative means of mapping the relative positions of cohorts in the field, basing my analysis on a different approach to the CV data.

The alternative means of mapping was based upon the development of an at-a-glance summary of CV data. I considered this summary to be a simple profile which could operate like a unique, visually accessible fingerprint or profile displaying the data for a single CV, or the median data for a large or small group of CVs. Figure 11 shows the visual form of the created profile, in this case displaying median results from the complete CV data set, thus offering a picture of a typical Western Australian artist’s CV and the kinds of activities at different levels that it includes.

Details of the data reduction process involved in condensing the nuanced initial coding of the data to just three levels can be seen in Table A-4 and Table A-5 in the Appendices.

Table 12, however, provides a brief summation of the kinds of activities associated with each level in each category in the profile.
Table 12: Correspondance between profile levels and CV activities in four categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Abbrev.</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exhibitions</td>
<td>EXH</td>
<td>Group Exhibition or Exhibition of Unspecified Value</td>
<td>Group Exhibition by Invitation or Shared Exhibition</td>
<td>Solo Exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awards</td>
<td>AWA</td>
<td>Unspecified Award, Selected/Nominated/Finalist</td>
<td>Commendation, Other Prize</td>
<td>Category Prize, Prize Winner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants/Funding</td>
<td>GRA</td>
<td>Residency, Scholarship, Fellowship or funding from other source</td>
<td>State Government Funded Arts Grant</td>
<td>Federal Government Funded Arts Grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>EDU</td>
<td>Other Educational activity up to Diploma/Advanced Diploma</td>
<td>Degree Level Education including Honours and Grad Dip.</td>
<td>Masters and PhD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the course of my analysis I created a profile of this kind for each of the 17 commercial gallery cohorts, using median frequencies from the cohorts’ aggregated data. To use these 17 profiles to map the field I arranged them in a Microsoft Excel worksheet grouping them together according to their similarities and differences. I then separated and grouped the profiles according to the different attributes being compared, using coloured lines to bisect the field (Figure A- 3- in Appendix A). In this way I was able to suggest how the field might be divided up on the basis of four different attributes; span of practice, education/qualifications, grants/funding and international activity. I was also able to show on this mapping of the field which cohorts were distinctive on the basis of representing indigenous artists from remote communities, and also cohorts represented by commercial galleries in regional locations.

In order to make the relationships revealed by this analytical approach clearer I have re-presented these findings as a venn diagram. In Figure 12 the strong position of Galerie Dusseldorf (GD) in the field can be observed in the centrality of this cohort within the diagram. Galerie Dusseldorf cohort has positive relationships to four of six indices considered in this analysis: span of practice (SPAN++), grants and funding (GRANTS+), international extension and education and qualifications (EDUCATION ++).
The Turner Galleries (TG) cohort is the only other cohort with positive relationships to four out of six indices though in this case the cohort has fewer very senior artists (SPAN++) and represented artists have received more grants and funding (GRANTS++).

Taking the core of this diagram, where Galerie Dusseldorf and Turner Galleries are positioned, as the centre of a particular set of values operating within the field, one might observe the positions of other cohorts in the diagram as degrees of eccentricity in relation to these values. Whilst Perth Galleries (PG), Greenhill Galleries (GH) and Goddard de Fiddes (GdF) cohorts have positive connections with three out of four values in common with the core, cohorts like Stafford Studios (SS) share only two and Gadfly Gallery (GF) shares only one. Cohorts such as Boranup Gallery (BO) and Linton & Kay (L&K) can be observed in this diagram to operate in completely different realms to Galerie Dusseldorf. In this way we may suggest cohorts’ positions/orientations towards the values considered in this analysis and relative to those with which Galerie Dusseldorf has strong connections.
2.1.3.2.3 Collating and Consolidating

In order to bring together the findings of these two approaches to mapping the field I have employed what Howard S. Becker calls a truth table (Becker, 1998, pp. 166-171). In truth, my truth tables register stronger (+) and weaker (-) relationships, rather than actual true/false relationships, but in the interests of simplicity I have effectively treated these relationships as if they were simple binary oppositions. In this process I converted the findings of both forms of mapping into two independent truth tables. For the plots achieved through ranking cohorts in relation to six indices (Figure 9, Figure A- 1 and Figure A- 2), for each chart I divided the total grid into just four quadrants and assigned weaker (-) or stronger (+) values on the basis of each cohort’s position relative to each value (axes). Figure A- 4 in Appendix A graphically shows the correspondence between the plotted positions of cohorts and the allocated truth table values. The resulting truth table can also be seen in Appendix A, Table A- 13. For the map produced by means of the CV profiles I simply allocated positive (+) or negative (-) values as appropriate to cohorts on either side of the divisions used to separate values in the field in Figure A- 3 in Appendix A. The truth table resulting from this process can be seen in Appendix A, Table A- 14.

As three indices of six were common to each truth table, there was an opportunity to compare the findings and observe any variance between the two analytical approaches to producing the maps. This comparison is presented in some detail in Table A- 15 and the accompanying discussion, A.2 in Appendix A. In sum, however, I found that seven of the eight variances might be considered borderline cases in the two analyses, but were essentially mapped into similar positions. 84% of the results across the shared indices were in complete agreement, and including the seven borderline instances the figure is 98%.

Combining the two truth tables produces one truth table (Table 13) in which the cohorts’ relationship to nine different indices is indicated. I have assigned the seven borderline cases a neutral value of 0, to reflect their situation and in the case of the remaining greater variance (see Table A- 15 and discussion A.2 in Appendix A). I used the evaluation from the CV profile mapping, based on median data across the cohort.
Table 13: Cohorts’ strong (+), weak (-) and neutral (0) positions relative to nine indices drawn from two mappings of the field

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Span of Practice</th>
<th>Secondary Market (Extension 1)</th>
<th>Interstate Activity (Extension 1)</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Grants and Funding</th>
<th>Perth Metro A Venues (Penetration)</th>
<th>International Activity (Extension 2)</th>
<th>Indigenous Artists (from remote communities)</th>
<th>Regional Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boranup Gallery</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jahroc Gallery</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallery 360</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gomboc Gallery</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenhill Gallery</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford Studios</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallows Gallery</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gadfly Gallery</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linton &amp; Kay</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LK Contemporary</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements Gallery</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerge ARTSPACE</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallery East</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth Galleries</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galerie Dusseldorf</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turner Galleries</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goddard de Fiddes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking at Table 13 there are strong correlations between the various indices, positive values in relation to grants and funding, for instance, coincide with higher educational levels. Positive values in relation to the secondary market correspond directly to cohorts containing more senior artists, or more indigenous artists from remote communities. Positive values in relation to access to Perth Metro A Venues coincide with either higher education and/or with seniority. There is a correlation between positive presence in the secondary market and interstate exposure and in the main these are not the cohorts who dominate in the Perth Metro A venues, though there are exceptions. Furthermore the comparatively weaker positions of cohorts including more emerging artists (Span of Practice -) and cohorts represented by regional commercial galleries can be clearly seen in both in terms of the secondary market and in terms of grants and access the Perth Metro A Venues.

These findings also suggest other things to look at. For instance, Elements Gallery and LK Contemporary Gallery cohorts appear to have had more limited access to Perth
Metro A Venues than other comparably well-educated cohorts. One possible explanation is that the connection between Perth Metro A Venues and Education may have at least as much to do with particular institutional connections as with the level of qualification obtained.

2.1.3.3 Network Map

As it was my goal to produce a map of the field in a graphic form I looked for a means to display complex interrelationships across the nine indices developed through the previous mappings and detailed in Table 13. My solution was to display these relationships as a network, using an open source network analysis program, Cytoscape (Cytoscape, n.d.). To do this I converted the data in Table 13 for input into Cytoscape. The gallery cohorts and the various indices were considered interacting nodes, and the values contained in the table offer the basis for describing the relationships and connections between the nodes. I have transposed the values from Table 13 as follows in Table 14:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Truth Table Value</th>
<th>Network Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>no connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>weak connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>positive connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>++</td>
<td>strong connection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the sake of simplicity in illustrating the field as a network, I have designated comparatively weaker relationships (-) as “no connection.” As the emphasis in this network is to show the relative position of cohorts along the different indices examined, it is useful analytically to eliminate the weakest relationships and to focus on more positive connections. After producing an initial visualisation of the network, I then transformed it into a “force-directed layout”, in which the position of the nodes relative to each other is determined on the basis of the number of connections and relationships each node has within the network. Figure 13 shows the network thus produced. Though I have moved some nodes manually in order to make some relationships easier to see, I have not significantly altered their positions relative to other nodes as distributed by the software.
The nodes have been positioned by the software on the basis of a statistical algorithm, in two roughly parallel bands above and below six values shared by cohorts in both bands (span of practice, Perth Metro A venues, international activity, secondary market, interstate activity, indigenous artists from remote communities). The distinguishing feature of cohorts in the bottom half of the diagram is their exclusive association with two values (education and grants). Whilst it is possible to identify two clusters of positive values around different indices in Table 16, the network display makes the duality of the local field around these nine indices quite clear.

Of eight connections with the MET-A (Perth Metro A venues) node, six of them are with cohorts with connections to education and grants in the bottom half of the diagram. Following on from the suggestion in 2.1.2.4.2 that Greenhill Galleries and Gomboc Gallery cohorts may be the educational/institutional elites of an earlier generation, it is significant that the two remaining connections to the MET-A (Perth Metro A venues) node are with these two cohorts. In this way, the exceptions may prove the rule that formal art education and access to key WA art institutions are interlinked. The positions of both LK Contemporary (LK) and Elements Gallery (EL) cohorts are also significant, given their connection to the EDU (education) node and their lack of connection with the MET-A (Perth metro A venues) node. These two cohorts are distinguished from the other highly educated cohorts by having few senior artists (no connections with the SPN node) and a lower proportion of Curtin graduates, as reported in 2.1.2.4.2 and shown in Table A-1 in Appendix A. The eccentric positions of these cohorts may confirm the importance of specific institutional connections between art schools and the local field.
Figure 13: Force-directed display produced by Cytoscape software of network of 17 Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts and nine values deployed as indices in this study.

**Key:**
- BO = Boranup Gallery
- EL = Elements Gallery
- EM = Emerge ARTSPACE
- GD = Galerie Dusseldorf
- GdF = Goddard de Fiddes
- GE = Gallery East
- GF = Gadfly Gallery
- GH = Greenhill Gallery
- GL = Gallows Gallery
- GM = Gomboc Gallery
- G360 = Gallery 360
- JR = Jarhroc Gallery
- L&K = Linton & Kay Contemporary
- PG = Perth Galleries
- SS = Stafford Studios
- TG = Turner Galleries
- EDU = Formal Art Education
- GRA = Grants and Funding
- INDIG = Representation of Indigenous artists from remote communities
- INTNL = International Activity (extension)
- INTST = Interstate Activity (extension)
- MET-A = Activity in Perth Metro A Venues (penetration)
- SPN = Span of Practice (senior artists)
- REGNL = Regional Location
- 2MKT = Secondary Art Market

**Red Circular Nodes =** Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts

**Blue Square Nodes =** Values drawn from CV data used as indices in this study
The fact that relationships between other nodes and values in the network seem to have more exceptional cases to be considered is itself an interesting finding. An explanation for this might be that CVs are particularly important for mainstream artists: those artists who rely on competitive funding to produce their work and who are focused in building careers through activity at prestigious venues. As a consequence of the function of CVs for these artists, and the similar kinds of contexts in which they are instrumental, there may be more homogeneity across the CVs of mainstream artists than other artists. It also suggests that artists working in other ways, eg. prolific and commercial artists, though they may not have access to prestigious institutions and funded opportunity, may have more freedom with respect to the range of activities in which they are involved and the places in which they can be active.

2.1.4 Conclusion: Art Worlds and Fields of Cultural Production

On the basis of the maps produced from my analysis of the CV data there are a few conclusions to be drawn, and also a few questions that are begged by these findings. Firstly in connection with Bourdieu’s model of the field of cultural production, in relation to nine different indices there is a certain consistency about the relative positions of 17 commercial gallery cohorts. It is possible that this is a product of the particular kinds of data to be found on CVs, in the sense that all the various information on a CV is intended to tell a particular story, so the variety of measures may be seen to collude with each other rather than offering differing perspectives. On the other hand, even if this were the case it would seem to be a kind of empirical vindication of Bourdieu’s thesis in which homologies in the field and between fields mean that artists can tell a particular story with exhibition venues, with qualifications and associations with institutions, with art prizes, with the receipt of grant money and so on. This CV analysis is predicated on the way in which all of these symbolic markers in the field can effectively act as a form of social accounting and position individuals and their products in relation to markets, places of publication, audiences and so on.

Furthermore, whilst I do not believe that I have produced the means by which to decisively establish causal relationships from the empirical data it is interesting that
the least ambiguous correlations emerging from my analysis are between values that correspond with Bourdieu’s conceptions of cultural capital; including span of practice (or seniority), educational values and perhaps also indigeneity. The data seems to suggest that access to the more significant Perth Metro A venues is associated with artists’ comparative seniority, and also with higher levels of art education. Similarly, the secondary market seems to favour artists who possess seniority, or indigenous artists from remote communities. There is also a strong correlation between higher levels of education and the receipt of arts grants. One of the questions arising from these findings, however, is whether the key to understanding the connection between education and these other values lies in the qualification obtained, or in the association with particular educational institutions.

In relation to some of the research questions that motivated this study one of the key findings of this mapping exercise is to suggest the kinds of institutional affiliations that may exist within the field. These findings have revealed that grants, education and key Western Australian exhibition venues (including all of the most important government funded art institutions/museums in Perth) appear to closely interconnected in the network presented in Figure 13. It is perhaps not surprising that government funded institutions and government arts funding bodies should support activity according to similar criteria, and thus support only a comparatively small sector of the field. However, this subsidised sector in Western Australian visual art appears to be strongly aligned with university art education in general and with Curtin in particular. It may be possible to see this situation as a product of the peer-review process that is an integral part of much institutional allocation of funding and opportunities. The network in Figure 13 may then, among other things, indicate those cohorts of artists who are considered peers, and those who are not. Perhaps there are some echoes here of McCall’s (1977) study of St Louis art worlds in which university faculties play significant roles in the legitimation of art in the absence of a market.

To return to the debate about “fields” (Bourdieu) or “worlds” (Becker) I think that the empirical data suggests on the one hand that there are many more dimensions to the local “field” than are admitted in Bourdieu’s maps of the French field. Whilst I have sought to create a general understanding of the field, it is clearly the case that not all
artists, cohorts or venues can be decisively positioned in relation to any underlying and predetermining structure, and exceptions exist even where the connections seem strongest. On the other hand, I think that there is ample evidence that some key actors, entities and institutions in the local field do in fact serve as spatial markers for social values in much the same way that Bourdieu suggests. Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (PICA), for instance, is clearly associated with cohorts of highly educated artists (many of them Curtin graduates) whose CVs model the kind of markers of institutional excellence promoted by government arts funding bodies. The annual Hale School Art exhibition on the other hand is unlikely to appear in the data included on the CV of a career building artist, but may possibly be a significant event for a more commercially minded artist pursuing the sale of artworks to local audiences.

In Figure 14 I have displayed the relationships uncovered in these findings in the form of a flow chart, rather than Bourdieu’s more static representation of the field. The connections and relationships in this flow chart suggest the pathways by which Western Australian artists are able to access certain values in the local field. The pathways delineated here are perhaps only the most apparent from the vantage point of my analysis, and I am not suggesting that it is impossible to traverse the social space along a path not marked here. However, in line with Bourdieu’s notion of taking one’s bearings and achieving social orientation in the field, I believe that this representation is indicative of the conventional understanding that social actors may have of the comparatively objective field, knowing which actions lead to which others, understanding the overall direction in which particular actions are taking them and so on.

The node “Local Art Sales” is not directly accessible via analysis of the CV data. Because CVs were collected from the websites of commercial galleries, it is reasonable to assume that local art sales are of some relevance to every artist represented in this CV study. I have inferred about the relationships between local art sales and the other nodes in the diagram on the basis of my overall analysis (including the interview data) and my own understanding of the field.
Figure 14: Representation of the flow of values within the Western Australian field of cultural production for visual artists

Blue Arrows: access to commercial success
Red Arrows: access to institutional excellence
Green Arrows: access achieved by indigenous artists from remote communities
Black Arrows: access afforded by seniority
The flow chart indicates three points of access to the field, one through formal art education, another via cultural traditions in the case of Indigenous Artists, and a third open point of access (representing self-taught artists, or artists who may have come to art via a variety of other means). All three of these points of access can clearly enable artists to gain commercial representation and to sell their work in local metropolitan or regional art markets. From art education artists may proceed either towards commercial success, via local art sales, or towards institutional excellence either by attending a key institution, such as Curtin, and/or by pursuing higher qualifications (Honours and above). For artists pursuing local art sales, subsequent opportunity hinges on commercial success – ie on being able to sell work in the art market, which may then lead to opportunity to sell work in other markets, interstate international and secondary. For artists pursuing institutional excellence there are shorter and longer routes via which to climb towards this goal. For instance, studying at Curtin may be an indicator of excellence in itself, and also provide access to exhibitions in some key Perth Metro A venues, which in turn is another indicator of excellence. Towards the centre of the diagram is a node labelled seniority. As this value is not produced by art sales, or education, but rather the longevity of a practice, I have situated seniority independent of particular pre-requisite relationships. Seniority seems to be a value in the field that may facilitate the sale of art work in the secondary market and also access to key Perth Metro A Venues, and may be a measure of institutional excellence in itself, as per Bourdies’ concept of consecration.
2.2 Contexts and Situations

Exhibit- 15: Penny Bovell, *Trace*, 2011, acrylic on canvas, 120cm x 120cm. Collection of Department of Sports and Recreation. Photographed by Bo Wong

In this section of the thesis I will present material drawn from the interview data intended to provide a sense of the local contexts and situations from which and in which the labour of visual art is undertaken in Western Australia. In other, similar studies it is common to provide an overview of the historical contexts surrounding art worlds and individual art practices in particular places. For studies centred on places like Paris and New York there may be a wealth of ready to hand, published scholarship on which to draw in compiling this contextual material. In Western Australia, by
contrast, local art history has largely been a DIY project, undertaken by self-motivated individuals in a piecemeal fashion, often with little support and limited interest beyond the local art community.

Whilst a whole range of important material does exist (see the discussion in 1.1.2.1), locating it and synthesising it for the purpose of contextualising the material presented in this study would be a task equal in scale to the collection of empirical data that has been the focus of this research and deserves a PhD thesis of its own. It is for this reason that I have opted instead to draw on the experiences of the artists that I have interviewed as a means of contextualising and situating the labour of visual art in Western Australia that is the core concern of this project. This contextual and situational interview data is intended to complement and enable comparisons with the picture of the local field of visual art that has been developed in this research project via the study of professional artists’ CVs.

A second advantage of drawing on the collected data to contextualise the findings from the same is that it provides this project with some access to participants’ own definitions of the situations in which they have themselves been active. As Znaniecki writes: ‘where a psychologist, a moralist, an educator, a statesman sees a “total situation” of inextricable complexity, to the agent it may be very simple [...] to the sociologist, it is the agent’s view that matters, for it is his task to study the agent’s action as an empirical datum’ (Znaniecki, 1967 [1936], p. 43). These artists’ accounts of their contexts and situations have resulted in two sections presented in this thesis. The first, Western Australia, Artists’ Impressions presents data from the interviews in which artists relate their experiences of Western Australian art worlds, from the late 1950s to the near-present. This material highlights some of the issues and complexities peculiar to the Western Australian contexts in which these artists have been working. This contextual understanding is then augmented in 2.2.2, Artists’ Juvenilia and Points of Origin which deals with the emergence of participants as artists from their different family backgrounds and biographical circumstances.
2.2.1 Western Australia, Artists’ Impressions

Whilst the focus of this material is to contextualise the ways in which artists define their contemporary situations, the artists’ impressions that I begin with here are perceptions that artists have about various, past *Golden Ages in Western Australian Visual Art*. This material provides a sense of longitudinal development in the local field, and also helps develop a picture of what some artists perceive as being comparatively ideal conditions for professional visual art practice. Following this retrospective survey of some values in the field, *Pathways You’re Supposed to Take* turns to the role and nature of art school education in Western Australia from the 1960s to the present. This material provides a brief sketch of some key institutions which have exerted significant influences on artists and the field in Western Australia. *A Small Business and a Fragile One* discusses the local art market for visual art in Western Australia and the various actors that operate within it, commercial galleries, auction houses, art collectors, art museums etc, this material is the subject of the third impression. The impression presented in *On Isolation Home and Homelessness* discusses the physical and cultural isolation of Perth and Western Australia more generally. This material expands on impressions of local art worlds developed other parts of this section by engaging with artists’ experiences and perceptions of relationships and connections within regional, national and international contexts. Finally I conclude this contextual material by observing in relation to all of these situations, both challenging and advantageous, Western Australian visual artists are *Doing it Anyway*.

2.2.1.1 *Golden Ages in Western Australian Visual Art*

Tom Gibbons states: ‘I’m fairly certain that in its apparently small way, it was a livelier kind of scene’ [TG,2:4]. ‘Skinner Galleries was a very lively centre, they used to put on plays […] they did a lot […] during the 60s’ [TG,1:5]. There were also ‘interesting people around,’ in particular, ‘various expatriate Europeans,’ [TG,2:4], artists, such as Elise Blumann and collectors and enthusiasts such as Dr Salek Minc. There was also, ‘a kind of enthusiasm and a willingness to buy paintings, which I think has disappeared, […] people used to buy paintings because they loved them’ [TG,1:5]. In addition, there were a variety of newspapers and even some local art/literary journals [*The Critic* and
The Westerly] publishing visual arts content and criticism. Whereas, ‘The West Australian [Newspaper] now has a monopoly and, as far as I know, they don’t currently have an art critic’ [TG,2:4]. Another distinguishing feature of the period for Tom Gibbons was that, ‘it was all fairly ad hoc, non-professional in its own way, non-competitive’ [TG,2:15]. The product of this liveliness was for Tom Gibbons, ‘a general feeling of optimism and a sense of direction, I think that was valuable’ [TG,2:5].

Other artists have noted similar later periods of vibrancy in WA visual art. ‘Good painting, good object making, good performance work, any way you wanted to cut it - they were making films in this part of the country [...] maybe about ‘84 to ‘95 I think, a bit of a golden age’ [SE,2:9]. Some of the same features that Tom Gibbons identified of the previous golden age are also significant in younger artists’ accounts of later eras. ‘There was more happening and there was some really exciting stuff going around and you had people writing about art then, I just don’t think there’s as many people writing now’ [KD,1:3]. However, within recollections of the late 1980s and early ‘90s there are other significant elements that artists have identified as contributing to the optimism and enthusiasm of the time. The Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA), for instance, once had ‘real contact with local artists,’ which ‘made you, as an artist, feel a sense of importance that they actually recognised and acknowledged you. There was once a sense from them that, “we like what you do and we love having you here”’ [NH,2:10]. This real contact was established through opportunities, such as the BP Art Prize, which, for artists who entered, meant ‘you could have your work actually hanging in the State Gallery, [...] sadly that happens no more’ [NH,2:10], and also through stimulating programs of exhibitions, talks and even lunches for artists. Another element featuring in recollections of this period is the role played by the various art schools in not only producing a diverse range of practitioners but also because ‘Perth doesn’t really have a big audience, so it’s really important that we have different universities (art schools),’ to provide ‘people [who] are going to go out there and be interested in cultural things’ [PB,2:4]. Also mentioned was the significance of ‘that sense of community; though openings are terrifying, they’re quite, quite necessary [...] and Perth was great like that, people used to go. [...] We had our three unis and our various TAFEs and people would go, not just for the free food, terrible wine’ [KD,1:20].
Other features of previous times that actively contributed to a general feeling of optimism include various aspects of the financial climate in WA. ‘It was so cheap, and the shed I had in Bayswater, it would cost a fortune in Sydney in that area, or Melbourne, you couldn’t have done it’ [KD,1:6]. ‘Here, you could always do things, you could make things happen, it just seemed easier’ [PB,2:12]. In the mid 1990s Oron Catts was able to capitalise on a ‘frontier mentality’ that Perth had at the time, with ‘much more openness and willing[ness] to explore things, both to do with the science and the arts’ [OC,2:5]. He suggests that new and experimental artistic enterprises such as SymbioticA, ‘couldn’t [have] happen[ed] almost anywhere else in the world’ [OC,2:5]. But this too has passed and ‘in the atmosphere that we have now, something like my own practice, or SymbioticA, could never be established’ [OC,1:10], as ‘more utilitarian and economically driven approaches are starting to really take over the funding decisions’ [OC,1:10].

What I think is interesting about these brief accounts of golden ages in WA visual art, is that they offer a glimpse of what artists perceive at different times to have contributed to a positive and conducive environment in which to practice. One can observe, for instance, that the noted absence of current local art criticism and publications presenting visual arts content, may be considered to be a significant loss for the vitality of the Western Australian art scene. It is also significant to note an arguably negative impact on a local sense of community and collective endeavour arising from increased professionalisation and competition in the visual arts. Tom Gibbons suggests that perhaps this has partly been encouraged by government arts funding models, ‘for all the work that they’ve done, […] they’ve become a sort of class system in the arts’ [TG,2:22]. But Penny Bovell has also suggested that geographical isolation and the ‘smallness of this city’ [PB,2:3] have contributed to various forms of ‘gate keeping […]through criticism, through peers, through next generations etc, there’s a sanctioning, this person can come up, this person can’t’ [PB,1:14]. This also encouraged competition between art schools, rather than accommodating their institutional differences and distinctive graduates as complementary contributions that may have collectively ‘serviced Perth well’ [PB,2:3].
It is also interesting to observe the other things here that artists have noted as contributing to their general feeling of optimism and sense of direction. These included the programming and collection policies of the state gallery and a feeling of liveliness generated by more happening within the state. In this respect it is interesting to consider the impact of the financial plight of commercial galleries, whose opening events once used to draw together the community, and the perhaps undervalued significance of catering; ‘I can remember the 70s on a Friday night, there was no need to cook dinner [...] you’d just go to two or three galleries on Stirling Highway, between Perth and Fremantle and you’d be fed’ [CB,2:1]. No fewer than five long-established and successful Western Australian commercial galleries have announced their impending closure (Buck, 2012; Diciero, 2010; Eakins, 2012a; The West Australian, 2012) since I began this research project. Stuart Elliott draws from the collection policies of the State Gallery and the general content of *The West Australian*, among other sources, evidence that ‘there is no sense of us [in WA] having any kind of intrinsic worth’ [SE,2:8]. The pull of outward looking opportunities that align with funding agendas and international models of excellence might be seen as active deterrents for local community engagement and activity, impacting on the kinds of vitality that artists have discussed in their perceptions about previous golden ages in WA Art.

Whilst recollections of the past serve a useful purpose in assessing the present, the golden ages discussed above were not experienced by all of the artists I interviewed. Indeed some of the younger artists have never experienced ‘State Galleries that are actually interested in what we are doing’ [PB,2:13], or times when it was significantly cheaper to rent a studio in Perth than in Sydney or Melbourne, or even periods when artists felt Perth to have a ‘pumping art scene’ [RB,2:14]. So there is a need also to capture a sense of different aspects of artists’ perceptions of the Western Australian context and situation leading up to the present.

**2.2.1.2 Pathways You’re Supposed to Take**

Various Western Australian art schools have played key roles in shaping the visual arts scene in WA. Only three artists in my interview sample did not attend one or more of
the Western Australian tertiary educational institutions teaching art in the past 50 years. Several participants have been students at more than one WA Art School and a number have also taught at one or more of these institutions. In the past 50 years the nature and level of qualifications in the visual arts have changed significantly. At the time of Tom Gibbons’ involvement with the Perth Group beginning in the late 1950s, university qualifications in creative art practice were not the norm, and he was a rare case, having a degree (in English Literature). From the 1960s to the early 1980s, tertiary art education was obtained in Technical Colleges (Perth Technical College [Perth Tech], Claremont School of Art, Western Australian Institute of Technology [WAIT]) and the highest qualification held by most artists was a Diploma or Advanced Diploma. In 1987 WAIT become Curtin University of Technology (Curtin), and a Bachelor’s degree became a more common qualification amongst artists. From the 1990s onwards, with three WA universities (Curtin, the University of Western Australian [UWA] and Edith Cowan University [ECU]) offering visual arts courses, artists withHonours, Masters and even PhD qualifications have been become more prevalent (See also Appendix C.4). As a consequence of these developments, many young and emerging artists are more highly qualified than many older and very well established artists in Western Australia.

During different periods, art school education in different institutions had different emphases. At Perth Tech in the 1960s, for instance, courses were geared towards obtaining practical skills in commercial art. ‘They didn’t explain enough about their techniques, like those beautiful wet on wet techniques that Ivor Hunt used, he never showed us how to do that. He would make us do water colours of […] a glass like that, so you could go and work in an advertising agency’ [CB,2:9]. ‘We had life class every day, in second and third year and I was just bored witless’ [CB,2:8]. ‘Perth Tech was very much fundamentally practically based’ [PD,2:6], subsequently Claremont School of Art in the 1970s maintained a similar emphasis: ‘Art school in those days was very much about the practice of art, how to paint, how to draw and that was it. But it was a tremendous experience’ [NH,2:5]. On the other hand, later at Curtin, artists noted that there was ‘a bit more needed critically, a bit more rigour required’ [KD,1:2]. ‘Curtin made you think more laterally and […] helped you develop skills with pre-drawing and
drawing ideas, which I always found very hard. [...] But at the same time I think I gained a lot, theory knowledge’ [PD,2:6].

Second year at Curtin I found very, very tough, [...] there was a lot of people telling you what was wrong with what you were doing but not suggesting where you might go and I actually found that incredibly frustrating. [...] I’d spend a lot of time just thinking, which is, gee, what a surprise for a university?! [SE,1:18]

At different times, different art schools were perceived to be pre-eminent in Western Australia. In the early 1960s, Perth Tech was the only option, as WAIT [later Curtin] ‘was just a plan on a drawing board’ [CB,2:9]. In the 1970s, ‘Claremont Art School, [...] at the time was a vibrant place, the three major lecturers had a lot of kudos, they were tremendous’ [NH,2:5]. In subsequent decades Curtin ‘has tended to sit on top of everything else’ [PB,2:3]. ‘I talked to people who’d done degrees at the various places, and it just seemed like Curtin was it, for art, or for painting at least’ [AS,1:18]. Even artists who did not pursue studies at Curtin have experienced, ‘this sense that I should do it, that is the pathway that you’re supposed to take’ [PH,1:19]. ‘I think people [at Curtin] thought that I was probably a quite interesting painter - self-taught painter – [and] given their direction, may have become a seriously interesting painter’ [LM,2:8]. Artists studying at other institutions have found that this institutional dominance extends beyond the educational environment.

I think there’s very much institutional areas in Perth that are covered and that’s normal. I think you give opportunities to people you know and because you’ve got a history of their character. But I found it really tricky, coming from ECU, because I don’t think we have as many of our alumni stepping into the local/national gallery or arts administration roles. [CY,2:10]

Another striking thing about artists’ accounts of their experiences as students and teachers at art school are the different characteristics of the educational environment. In particular it is interesting to note that for the majority of participants in this study art school education in WA seems to have been delivered in two influential modes. At Claremont School of Art, for instance, artists have observed that there were minimal expectations and requirements that ‘left a lot up to the individual’ [PH,1:18], and ‘almost fostered you working to your own [...] timetables and premises’ [SE,1:18]. Artists that succeeded in this environment were those that ‘got on with it and stuff
without being told to’ [PH,1:18]. Penny Bovell has made similar observations about the later course at UWA; ‘it really fostered a high level of independence and you had to be the type of student that could just get on and do it anyway. So I think it actually had some really interesting students there’ [PB,2:5].

On the other hand, accounts of the educational environment at Perth Tech and at WAIT/Curtin have stressed an almost adversarial approach to art teaching in which the students were frequently subjected to confrontational criticism.

In our summer holidays we had to make 130 bowls out of two pounds of clay. [...] I proudly picked out the best ones, [...] and I took them in [to Perth Tech] and I had a really sharp foot angle and he just picked one up and got the hammer and smashed it in front of me and said, ‘You can’t have that sharp thing, you’re going to have to go home and do them all again!’ He was a bastard, but the thing was, he really did make you work hard at the wheel. [PD,2:6]

Susanna Castleden recalls being ‘told that it was shit, when it was shit’ [SC,2:11], when they were students at Curtin, ‘but I think that was a great learning environment as well. There wasn’t an assessment, I don’t think, that I didn’t cry at the end of because I felt like I’d had shreds torn off me’ [SC,2:12]. Erin Coates talks about the ‘affronting form of questioning [at Curtin] that was really quite refreshing and at times shocking’ [EC,1:3]. And it was the studio critiques that Rebecca Baumann found to be an experience that initially put her off professional art practice; ‘I felt like I really didn’t have the stomach for it. I used to actually get very nervous and used to feel quite sick, like I was going to vomit before I put anything up’ [RB,1:4]. It strikes me that such learning environments functioned to temper students’ resilience and self-reliance and equip them with the critical capacities to assert themselves as their own harshest critics in the world beyond art school. On the other hand, Penny Bovell observes that ‘the number of people that were annihilated through inappropriate criticism was not a good thing to watch and not a good thing to feel that you were part of, and often, [...] that level of criticism was generated by competition between staff members’ [PB,2:5]. It has been noted, however, that the situation has changed somewhat at the present time, ‘we would never say [it was shit] to a student now, never’ [SC,2:11]. Whilst the quality of teaching and valuable criticism has in no way diminished at Curtin, as at many universities there are now fewer permanent staff and reduced teaching hours.
‘There was also a barrage of staff, we had three staff in [the department], and now it’s me, I’m one staff. [...] But we always had people around to critique you, to challenge you, to question you’ [SC,2:11-12].

Looking at these two modes of delivering art education in WA, it seems that the sort of student who thrived in either of them possessed significant personal reserves and a high degree of self-motivation; on the one hand to make their own way in the absence of clear direction, and on the other to push ahead in the face of critical resistance. Both of these capacities would seem to be vital for visual artists operating as professionals outside of the academy.

2.2.1.3 A Small Business and a Fragile One

The art market in Western Australia by all accounts is a limited one. In fact, Michael Iwanoff goes so far as to suggest that, from his perspective, in WA ‘I don’t have to worry about letting my work be influenced by an art market, because there really isn’t one as such’ [MI,1:14]. Even gaining access to the market is difficult given that commercial galleries in WA are ‘getting fewer and fewer, [...] the people running them are getting older and [have] had enough or it’s just not viable. In fact I can’t believe any commercial gallery is viable’ [KD,1:40]. As indicated in discussion A.1 in Appendix A, many Western Australian artists have little or no secondary market to speak of. ‘If my work was to sell at an [Art Auctioneers], it could go for a minimal sum. There’s no secondary market, I don’t have a secondary market, and the auctioneers wouldn’t be interested in researching my CV or the value of my work’ [PB,1:2]. For some artists, selling work from regional centres that are Western Australian tourist destinations is one way of expanding on the limited market in Perth. ‘People from all over the world go to Margaret River, and to Broome, and right from tourists to serious collectors, [...] [in] small communities, the art is there along with all the wine and other lifestyle things.’ [LM,2:6]. ‘I enjoy having an outlet for my work in the Margaret River area because it is such a tourist mecca and my work is exposed to a wide audience from all around the world. Much more so than in an art gallery in Perth’ [NH,2:17]. For artists dependent on the sale of their creative work, a presence in national and international markets can become an imperative.
I have completely moved away from the Perth market, I didn’t rely on the Perth market at all for a long time, because a lot of [my local collectors] were getting older like me and I hadn’t really got[ten] into that younger generation, in that mid 30s-40 [age] bracket where [...] the disposable income was. [PD,2:1-2]

Artists have described the difficulties of operating in the local market, particularly in mid-career, ‘as you drop all of those other types of activities in order to do your artwork, you rely more and more on sales [...] it’s precarious’ [PB,2:7]. ‘People are interested when you are young and emerging, because you’re doing something, which maybe they haven’t seen before. But to sustain your career over a long time, maybe that’s more difficult’ [RB,2:4-5]. In addition to waning interest, mid-career artists in WA also need to contend with a saturated market, ‘the institutions stop buying because they’ve maybe bought one piece of work’ [PB,2:7]. And ‘eventually those people on [the gallery’s] invitation list, they still love art, but all the walls are full and it really is the case, they don’t buy any more art’ [NH,2:17-18].

In addition to these problems, artists in Perth often feel that the commercial galleries representing them are not working hard enough to connect with new audiences and collectors. ‘A gallery is as good as the amount of effort that they put into promoting the artist’s work’ [NH,2:17]. ‘Given that it was mostly my friends that bought work anyway, I think why am I paying the gallery [...] 40% or whatever, [...] when my friends are going to support me no matter where I am?’ [source withheld]. Furthermore the existing commercial galleries in Perth simply ‘can’t deal with the number of artists’ [PB,2:9]. ‘There’s a lot of artists, with just a few galleries, so you’re going to get such a tiny little share of their time. And if they’re doing an amazing job, then a tiny share of amazing is a good thing, but I don’t think many are’ [PH,1:15]. For an art jeweller, like Barbara Cotter, it is difficult in WA to even find a gallery ‘that’s actually interested in showing jewellery, doesn’t have that big a space, but has the right, not clientele, but like focus I’m interested in’ [BC,1:6]. Even those WA commercial galleries that artists do perceive to be working hard to represent them are not necessarily successful business ventures; ‘I reckon at best her gallery would break even most years, so she certainly doesn’t do it for profit’ [SE,2:4]. Furthermore, there can be profound effects resulting from the general economic climate. ‘Three years ago, before the crisis [Global Financial Crisis] you could sell quite a lot, I mean a gallery might sell $80-90,000, [...]’
now [...] if we can sell $45,000 it’s good’ [RN,2:11]. Other kinds of regulation and legislation can have similar negative impacts, such as on purchasing art as investments for superannuation purposes, ‘now they’ve put such incredible restrictions on it, this is one of the things why art’s not selling at the moment’ [NH,1:14] (See Eakins, 2012b).

For some artists the solution has been to by-pass local commercial galleries altogether, ‘I know so many people in the West that could afford to come and buy my work that there’s no market for me in a gallery in Perth, they just come here, and that’s been part of my survival too’ [PD,2:2]. ‘I bumped into [an established Western Australian artist], she said I was doing the right thing by exhibiting at home, because no one’s buying. I sold, I think it was 45 [paintings] at my show, last September’ [CB,2:13]. Other artists have taken an approach whereby they have no expectations of sales, ‘it’s always below the poverty line, you’re a small business and a fragile one at that, so you can’t let sales be a determining factor of success’ [PB,1:2].

it’s less important to me now that I do get representation. I think that I’ve worked long enough not making money... it’s not really my concern to make a lot of money from my work. And also, having been independent for so long [...], I’ve learnt a lot about how to do it myself. [CY,1:9]

Without a presence in a secondary market to support the investment value of the work of many Western Australian artists, and the difficulties of accessing national and international markets, artists in WA can be heavily reliant on local collectors for their sales. Whilst some institutions, such as Edith Cowan University, have had collection policies that support local practice, ‘there’s probably a handful of major private collectors, who are the repository of the genuine cultural visual arts history of this part of the country’ [SE,2:17]. A lack of interest from the Art Gallery of Western Australia has also been noted; ‘I have lot of friends who come here from Europe and stuff, who go to the State Gallery and are deeply disappointed that it doesn’t really teach them anything about WA, and what goes on here’ [LM,1:14]. ‘There’s a lot of really interesting work around which they haven’t got,’ Stuart Elliott maintains, and this has ‘had a deleterious effect on the [WA] art community in general’ [SE,1:17].
2.2.1.4 On Isolation, Home and Homelessness

The notion that Perth is ‘quote, “the most isolated [...] capital city in the world” unquote’ [SE,2:9], is a very significant element of the cultural heritage of Western Australian visual artists. It is not, however, a notion that is subscribed to wholeheartedly by all of the artists that I interviewed, nor is it entirely clear that such isolation is in all cases viewed as a negative thing, ‘as a weakness and something which is quite quaint’ [SE,2:9]. There seems to be little doubt, though, that the ‘geographical isolation’ [EC,2:9] of Perth can have some considerable impact on WA artists’ capacities to operate in national and international arenas, both on a logistical/economic level and on a cultural level. There is a further level of isolation that operates for artists living and working in regional Western Australia, distant from Perth, again with logistical/economic implications as well as cultural impacts.

Putting aside the negative impacts of isolation for the moment, it is interesting to note the various positive dimensions that artists have identified in relation to living and working in Western Australia. Many artists have noted that their decision to remain living and working in WA is primarily a lifestyle choice, influenced especially by proximity to family and environmental factors. ‘I missed the beach and missed fishing and I missed diving and I missed the southerly and I came home because of those sorts of things. [...] I realised that I was much more interested in that sort of stuff than in being part of the art world’ [LM,1:7]. ‘It was the best place to bring up kids, I mean every time I came back. We’ve lived all over the world and I call Perth home, and my kids are never going to leave this place’ [RN,1:5]. But for some artists, remaining at home in WA isn’t only a matter of choosing family over a career, they also construct their Western Australian context as a key enabling element within their practices. For Craig Boulter, living in Fremantle, ‘there’s heaps here to paint, and people buy my work, [...] if I went to the eastern states, I’d be just lost, [...] I’d be a nobody’ [CB,2:17]. For Erin Coates in Perth, ‘I like it being a knowable scene for me, I can get projects done, I can do things, [...] there’s a certain reluctance to leave that and go and practice in another city’ [EC,2:11]. For Peter Hill, living in Northcliffe in the state’s South West, ‘this is where I draw the source for my artwork [...] just looking at it as my job, as my career, that’s pretty important that I’m here’ [PH,1:20]. On still other levels, several
artists have noted Perth’s relative isolation from external influence; ‘it’s not about trying to impress the people in the next city’ [OC,2:6], and getting ‘too caught up with, the thing that’s going on’ [NH,2:9]. This makes WA art distinctive; ‘There’s really intriguing stuff happening, it does have a different flavour, [...] and I think it’s something about the landscape and doing what you’re going to do anyway’ [KD,1:39]. And it also potentially provides WA artists with a level of freedom and even expanded horizons, where ‘the great thing about being in Perth was that you could achieve things [...] I still believe that the isolation allows things to happen’ [PB,2:12]. ‘What’s interesting about Perth being isolated is that [...] the world is yours. [...] It’s looking at the world and basically trying to do stuff where it can be’ [OC,2:6].

Despite this positive parochialism, there are also some significant disadvantages resulting from isolation that are consistently experienced by artists living and working in Western Australia. On one level, there are keenly felt logistical and economic constraints that greatly inhibit WA artists’ scope, particularly arising from the costs and risks associated with freight, but also in terms of artists’ capacity to be present and visible in other art worlds, nationally and internationally. Oron Catts observes that, ‘once you get out of Perth it doesn’t really matter. If you go to China or if you go to the States or to Europe, it’s a trip’ [OC,2:6]. But it is also true that ‘it’s harder for us to get out, we’re actually very far away, I mean the flight’s actually quite long and they’re expensive’ [RB,2:14]. Whereas on the more highly populated eastern seaboard of Australia, or in Europe for instance, major centres, other cities, and even countries may be accessible to artists relatively cheaply and quickly, often for Western Australian artists visiting or sending works to another city is prohibitively expensive. Artists note that without the capacity to invest in freight and travel they can be limited to working within Western Australia. ‘You’ve got to be there, people won’t know, know about you otherwise’ [CW,1:13], ‘people aren’t looking over here to see people’ [RB,2:15]. ‘It was very important to think of the big picture and be prepared to share your spoils and ship and freight stuff around the globe, [...] and show your work’ [PD,1:8]. ‘I always end up paying all the freight home and the freight there and the whole thing becomes a completely un-economical exercise’ [PD,2:5]. The costs of freight, however, are only one dimension of the logistical difficulties for Australian artists. In addition there are
the significant risks of lost, damaged and delayed works; ‘sometimes it came back rejected, sometimes it got lost, sometimes a forklift went through the canvas’ [LM,2:18]. ‘Things get damaged, no matter how well you do, things move, between here and Albany, between here and the Nullarbor, constant vibrations’ [KD,1:23]. These risks, and the costs, act as a deterrent for both artists and the distant galleries that may otherwise be willing to represent them, ‘you say where you are from, “WA,” well it’s just going to be too difficult to deal with you’ [NH,2:9]. ‘Even sending stuff to Perth from Albany and back, it’s just a real pain. And, because I do like big work, I’m finding that I may have to rethink the size of work, or tackling it another way’ [AS,1:20].

In addition to these very practical constraints resulting from the substantial physical distances within Western Australia and between this state and other places, artists perceive that there are other more cultural impacts of Western Australian isolation and the competition that it produces. Tom Gibbons notes, ‘WA artists have always been very reluctant to talk about their work, not necessarily in theoretical terms but just to say what they were doing. There seemed to be an attitude of, [...] genuine suspicion of anybody who was articulate about their work’ [TG,2:5]. He goes on to say that ‘the locals seemed to think that this was compromising their integrity in some way, I think that goes with the general Australian suspicion of articulacy anyway’ [TG,2:5]. Regina Noakes relates similar experiences, ‘I’m the last person that wants to attack or cheat someone, I don’t need to anyways, but they’re very guarded so it’s ridiculous. Even to the point I dare not go to another person’s exhibition sometimes, because it’s like I’m spying’ [RN,2:12]. Monique Tippett suggests that in her experience, ‘artists [...] don’t like sharing, because they think someone’s going to pinch their ideas, I think. Whereas [crafts] people [...], I feel they’re a bit more open, or friendly [...] they’re always collaborating, they love it and people pinch each others’ ideas left, right and centre, but everybody doesn’t really care’ [MT,2:27]. Regina Noakes also observes a similar difference in the way that galleries operate in Perth: ‘Galleries [...] in Boston are all on [...] Newbury Street, all galleries nothing else. [...] If you want to buy someone’s painting you go to a gallery [...] they, actually will tell you to go [to another gallery]. Not like here, they try and sell you whatever is there’
Whilst these experiences suggest the negative impact of competition for limited resources and opportunity, Stuart Elliott notes ‘that artists are like anybody else, the art community is full of people that are almost pathologically generous and at the same time it’s also full of people that are very, very selfish and short term’ [SE,1:8].

Outside of metropolitan arts communities, artists have noted that, ‘it’s harder in rural communities,’ for artists in regional WA to ‘connect with Perth, or a big city’ [KD,1:38]. ‘I don’t know how to get into that community, because I’m not attending gallery openings, I’m not schmoozing or networking in that scene, […] Perth, seems to be a bit more a closed’ [MT,2:24]. Having moved to Albany from Perth, in dealings with an art prize in Perth, Anna Sabadini encountered a perception that she had ‘dropped out of sight or something,’ though she didn’t ‘have the sense of having gone away’ [AS,1:19]. And nationally, ‘WA just doesn’t figure at all, it’s nothing, absolutely nothing. And then being in regional WA is possibly even more so, and there’s a sense that you need to show in the eastern states to be serious or to seriously make a name or something like that’ [AS,1:26-27]. ‘[There is a] perception that people in Sydney and Melbourne have that nothing interesting can happen in Perth and if it’s interesting it should move to either […] Sydney or Melbourne, if it stays here it seems that there is really something wrong with it’ [OC,2:9]. These attitudes are perceived by WA artists to produce territorial conflicts, ‘locker room stuff’ [KD,1:38], that bias the distribution of funding and opportunity in this country:

[The curators] applied for Federal funding [to send West Australian work to the Small Sculpture Triennial in Budapest] and the Feds [The Australia Council] said ‘oh no, […] it’s a parochial show, it’s got nothing to do with us!’ But I think that was the same time they put together a show for, might’ve been for our Bicentennial or something, and I think, out of the 12 artists in it, I think 11 of them came from Sydney, I think the other one of them came from way out back at Newcastle. [SE,2:8-9]

Artists perceive that similar ‘cultural cringes’ [KD,1:39] are in operation even at a national level. ‘Once you go overseas, people think you’re doing about ten times better than they thought if you were just staying in Australia, […] so you can be living somewhere, but it just almost makes you more connected to Australia in a weird way’ [RB,2:12]. ‘In Perth, […] culture is a deadly serious business, […] a rather Romantic
notion of art [...] I think there’s a kind of insecurity behind it all’ [TG,2:19-20]. ‘We really don’t have that history or that cultural depth, so it’s still very formative. And like with any formative or adolescent culture, we like to hang on to things and like to show off or like to feel that we are heading in the right direction’ [MI,2:11].

Some of the unfortunate products of such cultural cringes are the ways in which they influence the market and distribution of opportunity for artists working within this state. On the one hand as Stuart Elliott and others have noted, collection policies and programming in the State Gallery that are ‘always looking to that distant shore, that it’s better over there and not here’ [PB,2:13], have made it irrelevant ‘to most working artists [in WA]. But its sheer irrelevance means that there is actually a void where there is no sense of ownership or leadership, so there’s almost a homelessness about the visual arts community which I think is unhelpful’ [SE,1:17]. ‘To be represented by Australia[n institutions] might be good,’ says Regina Noakes, ‘I’m an Australian artist represented by [institutions in] Italy, London, I’ve got things in Boston and I am Australian when I go there’ [RN,2:15]. Alongside this homelessness experienced by artists working within the state there are also significant pressures to leave home, to go to places where one can maintain a career and access larger markets and more opportunities.

There are opportunities that one doesn’t have, being an artist in Perth, and I think a lot of our colleagues and friends who have chosen to go to Sydney, New York, Germany, Berlin, are able to further their careers as artists at a much quicker, faster, bigger, rate, pace, scale than they would’ve if they’d stayed in Perth. [SC,2:13]

There is a ‘sort of drift that we [in the Arts in Perth] have towards Melbourne’ [EC,2:5] and to other places. ‘You do just get the drain of people, [...]my friends have gone.[...] Environmentally I really love it here [...] but I do wonder if long term you might have to leave if you want to keep on pushing forward’ [RB,2:13]. For some artists these concerns are entirely external to their practices; ‘I’ve never particularly been interested in exhibiting in Sydney or Melbourne. Then I suppose, in a way, I’ve never been particularly interested in advancing my career’ [TG,2:23]. ‘I’m in the place that I prefer to be and I make sure I stay there and that place is where I can be honest and be open and explore those aspects of my life which for me are important and that’s
what it’s about, basically’ [MI,1:6]. But for others, creating and maintaining a viable practice cannot be wholly reliant upon what is available within Western Australia. ‘I’m happy to live here because I have been able to go and do other things and to stay connected in other places. But if that changed, then for me, at this point in time, it doesn’t feel like enough if I was just working here, because there’s just not that many opportunities’ [RB,2:12].

2.2.1.5 Conclusions: Doing it Anyway

Drawing together these different impressions of the field of Western Australian visual art it is difficult to re-work them to form a singular image, such as might be the synthetic result of a more historical research project. Nevertheless, the composite picture developed here does offer some sense of how artists have been situated in this state in the present and in the past. It presents an image of previous eras in which artists felt themselves to be part of a vibrant, and optimistic local visual arts community, and identifies various characteristics of those times that may account for their perceptions of the comparatively deficient present. It depicts the shifting hierarchies that exist between art schools in WA and offers a glimpse of the art educational environments in which most of the artists I interviewed had experienced the formative stages of their art practice. It lays out the key actors and idiosyncratic conditions of the local art market in which Western Australian artists struggle to establish and sustain a viable professional practice. Finally, it focuses on the isolation of West Australian art worlds from others, and notes both the benefits of isolation and the significant obstacles faced by local artists seeking to connect with other markets and art worlds. Perhaps what is most remarkable about the picture developed here is that visual art practice in Western Australia is the product of people recognising all of these challenging conditions and choosing to do it anyway:

There was no money, of course, and you were just doing what you wanted to do anyway, because there wasn’t going to be that sort of support. Which I think is a thing about Western Australia, why some of the work is quite different and unusual, [...], because it’s not going to make that much difference. So actually, in a way, I think that was more fruitful. [KD,1:3]
It is perhaps obvious to observe that no two individuals share exactly the same experiences of childhood and youth, and that the construction of their identities, professional and otherwise, are achieved by means of unique and complex passages through life. Despite this, one approach to social scientific studies of artists has been to try and establish the determining social factors that lead (and/or allow) individuals to choose an artistic career, and the roles played in artistic careers by certain pre-determined circumstantial aspects of individual’s identity, such as class, ethnicity, parental influence and so on (For example Ravadrad, 2009). Whilst the pursuit of these kinds of causal explanations are not one of the aims of this project, there are nevertheless some benefits to our understanding of artists’ working lives to be gained from an engagement with artists’ own conceptions of their early identifications as artists.

It is certainly the case that across the interview sample for this study there were 20 distinct accounts of early experiences, circumstances and pathways to artists’ decisions to pursue professional creative practice. However, there were also a more limited number of common features emerging from this data that seem to have some general as well as personal significance in artists’ accounts of their own first steps to being artists. Here I will offer a brief presentation of the different routes to a professional artistic identity that this study has revealed, by looking at four themes emerging from the data. In almost all cases, artists maintain in some form or another that I’ve Always Been an Artist and so this is the starting point for this account of artists’ beginnings. Artists, like other people, do not have a choice about the families and communities into which they are born, and so accounts of their early pursuit of visual art practice also involve the negotiation of attitudes held by family members and others that ranged between the notions that creative practice was a Worthy Pursuit or a Waste of Time. A third common thread running through participants’ accounts of self-identification as artists were instances of early Recognition of their abilities and sensibilities, acknowledged by parents, teachers and also by themselves in recognising what they enjoyed doing. Finally, artists related different versions of coming to consciousness and to arriving at decisions to pursue an artistic career, in their different
accounts of *Determination, Eliminations and Falling Onto Art*. I will conclude the section with a brief discussion suggesting the contextual significance of these different aspects of artists’ juvenilia and points of origin.

### 2.2.2.1 I’ve Always Been an Artist

Stuart Elliott says, ‘it’s really hard to know why you make art. I guess before you go to art school you don’t really give it any conscious thought, you just do it. And when you do it, the only [way] that you can gauge what you’re doing is by stuff that you see’ [SE,1:17]. This statement is an interesting one, echoed by a number of other artists, that early identification as an artist is really something that depends in part upon the kind of exposure that one has to art and to artists. As Kevin Draper observes, from his early days on a farm [near Mount Barker in the State’s Great Southern region], ‘I was always drawing and painting, because I thought that’s what art is, I’d never heard of sculpture, till I went to uni’ [KD,1:1]. Similarly Erin Coates suggests that her initial concept of what an artist was came from ‘probably rather archaic ideas that my parents had about what an artist was, originally and then [...] a lot of it was really looking through books and looking at art work in magazines and thinking about what they did’ [EC,1:1]. What is significant, however, is that whilst individuals may not have had the kinds of early exposure that allowed them to know what making art or being an artist was about, in retrospect nearly all the artists I have interviewed have recognised the things that they did unselfconsciously as providing evidence that they had always been artists. As Oron Catts relates, ‘ever since I was younger I was doing what can be considered to be like arrangements of sorts and stuff like that. I always felt that was something I wanted to continue doing and I suppose re-organise matter in a useless way’ [OC,1:1]. Similarly Craig Boulter says, ‘I knew right from, I was that old, I was scribbling on the walls. I used to drive my mother up the wall’ [CB,1:1].

Specifically, it seems to be the particular kinds of activities in which they engaged as children and the kinds of aptitudes that they had that artists associate with their being artists from an early age. ‘I’ve always just been [an artist], as a kid that’s all I did, I just used to do a lot of drawing. [...] We didn’t have computers and weren’t allowed to watch TV and all that sort of stuff, and I was the only child for 11 years. [...] Just always
loved to draw, [...] whenever I was bored [...] Mum would stick paper and pencils and whatnot in front of me’ [MT,2:1]. Interestingly, this theme of creative practices such as drawing being used to overcome boredom, loneliness, frustration and isolation recurs in a number of artists’ accounts of their formative years. Nigel Hewitt says, ‘I’ve always loved it, I’ve always loved doodling and so when I was in a job that I really, really, disliked I came home and I basically, well I didn’t deliberately put a folio together, but I did a lot of work and that’s how I got into art school with those’ [NH,1:1]. Stuart Elliott relates different circumstances in a similar way: ‘when I was a kid, I was pretty crook and I missed out on a lot of school and I spent a lot of time bed-ridden and [...] the family lived [...] in reasonable isolation. [...] I just used to get out and then I would just do stuff in the bush, [...] I would often build cities in the walls of clay pits or arrange these strange kind of installation things in old gravel pits and things like that’ [SE,1:12].

As well as being an important escape, or distraction from everyday circumstances, artists have also talked about the pleasure derived from activities such as drawing, painting and making and the aptitude that they had for creative practice. Tom Gibbons talks about the discovery of his aptitude in the process of running a university film society, ‘I chose to design posters, got interested in poster design and lettering, and found that although I hadn’t actually picked up a brush or anything like that, in all of those years from about what, age 15 to 20, I developed certain motor skills, I mean I could actually control a brush’ [TG,1:1]. Barbara Cotter says, ‘I don’t know whether I had natural ability, I just liked making stuff [...] and I always figured that if you actually like doing something you’re actually better at doing it’ [BC,1:1]. This sense of pursuing an activity at which artists’ experienced some personal success and satisfaction seems to be an influential aspect of the kinds of anecdotal experiences that artists discussed in interviews.

Interestingly, there is one interview participant who has made it clear that ‘I know a lot of people say, “I always wanted to be an artist,” but I can’t say that I always wanted to do that’ [MI,2:2]. But in Michael Iwanoff’s case he also maintains ‘I actually don’t identify myself with being an artist, at all’ [MI,1:1]. What this counter-example to the above trend might point to is the ways in which the kinds of recollections and anecdotes communicated by artists in the interviews are linked to the ways in which
artists identify themselves in the present. So the relative importance of being an artist in the present shapes the ways in which artists may account for the origins of this identity. In many cases they experience it as being akin to a natural state; they are artists congenitally. Correspondingly, not being an artist in the present, changes the kinds of significances that are attached to the events and recollections of one’s past, as they do not add up in the present to a specifically artistic identity. Importantly, for most artists their accounts of early identification provide an important *raison d'être* for professional creative practice. As Penny Bovell says ‘I don’t think I was very good at anything else, and I think that helps. Life was pretty simple because I couldn’t do anything else, and I wasn’t interested in doing anything else’ [PB,1:1]. In such cases being an artist isn’t felt to be a choice but a necessity - if artists *could* do other things, if they had the capacity and could find it satisfying - perhaps they might not choose the difficult path of professional visual art practice.

### 2.2.2.2 A Worthy Pursuit or a Waste of Time

While the great majority of interviewed artists related the experience that they had felt themselves to be artists from an early age, for as long as they could remember, it is the case that artists also received different levels of support and encouragement from their surrounding environments. In particular family attitudes, and the influence of community – especially in rural situations – have been discussed by the interviewed artists as playing very significant roles in the paths individuals took towards professional creative practice as visual artists. Within the collected data, there were a range of different attitudes that the participants encountered as they began to identify themselves as creative practitioners.

A number of the artists talked about encountering, ‘a fairly traditional kind of resistance,’ from parents to their artistic aspirations, as Larry Mitchell goes on to say, ‘because they loved me and they wanted me to be secure’ [LM,1:2]. Similarly Anna Sabadini says, ‘at home the understanding was always that I would do law, medicine, that sort of thing and art was just always considered a waste of time basically’ [AS,1:2]. While Penny Bovell says, ‘I was from a family that […] had no interest in art […] they weren’t university trained. They were more interested in sport, so no real
encouragement. [...] I think for my family, me doing art was a way of keeping me quiet, and out of trouble’ [PB,1:1]. Stuart Elliott’s description of his parents’ attitude also resonates:

> It would be wrong to say they were hostile, because [...] they were nice people, simple people that just wanted the best for their kids. And the best for their kids I don’t really think factored in a visual arts practice. So I think my mother was pretty convinced that I would see the light at some point and go back and do engineering, which would lead to a much more likely income. Whereas I think my father’s disappointment increased from the point where he realised I wasn’t taking cricket seriously. [SE,1:2]

Whilst in all of these cases artists experienced negative responses to their artistic practice from their families on some level, it seems that most artists also understand the generally well-intentioned motives on which such resistance was founded. While Anna Sabadini describes ‘the role of family, honestly, has been something to overcome and convince’ [AS,1:5], only Peter Hill relates the experience of ‘being disowned by the family,’ after, ‘quitting my science degree and telling my parents that, “I’m quitting, I want to be an artist”’ [PH,1:18]. And even in this case, the family was reconciled as the artist produced tangible results from his creative practice, as he says, ‘because I come from a part of society that just had nothing to do with the art world or art in general, it was only an official, formal achievement that they would recognise, “oh, you are taking it seriously? Oh!”’ [PH,1:2].

In contrast to these experiences in which artists’ creative aspirations weren’t actively encouraged or supported, Michael Iwanoff relates: ‘I was in a situation where art practice, [...] or creative practice was accepted. So the things that I loved to do, [...] were accepted and not only accepted but encouraged, because my father, was also very much involved in the arts, as a young man and then went on to study architecture. He was very appreciative and he didn’t even blink an eyelid that that’s a worthy pursuit’ [MI,1:7]. Cecile Williams similarly talks about being, ‘surrounded by parents who were artists, I didn’t think beyond that. [...] I mean when we were little we belonged to an arts and crafts group, so I used to sell stuff from quite a young age. From the age of eight I was making money from my art, so I just saw it as, that’s how I made an income, even that early’ [CW,1:1].
For artists growing in these kinds of circumstances, creative practice ‘was always there and part of our lives, and [...] we always went to art exhibitions and we always had friends, relatives who made art, who were part of art groups’ [SC,2:10]. In a similar way Monique Tippett feels that her creative practice was encouraged through immersion, growing up in a family rich with craft skills and thrifty creative practices, rather than having exposure to art, in the normative sense, specifically. She says:

Mum was a seamstress and she was amazing. Because we didn’t have that much money, if I needed a new dress or something or other we’d go to Target, or wherever, we’d find the one I wanted, she’d take it home and she’d copy it exactly. We’d go and buy the fabric. And [...] my grandmother she was always trying to teach me how to crochet. She had all these flexi inks and things like that that I’d play with, as well. So, just through osmosis, just busy with your hands. And Mum, with all her pattern books, [...] and they’ve all got pictures of girls on [them], so I used to spend a lot of time drawing girls and making dresses for my dolls. [MT,2:1]

Clearly in these households aspiring artists didn’t need to invest so much energy in convincing their families that creative practice was a worthy pursuit.

The interview data also includes artists’ accounts of home environments in which creative practice wasn’t necessarily fully understood, but yet artists’ aspirations were supported and encouraged in various ways, or at least not discouraged. As Rebecca Baumann says:

My Dad’s always been really encouraging, even though [...] I guess, he doesn’t really understand what I do. [...] He worries about me I think, financially [...] He actually had a lot of books about plants and birds [...] so we did have books, but not necessarily art books. But he’d always put your drawings in those books and in no particular order, so if you actually ever flick through them you’ll find something you made or something you did. [...] I got encouraged a lot as a kid and I used to go to little community art classes and, there’s all these little clay dragons and whatnot still scattered around his house and some at my Mum’s house. So even though I might have not been exposed specifically to [art], I was always encouraged to be interested in that sort of thing. [RB,1:2]

Pippin Drysdale talks about the consistent financial support provided by her father and his well-meaning offers to, “ring the director of BHP and you could make a whole lot of trophies, or thingies for gifts,” and I’d say, “Dad, I don’t want to be one of those
potters, I want to be somebody very special that you’ll one day think, well it was all worth it”’ [PD,1:11].

Artists growing up in these kinds of households had different experiences again in realising their aspirations for creative practice. The kind of neutrality or in some cases support offered by parents who were less knowledgeable about the arts and creative practices enabled artists to pursue creative practice with fewer obstructions than those with parents who resisted. But it did not, perhaps, provide the same sense of creative practice being a natural and understood choice of profession, that participants growing up in families immersed in art and creative practices experienced. As Erin Coates relates, ‘my parents had […] quite a lot of books around and if I wanted more books on art they were always supportive in that’ [EC,1: 1], but she also says, ‘I don’t think […] I ever conceive of being in a position where selling work will support me beyond about, 1% of my annual income [laughs], […] much to the chagrin of my parents; […] “Put up those nice drawings”’ [EC,1:9]. Kevin Draper, who describes his parents as, ‘not really support[ing], and not really discourag[ing]’ [KD,1:5], also says, ‘[my mother] was pretty good when I started to have shows and that. But then I shifted to sculpture, she found it very difficult. […] She just couldn’t understand why I did make these big, ugly, rusty things and make quite, abrasive comments about situations. […] She’d much rather I did a painting of a nice landscape’ [KD,1:5-6].

Also emerging from the data, were the experiences of artists growing up in rural communities, where creative practice was often perceived as, ‘this alien thing and the only people they’ve ever met that are artists are people down here growing dope’ [PH,1:2]. Larry Mitchell says: ‘I was in a very small town, it was claustrophobic. I was a painter, I didn’t play football, I did art with the girls […]’, and I was a typical fish out of water and I just wanted to get out of there. It’s a clichéd story, but it happens a lot in the country, still does, and art was a sort of freedom, almost a way maybe I could escape that kind of 1950s, 1960s rural environment’ [LM,1:2]. Or as Craig Boulter describes, ‘I never had any art education and at high school in Margaret River, there was no art teacher there was just nothing’ [CB,1:1]. Kevin Draper suggests that ‘it was probably a little easier for me, because I didn’t just hide out in my studio and occasionally roll up with work and have a show. I was also playing sport and involved in
the community’ [KD,1:1]. On the whole, artists growing up in smaller, rural communities seem to have experienced an additional level of resistance to their aspirations to pursue an artistic career in the form of a lack of acceptance from the local community. In addition, in such communities, ‘there simply wasn’t any opportunity [...] I was brought up in Northampton [...], and there was no other painters or artists or drawers or that sort of stuff. And certainly, when I moved even to Geraldton there was a small, local, cliquey kind of society, it was really quite awful’ [LM,2:12].

From the material presented here it can be seen that artists experienced different levels of support and encouragement from the family and community environments in which they grew up. For some interview participants becoming an artist was something that they pursued in spite of difficult and sometimes even hostile conditions. For others, professional creative practice had always been a path that was open to them and one that was not regarded with suspicion or apprehension - but that is not say that it was naively regarded as an easy path to take. I will return to the ways in which participants’ pathways to becoming artists were influenced by these conditions in a later section.

2.2.2.3 Recognition

Another key element in the interview participants’ accounts of coming to identify themselves as artists has been the role of various forms of recognition of their abilities and their aptitudes and sensibilities. As has been discussed above in relation to the concept that many artists feel themselves to have always been artists, clearly an awareness of one’s own abilities and inclinations, and the sense of pleasure and achievement derived from creative practice contributes in many cases to an important sense of self-recognition. As has also been discussed, self-recognition may initially occur in the absence of the specific conceptual categories of art and artists, though it may subsequently be reconfigured in these terms. Aspects of self-recognition as an artist can be felt in positive ways. For instance, Monique Tippett suggests that ‘I’d spend a lot of time with [my grandfather] in his workshop and I think that’s where the love of the timber came into it, because I was always banging nails into the bits of
wood that he’d give me’ [MT,2:1]. Or as Pippin Drysdale recalls of her schooling, ‘I loved tapestry, and weaving with cane, and drawing and art subjects’ [PD,1:1]. But self-recognition may also be felt in less positive ways as a profound sense of difference, described above by Larry Mitchell as being a fish out of water in relation to family and community. In Anna Sabadini’s case, being the child of migrant parents and bilingual, she says, ‘coming from that background too, that sense of not really fitting in, and in some ways I use art to talk about that, and maybe also to transcend it’ [AS,1:4].

Alongside this important self-recognition, a number of different kinds of external recognition have emerged as being especially significant in artists’ accounts of their formative years. In the collected data the most prominent source of external recognition for artists at early stages of their careers seems to have been from school teachers and in other educational environments. Though he maintains that he hasn’t actively pursued a career as an artist, Michael Iwanoff describes the origins of his ongoing involvement with the arts in this way: ‘It wasn’t of my choice, it was the teacher who recognised my sensibility, or my disposition, and recommended that I apply and be interviewed [for the Applecross Senior High School Special Art Program]. And basically since then my involvement has just kept on happening for me’ [MI,1:7]. Anna Sabadini remembers, ‘in high school, an art prize was given to a friend of mine, and I remember [...] the art teacher saying, after the assembly, “If I’d known we could give second prizes, I would’ve given you that”’ [AS,1:1]. And Peter Hill talks about an early instance of external recognition, ‘in my year five parent teacher night, my teacher said to my parents, “Oh, look up on the wall there, [his] work really stands out’ [PH,1:2]. In a number of other cases, artists have specifically spoken about their ‘really supportive high school art teacher’ [SC,1:3], and the encouragement of school environments in which creative practice was valued. ‘I did art at high school, and I did art from very early years, and even in primary school. I went to a funny little Catholic school in Mount Barker, run by Nuns, and art was quite important in that school and there was a lot of art, a lot of drawing’ [KD,1:1].

But teachers and supportive school environments weren’t the only form of external recognition that artists recalled in talking about the beginnings of their self-
identification as artists. Rebecca Baumann says that ‘everyone had told me I was good at drawing when I was little’ [RB,1:1], and Monique Tippett talks about getting, ‘praise, “Gee you’re a good drawer,” and you think “Ooh, that feels nice!”’ [MT,2:1]. Nigel Hewitt says ‘I found some sort of solace in, in just doing something at home on the kitchen table. […] I got a little bit more serious about it when I just moved in with my partner and she was very, very encouraging, […] I had a little room then and set that up’ [NH,1:2]. A number of artists also talked about external recognition coming in circumstances where the artist was actually pursuing other things. Regina Noakes says, ‘I wanted to go to […] Vet School, and I was there for about […] four months. I sold my assignments, people were buying my assignments and my drawings and they said I really should be doing art rather than, becoming a vet’ [RN,1:1]. Similarly Oron Catts recalls that ‘one of the things [that] constantly came back […], in my design studies, was that my tutors and lecturers would say that what I’m doing is too artistic’ [OC,1:1].

Finally, whilst it may seem reasonable to assume that the decision to attend art school is indicative of some kind of pre-identification as an artist, and determination to be an artist, it is interesting that a number of the interviewees observe something along following lines. In Caitlin Yardley’s words, ‘I did a lot of art in high school so I think that’s why I ended up at art school. It wasn’t necessarily my intention at that stage to become a full time artist’ [CY,1:1]. In Caitlin’s case, ‘I’d wanted to go into arts management, probably in theatre because my Dad had a theatre at the time’ [CY,1:1]. Barbara Cotter says, ‘when I was younger I wanted to be an art teacher and a maths teacher and I was divided between the two, so I always had an interest in art, even back in high school, and I didn’t necessarily have a career path as such in mind, […] even when I was in university I didn’t necessarily have a career path in mind’ [BC,1:1]. Similarly Susanna Castleden explains; ‘I always knew that I wanted to do something to do with art, but I was thinking it would be more in the line of teaching or art support, or arts industry rather than “artist”’ [SC,1:1]. So for some participants, external recognition received in the course of studies at art school has played a decisive role in their coming to identify as artists and in directing their careers. Susanna Castleden relates, ‘in my Masters and then getting the Dusseldorf Post Graduate Prize was probably the time when I went “Oh, well someone’s almost identified it for me”’
And Nigel Hewitt says ‘I didn’t really know whether I really had any ability at all and, […] first year at art school, [the sculpture teacher] at Claremont […] he said “I want you to do these things,” and I did it and he seemed very, very impressed and I thought “Oh, that’s ah, quite exciting.” I guess it was those sort of confirmations, that I thought, “well maybe I am on the right, the right track here”’ [NH,1:2].

2.2.2.4 Determination, Eliminations and Falling Onto Art

Having presented material that indicates a range of different experiences and circumstances recounted by artists about their passage towards being artists, it is time now to turn to artists’ accounts of those moments of crystalisation and determination when their creative practices became something that they were actively going to pursue in a professional sense. In doing so, however, it is important to recall that even within this sample of just 20 artists there were a range of different circumstances and attitudes that in some cases assisted and in some cases obstructed the pathway to identifying as an artist and pursuing an artistic career. So it is that the collected data contains a significant number of accounts in which artists initially pursued things other than art, things that were perhaps more acceptable in terms of the aspirations that participants felt their parents had for them, or were perceived to offer a greater level of security. Anna Sabadini tellingly describes her pathway to professional creative practice as, ‘a series of eliminations and prior failures, and just trying lots of different things and then slowly saying to myself, “this is not for me,” and then going for the thing that, secretly, I always wanted to do’ [AS,1:1]. Oron Catts says ‘when I enrolled into university I actually I really wanted to go and study sculpture,’ [OC,2:5] but ‘then my father died, so I thought that I should do something useful and decided to go and study product design as opposed to art’ [OC,1:1]. Nigel Hewitt relates:

Because we didn’t have a Dad, my Mum was fairly desperate for money and she had three children and she wanted to encourage us to go out to work as soon as possible, so she could get some money in. It was very hard, very hard living for her, and she said “right, I want you to do this, and to be a mechanic, you seem to like looking at car magazines, you must like cars, so that’s what you’re going to do.” Anyway, it was a promise that I made to her. [NH,1:1]
For artists in these kinds of situations, the attempt to do something else, something more practical, provided important confirmations that art practice was really the only possible professional path for them. As Nigel Hewitt says, identifying as an artist, ‘came through a process of, of realising what I didn’t want to do, [...] and through that, through doing what I didn’t want to do, it was at the time that I really, I fell onto art’ [NH,1:1].

Other participants were more sure of their early self-identification as artists, and perhaps in some of these cases this self-identification may actually have been helped by the level of opposition that artists experienced to their aspirations in the direction of creative practice. These interviewees talk about their careers as a determined struggle in one direction from the outset, as Larry Mitchell says; ‘I’ve always been a painter, and I’ve always thought of myself as an artist to be honest with you, everything else has been a substitute or leading up to or hoping that one day I could be a full-time painter’ [LM,1:1]. Similarly Peter Hill talks says that though he ‘didn’t have the guts to do it straight up, because, moving up to the city [...] from [a] country town, on your own, without any backing from your family, it just seemed too big,’ it was nevertheless, ‘what I wanted to do, it just took me a bit of time to get there’ [PH,1:1]. Craig Boulter says ‘I’ve always wanted to paint and before I went to Art School I was put in the Bank of New South Wales, by my parents and I just hated it, hated every minute of it. And I went to art school for three years, and then I worked as a draughtsman. [...] All the time I just wanted to paint as a living, as a professional artist’ [CB,2:2]. For these artists, it wasn’t a matter of trying other things as more practical alternatives to art practice, though of practical necessity they may have spent many years doing other things to create the right conditions for creative practice, ‘it was just a matter of how I was going to do it to the point that you then think, it’s my job, it’s my career’ [PH,1:1].

For still other artists, it seems that they were carried along to a certain extent by their educational journey from high school and into university. For instance Rebecca Baumann says that she doesn’t really know why she decided to go to art school except that ‘it was something I was good at’ [RB,1:1]. Other artists talked about art school as a being a natural extension of art at high school; Barbara Cotter says that her preference
for making things, ‘just sort of led into art at high school and it’s kinda led through into University’ [BC,1:1]. For some of these artists, particularly those moving directly from secondary to tertiary education in art, identification as an artist did not come as a result of undergraduate or even honours level studies, instead it was associated with other outcomes in the public sphere and the pursuit of art education at higher levels. As Penny Bovell remembers, ‘I identified maybe that I was serious about art when I had my first exhibition, [aged] 21, 22, and then even more so when I went overseas to study, so […] when I chose to do further studies to improve my knowledge’ [PB,1:1]. Similarly, for Susanna Castleden; ‘I think doing my Masters was probably the time that I thought that I could be an artist. Certainly my undergrad and my honours it was something that I didn’t necessarily think that “an artist” would be the outcome of’ [SC,1:1].

In contrast, for artists who did try other things (or had to do other things), and came to the determination that they couldn’t do anything else other than creative practice, their decisions to enrol in art school even at diploma or undergrad level could be fairly decisive moments of identification. As Nigel Hewitt says, ‘right from the outset, it was going to be a profession, I did not realise exactly what that incorporated or how difficult that was going to be, but I was determined, that was it, I thought “this is it, this is what I want to do, I’m going to do it properly” and I worked, I worked hard at Art School’ [NH,1:2]. Stuart Elliott talks about applying for art school after having ‘a rather spectacular industrial accident, […] so I rode down to Perth from the Pilbara and caught up with [a close friend] and he had been through a couple of art schools and he was then at Claremont [School of Art]and he said, “Oh, it’s a really good school, you should do it”’ [SE,1:2]. Similarly Monique Tippett remembers her decision to pursue studies at the School of Wood in Dwellingup as a key turning point:

There was an article about the School of Wood, […] and I was just like, ‘Oh my God, this is amazing, I would just love to do this.’ So when my husband came home that night, I’d already rung up Centrelink and […] figured out that even if he quit his job, that we wouldn’t be that much worse [sic] off if I went to school and got Austudy. […] I went for an interview, […], and I took my bits of wood that I’d been making, and then they accepted me. They had one spot left because someone had pulled out, and they said, ‘well if you want the spot, you have to be
here within 4 weeks.’ So we just packed up the whole house, [...] and we just drove up here and started our new life and never looked back since. [MT,2:5]

One of the most interesting aspects of all these different journeys towards being artists is the way in which it is possible to observe the impact of different circumstances on individual pathways from very similar points of early identification – ie the notion that participants had been artists for as long as they could remember. In these accounts one can clearly see the ways in which material circumstance, family and community attitudes, educational environments, and the different levels of access to opportunity (such as art schools) influence the ease with which individuals are able to come to identify as artists. Furthermore, it is significant that in all of these cases participants have achieved a level of identification as artists (whether intentionally or not) irrespective of these very different circumstances. This leads to the conclusion that whilst the pre-determined social and other contexts of artists early lives do undoubtedly impact upon the routes that artists may be able to take, nevertheless it seems to be possible for artists reach similar destinations by different routes. Furthermore it is interesting that some of those routes that appear to be the least interrupted and obstructed, such as the seamless transition from high school art to university art school, do not necessarily correlate with a strong and early identification with visual art practice as a profession.

2.2.2.5 Artists’ Juvenilia and Points of Origin: Conclusions

Aside from the general value of the foregoing section in contextualising some of the material that has been presented in this thesis, there are some more specific conclusions that might be drawn from the material discussed here. Artists’ actions are determined not only by the complex total situation of historical, social, cultural, economic and other circumstances, but most importantly by the ways in which individual actors have defined and responded to that situation. Through that act of definition the agent identifies those dimensions and elements of the total situation that may be significant in any given instance, reducing the complexity of the total situation to only those aspects of it that are relevant and have some bearing upon their own actions. In this sense, these accounts of artists’ early careers and pre-professional histories give a different kind of insight into how artists come to be artists.
than might otherwise be obtained through the reconstructions and interpretations of history. Without a doubt, and as we have seen, these accounts are shaped by the artists’ positions in the present, but they nevertheless provide a valuable window on the way in which a professional artistic identity is constructed even from the recollections of early childhood.

In relation to the labour of visual art (section 2.3), a key aspect of the maintenance of a professional art practice is the labour to define the concerns and processes of creative practice in the artist’s own terms. Here in these accounts of artists’ beginnings we can see some foundational experiences upon which artists’ definitions of practice are built, namely the conviction that artists are born artists, that creative practice is in a sense their natural vocation. More emphatically, the absolute necessity of creative practice for artists is underlined by a gradual process of discovering that one cannot possibly be or do anything else, whether through a long period maturing at art school or through pushing through obstacles and trying unsuccessfully to take other paths. This core sense of being an artist by nature, undoubtedly also contributes to the concept of integrity that artists labour to maintain, as it emphasises the connection between artists and their work not primarily as an acquired suite of skills and knowledge, but as a gift or a sensibility with which they have been entrusted. In the artists’ accounts presented here of their early lives it is seldom the case that artists have been able to control and significantly influence key aspects of the circumstances in which they found themselves. However, the positive and negative impacts of the situations in which they first engaged in creative practice and the kinds of recognition that played key roles in the initial establishment of an artistic identity indicate the great relevance of artists’ labour to create conditions and attract validation in pursuit of sustainable, professional creative practice. This brief discussion, which is in one sense a pre-historical account of artists’ professional creative practice, provides not only a sense of the important values and dimensions of creative practice that artists have singled out for discussion, but it also maps out the world in which artists labour as agents.
2.3 The Labour of Visual Art in Western Australia

One way of thinking about the labour of artists is to conceive of it as a process of actualisation, of taking the comparatively subjective values and concerns of creative practice and shifting them in directions such that they assume more objective significance for a greater number of people. In suggesting this I am following the lead of Florian Znaniecki as presented in his book *Cultural Reality* (2010 [1919]). Znaniecki argues that all empirical reality is accessed via subjective experience and only subsequently ordered by human agents into over-arching rational systems and understandings of the world. Znaniecki writes that as cultural agents, individuals can develop a sense of objective reality either by fitting themselves and their actions within existing rational systems (a procedure that he calls ‘subjectivating receptive process’ (Znaniecki, 2010 [1919], p. 52) or by drawing on their experiences and reshaping their sense of objective reality on the basis of these. (He refers to this as ‘objectivating creative activity’ (Znaniecki, 2010 [1919], p. 52)). In both cases, Znaniecki...
stresses, the agent can never be a passive observer, but is always an active constructor or reproducer of the objective cultural world.

My basic approach to the concept of the labour of visual art is to treat all kinds of purposeful activity that artists have described to me in the context of the interviews as valid elements of the labour of professional art practice. More specifically, my analysis has sought to discover the things that artists do to make their creative practice and their professional artistic identity real both for themselves and for others. In this sense artists may be quite distinct from other workers in other labour markets. Artists’ labour is not limited to the production of art works, but also to the production of themselves as artists. Pierre Bourdieu writes about the ‘specific labour’ that an artist has to accomplish, ‘both against [the] determinations [of their milieu] and thanks to them, in order to produce [themselves] as a creator, that is as subject of their own creation’ (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 104). In order to be a professional artist, artists must convince themselves and mobilise an art world to legitimate and recognise their activity as artists and their products as works of art. The advantage of Znaniecki’s notion of cultural reality over Bourdieu’s conception of fields of cultural production is that it emphasises the inherently dynamic nature of the objective field in which artists are orienting and positioning themselves, which Bourdieu’s emphasis on social structures tends to down-play or overlook.

2.3.1 A Conceptual Model of the Labour of Visual Art Practice

The understanding of the labour of visual art developed from my analysis of the interview data is illustrated schematically in Figure 15. For the purposes of theoretical clarity, the model of artists’ labour is isolated into separate realms of activity, even though in practice all aspects work together in an integrated dynamic system. The labour of artists is represented in the diagram by the four nested rectangles, each of which describes a realm of activity, or labour, in which artists are involved. I have given each of these four realms of activity a descriptive title; Defining Practice, Creating Conditions, Attracting Validation and Maintaining Integrity.
Figure 15: Diagram of conceptual model of the labour of visual art practice

In Figure 15, the nesting of the different rectangles within each other is indicative of their interrelationship. The inner-most realm of activity, defining practice, is a prerequisite activity for each of the other realms of activity, and is thus a core concern of artists. At the bottom of the diagram are double arrows and a reminder of Znaniecki’s conception of two different forms of cultural agency (2010 [1919]) which may be at work in artists’ labour at any level. Artists are involved in negotiating between these two forms of agency, objectivating creative activity and subjectivating receptive process. Artists may make their practice real by pursuing activities that assimilate existing cultural realities associated with the practice of art. Or they may instead work towards accounting for the practices in which they are engaged as legitimate art practices and contribute to the construction of new cultural realities.

In line with the concepts introduced above, defining practice might be conceived as the labour of making creative practice real for artists themselves. The next realm of labour, creating conditions, does not supersede the ongoing labour of defining practice, though it influences and impacts on defining practice in different ways. Artists work to create the conditions under which they can best define and maintain their
creative practices. The third realm into which artists’ labour extends has been called attracting validation, in which artists’ work is directed towards making the practice real and significant for other people. Wider recognition of the validity of the creative practice, as defined by the artist, greatly facilitates the creation of conditions, and the ongoing efforts of the artist to define practice. Throughout all of their labours to extend the cultural reality of the art practice, artists are involved in the labour of maintaining integrity. The maintenance of integrity functions as a personal resource to bolster self-sufficiency, it sets boundaries and limits for artists’ activities in all realms, and it can be an instrumental professional attribute in external evaluations of an artist’s creative practice.

In the pages that follow, I will offer an extended discussion of these different dimensions to the labour of visual art, and will present relevant data collected from the 20 Western Australian artists interviewed for this study.

2.3.2 Defining Practice

Over the course of this research I have had the pleasure and privilege of talking with 20 artists about their professional creative practice. Brief profiles of each of these 20 artists and images of their creative work can be viewed in Appendix B. Given that the intention of this research was to capture the diverse perceptions and experiences of individuals and their practices, it comes as little surprise that the collected data contains as many definitions of practice as there are artists in the sample. For the purposes of this study, however, what is of interest is the labour of artists that is directed towards the activity of defining those practices, of making the practice real, even if primarily real only for artists themselves. I will begin this section by presenting some material that discusses some of the complexities of self-definition and identification as an artist, based on data in which artists talked about Signature Styles and Social Roles. Following on from this, the focus will be on three important acts of definition emerging from the interview data. These acts have been labelled from the data as follows, Being One’s Own Harshest Critic, Going on a Journey and Having Something to Say/Offer. In what follows I will present from the data some of the ways in which artists’ definitions of practice build on these notions and utilise them to make
their professional creative practices real for themselves and also self-sufficient. I will
conclude the section with a brief summary that consolidates the ideas that I think
contribute to an understanding of artists’ labour to define their practices as derived
from this study.

2.3.2.1 Signature Styles and Social Roles

One crucially important dimension of artists’ efforts to define their practices involves
the ways in which they identify themselves. Artists have expressed a number of very
different views about what it means to identify as an artist. In some cases artists apply
the term to themselves quite reluctantly, and some prefer other appellations
altogether. The reluctance to identify as an artist stems from a number of different
understandings of the values that are attached to the term. Some creative
practitioners are reluctant to assume the evaluative undertones associated with the
notion of the artist. As Regina Noakes says, ‘I hear it all the time, everyone’s an artist,
like it’s so easy. I don’t say I’m an artist, I say I’m a painter, ‘cause it’s kind of tickets on
yourself, if you say you’re an artist’ [RN,2:5]. Or, as Stuart Elliott puts it, ‘there’s a
strange kind of responsibility attached to that, and you’ve actually really got to make
good art to be an artist, and I don’t know many artists who’ve got a lot of time to feel
smug about what they produce’ [SE,1:1]. For other artists there is level of uncertainty
and ambiguity attached to whether their identities as artists have any legitimate
primacy over the other facets of their identities. As Susanna Castleden says:

> When you’re traveling anywhere and they write that, “occupation”, do I write
> lecturer, or do I write academic, do I write student, do I write artist? I possibly
don’t write artist [...] I guess, I think probably, ‘what is my primary time user?’
and that’s being an academic, followed by artist and I see the artist-slash-PhD
student, hopefully [as] one and the same thing. [SC,2:3]

Still others try to resist being pigeon-holed or categorised altogether, ensuring that
they are free to engage with the world in different ways, not just as incumbents
fulfilling a prescriptive social role:

> I do a lot of the stuff that so-called artists do, but I don’t know whether it’s very
useful for me to think in those terms. [...] I’m more interested in being in an open
place where I can be in the moment and connect with the things that I’m
connecting with and really that’s what it’s about. [...] The other names or words
or classifications or categories or whatever, [...] [are] very foreign to me. [...] The role of an artist or the tradition of an artist is not something that I particularly relate to. [MI,1:1]

As can be seen here, some practitioners perceive the status and social roles of artists either as ideals that ought to be approached cautiously because they are unattainable, or they are aspirations that ought to be kept at arms-length because they might unduly influence the natural course of creative practice.

Significantly, a number of artists talked about the ways in which creative practice and professional identity may be conflated, with negative impacts upon the integrity of creative practice and access to opportunity. ‘[The visiting Gallery Director] looked at my work and she said, “well, I like your work, but,” she said, “I don’t know who you are, I don’t know whether that picture there represents you, that picture there represents you...?“ and she went around about five or six times, [...] she wanted a particular style’ [NH,2:15]. Or as Tom Gibbons suggests, ‘they think that you have to have a brand image or signature, “I’ve got an X Y Z over my mantelpiece”’ [TG,2:11].

Being associated with and identified by the formal or material characteristics of the artworks one has created can impose certain limitations or create a kind of inertia that is perceived to work against the risky pursuit of truly creative processes.

I always used to say this about other artists, [...] it’s all about pump it out, pump it out, and I keep thinking I never want to be like that. But at the same time you see edges of it coming in. [...] I get too tired and I ultimately need to be down there actually doing the work, but I do find it hard to, really. Sometimes I think ‘Oh, I can’t afford to lose this piece, I’ll have to work in the safe zone.’ [PD,1:10]

Interestingly, Caitlin Yardley has suggested that perceptions about the identity of the artist may also have some impact on the creative work that may be achieved; ‘I’ve always wanted my work to be a bit separate from me. I don’t like photographs of myself with my work, as newspapers always want you to do, and I don’t want the perception of who I am to influence what I can make’ [CY,2:6].

For other artists, however, identification as an artist is an important means of making their creative practice distinct from other forms of endeavour which might appear to be related. For Barbara Cotter, it is important that her work as a jeweller is art, rather than craft or design. She says:
I define craft as well made and art as thought provoking, [...] ideally I’d like to able to work within both realms but not at both extremes. I don’t want to be a craft person, I try not to use the word craft because it does have those connotations, and I try not to use the word artist too much, which is why “visual artist” tends to work a bit better in a way, because it doesn’t have those heavily laden kind of contexts surrounding [it] [...] I think sometimes [...] if you say you’re a jeweller then they assume you make commercial jewellery only [...] I have a friend who’s basically a jewellery designer and stuff and I can respect that, but that’s not what I’m interested in doing. [BC,2:3]

For Susanna Castleden, it is preferable to identify as an artist rather than as a print-maker:

Because why would you name anyone the thing that only does one thing? And I think I draw like I’m making a print, I think I make collages like I’m making a print, I think I make constructions, 3D objects like I’m making a print. I think about layering, I think about the process of addition and subtraction and I think printmaking informs the way I make art, but I’m happy to make a drawing if that’s what the thing needs to be [...] just whatever’s most appropriate for the thought that I’ve got to execute, I guess. [SC,2:7-8]

For Oron Catts, despite having a background in design, it is vitally important that his practice and the work of SymbioticA remains art, engaging in ‘non-utilitarian research, [...] I’m constantly resisting the language of innovation and creativity and all of these kind of things as a way of driving those initiatives because I think that’s dis-servicing what the artists are actually doing’ [OC,2:9]. Indeed Oron suggests that in his field of art and technology, the secondary outcomes of artists’ work often become the focus, ‘so when you look at the type of projects that they funded just recently, they would talk about [...] helping anatomy students retain anatomical knowledge or helping [...] paraplegics regain movement, [...] stuff [that has] nothing to do with art, but it is using artists as very cheap labour to produce those outcomes’ [OC,1:10]. Oron Catts stresses that he is an artist and not a designer, as it is counter-productive to project or describe the outcomes of the creative research in advance of undertaking the journey of artistic process.

Even though he suggests that it isn’t important or useful to his creative practice to be recognised as an artist, Michael Iwanoff nevertheless acknowledges that:

from society’s point of view, it’s where it’s accepted, ‘Oh you’re going to be a bit crazy, do whacky things. Oh, he does that, he does that and oh, that’s OK
because he’s an artist.’ I don’t mind that. [...] From my position, when you’re in that place, that’s the most important, not how other people perceive me. [MI,2:15]

It can be seen in the foregoing data that identifying as an artist is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it is a societal category and a social role that carries with it some significant cultural baggage and a wide range of expectations that individuals must address in various ways to be recognised as artists. On the other hand, identification (and recognition) as an artist may entitle the individual to act in the nebulous realm of art where, ideally, there are comparatively few limitations or expectations, and where practice and productivity may be defined in one’s own terms.

2.3.2.2 Being One’s Own Harshest Critic

Susanna Castleden states that, ‘I think essentially as an artist you have to be the one who’s the most critical of your own practice,[...] whether you can sign-off and say, “yes, that’s a successful piece of work,” or not’ [SC,1:2]. Stuart Elliott adds that, ‘as soon as you actually show work there is that responsibility: You get struck by a truck tomorrow, that’s the last work you did; is it good enough, is it worthwhile?’ [SE,1:4]. This is a responsibility artists have to themselves and to their audience, ‘you’re working in such a vague way, you’ve got to have this integrity that you won’t [...] do things unless you’re 100% sure’ [PB,1:4]. Clearly, there is a significant ethical dimension to these conceptions of responsibility and integrity associated with artists’ own evaluations of their practice. This is because artists maintain that such evaluations are not founded upon criteria that can be readily articulated, ‘it’s about a crude knowledge.’[PB,1:3]

You judge your work, you look at it, you think about how far you went from the original point of the idea, [...] does it match the concepts that you’re interested in? The feeling that you have about the work, and physically how you’ve managed to bring it to fruition, [...] it’s a response that you have if you’re honest with yourself [...] and I think that artists, they have to at least be honest with themselves. [EC,1:2]

The authority to judge the work comes from the artists’ immersion in the practice. ‘I don’t know what is successful. I just know that I’ve got to get myself into a situation where I’m totally involved in it so that my energies and my enthusiasm and my
confidence with the thought and the doing of what I’m doing is all working together, and then I don’t care what anybody else thinks’ [PB,1:3]. Furthermore, artists note that their own evaluations are often different from those made by audiences and the purchasing public. ‘People will respond to the work because of the way it looks or the way it feels rather than actually all the stuff that you loaded into it’ [SE,1:5]. ‘I think, “yes, I’m really, really, happy with those.” I put them up and they are the ones that I take home’ [NH,1:3]. Penny Bovell suggests that the work that the artist deems strongest in an exhibition is, ‘often the one that nobody else likes, because it’s telling you something about what you are going to need to do next’ [PB,1:3].

This dependence upon an intimate understanding of the practice from which creative works emerge also places limits on those who can legitimately evaluate the creative practice. ‘It’s quite difficult to just show someone, “here’s stuff, what do you think of it?” unless they have an idea of your past practice or your past ideas’ [BC,1:8]. For some artists, there are a few trusted individuals who have the requisite familiarity: ‘he’s seen the whole process and so I know he understands where I’m coming from, I know he understands what I will discard and what I will continue with’ [CY,2:4]. But even the opinions of such trusted critics must be assessed; ‘sometimes what they say, you feel isn’t right. You need to sift through and sort out, and I’m still feeling my way through all of that. Like, at what point do I [...] stop thinking of myself as a student [...] and feel that what I want to do has validity?’ [AS,1:17].

Ultimately, it seems to be the case that artists determine the success of artworks with reference to measures intrinsic to their individual creative processes. Such measures include understanding the relationship between the achieved outcomes and the motivating concepts that informed the work, and understanding the possibilities that work opens up for future practice. Artists also suggest that these measures are not necessarily able to be clearly articulated as they are attributable to instinct, and ‘sensibility, or it’s a sensory thing, it’s not something that’s known, it’s felt’ [PB,1:3]. As can be seen in some of the statements quoted above, artists not only feel a level of responsibility stemming from their privileged position as both judge and executioner of their creative work, but also recognise the importance of this critical autonomy for the self-sufficiency of their practice. So long as artists have grounds on which to
maintain that they know best about their own art practice, then they can continue to work and even succeed (in their own terms) in the face of any critical opposition. In this sense it is important that artists are able to claim that, ‘we’re our own harshest critics’ [KD,1:25].

Following on from the discussion above, it is significant that a number of artists have suggested that ultimately, as their own critics, they are never completely satisfied with their creative work. This seems, on the face of it, to be a contradiction when viewed in relation to the notion that artists should sign off on work that they are happy with, and have a responsibility not to present work that doesn’t make the grade. It is clear, however, that this dissatisfaction relates to an ideal. ‘When I start making something I have this vision [that] it’s going to be fantastic and wonderful and then I finish and I think, “well it didn’t quite do what I wanted.” To anybody else’s eyes, they can’t see what I had in mind’ [BC,2:6]. In part this re-iterates the concept that no one is more critical of the work than the artist themselves, but it provides an important raison d’être for the practice, the need to ‘keep on going, no certainty, or rarely certainty, always [...]’, dealing with doubt, [...] in a good way [...] not a crippling doubt, but a doubt that will keep you inquiring’ [PB,1:3]. Such dissatisfaction registers artists’ crucial recognition that there is still more to do: ‘we have to press on because we are perpetually dissatisfied and [...]’, if ever one really felt that one has succeeded, that would be the time to stop’ [TG,1:4].

2.3.2.3 Going on a Journey

Another key aspect emerging from the data around the ways in which artists define their practices relates to conceptions of artists’ work as an unfolding whole, the artists’ oeuvre, and especially an emphasis on process over product. In particular, artists have stressed the important continuity of practice, despite being punctuated by apparent ends such as public exhibitions: ‘there’s never an end point, because there’s always something in that previous show that’s going to demand that you investigate it further’ [PB,1:3]. ‘[The exhibition]’s all hung, but I don’t then come back to the studio and start afresh. Because when you’re working for a show, right at the end, all those ideas are
really going fast, that whole creative process is working really well, so I try to jump onto that and move on too. So it's an ongoing process’ [NH,1:7].

Such continuity of practice is an important aspect of artists' work on several levels. Firstly, it stands in opposition to any suggestion that an artist might be producing work primarily motivated by the circumstances of the particular event or outcome being pursued. ‘I don’t ever really change too much from the line that I’m working down’ [NH,1:6]. Secondly, it obviates the need for specific products to be completely successful in themselves, as they can instead be viewed in a developmental sense as leading somewhere else. ‘I suppose the last few years and those three shows have been kind of laying out a territory of what I’m interested in’ [AS,1:5]. ‘Even if it doesn’t work as well as I think it could it’s a great stepping stone for the next time I want to do something, so I’m never disappointed really’ [MT,2:3]. Thirdly, such a conception of practice reinforces the artist’s unique vantage point from within a dynamic practice, in which success is measured in relation to past practice and with reference to future possibilities. This dynamism is a crucial aspect of artists’ definitions of their practice, and is indicated by the suggestion of some artists that creative practice is a process of “going on a journey.”

For some artists the journey of creative practice is considered to happen in “the zone” in a subconscious or meditative state, ‘you just go on this journey and you really have an amazing time with that vessel and you don’t even know you are in the subconscious until you finally finished it and you went “Gee I had a good time, that was fantastic I, it seemed so easy”’ [PD,1:9].

I have it in my head, but it has to somehow come through my hands [...] sometimes people come up to me and I’m painting [...] I’ve chipped my teeth and everything because I’ve got such a fright, so they have to ring the bell and call me and scream at me [...] Because I’ve really gone into another zone, I cannot be disturbed, [you] could give me a plate, then I’d eat it up, I wouldn’t know what I ate. [RN,2:7]

Other artists talk about the intimate relationship between thinking and making. ‘Get that interval closer and see where you go, and you should be able to think while you’re making and vice versa and, so a lot of stuff will happen just with tinkering and working’
‘I always imagine it like it’s [...] an out of focus picture which is slowly becoming in focus, [...] I mean I follow my intuition and I think that’s what it should be’ [RB,1:10].

What is common to these different versions of the notion that artworks ‘do their own journey’ [NH,2:11], is the idea that ‘if you’re so pre-occupied with the end product, it’s not really a creative process, what you do simply becomes a means to an end, and for me that’s not what art’s about’ [MI,2:8]. Significantly, artists suggest that the only means by which a creative practice can be maintained is through working hard, and dedicating sufficient time to it. ‘It’s not a work ethic, it’s not about running yourself into the ground, it’s just being there, and being there doesn’t necessarily mean you’re busy with your hands, just being there with your head, you can’t short circuit that’ [KD,1:29]. ‘It all just comes very slowly, I can’t [...] push it, [...] it just evolves, like you’ve got to be at it, you’ve got to be painting every day’ [CB,2:11]. Peter Hill suggests that some of the ongoing activity of making works of art is ‘about momentum, it just keeps me learning things [...] just keeping everything fresh [...] in my mind’ [PH,1:8]. For Michael Iwanoff, the importance of time for creative practice is emphasised by presenting art practice as ‘a seasonal thing. [...] For example spring is all about fecundity and growing and there’s winter where it’s quiet, and that’s how I see it in my practice. There are times when [...] I actually don’t want to be in the studio. Because I feel that the work is at a stage where it needs to be rested’ [MI,2:16].

What is key, I think, in these conceptions is that it makes creative practice clearly distinct from the mere manufacture of artefacts. In particular, it suggests that there is no scope for rationalising the process to expedite, economise or otherwise improve the efficiencies of artistic process. Like the seasons, art works come when they are ready - if the artist is attentive. Some artists employ specific strategies to make the journey a process of discovery:

In my paintings, [I’m looking for] work that I don’t feel like I’ve achieved, something a bit beyond what I think my capability is. So, if there’s some sort of a level or balance between my control and my ability and limitations etc., and chance, so that that’s why I have probably always worked in a really liquid manner, because it’s not easy to control. [CY,1:6]
In these cases the singular and experiential concept of the journey suggests that not only is it impossible to replicate works of art, but (and because) it is similarly impossible to replicate the process by which works of art are achieved.

2.3.2.4 Having Something to Say/Offer

One interesting dimension of artists’ definitions of practice relates to the ways in which artists conceive of the broader public value of their creative work, and the various ways they talk about artworks’ uses and functions. Whilst other aspects of artists’ definitions of practice can on some level remain inward looking, for professional artists there is a need to project the potential value of creative practice out into the real world. From the interview data it is clear that one of the most common notions that artists hold onto in this regard is a conception of creative practice as a communicative practice. ‘One of the considerations in my work is a sense of giving something, and sometimes that can be like visual pleasure or, I don’t know, other things more difficult to name, I suppose, and that is important. And feeling that you’re communicating something’ [AS,1:3].

The communicative practices that artists define place a great deal of emphasis on the activity of articulation and incorporate very specific ways of considering the role and significance of responses that creative practice may or may not produce in audiences. Ultimately, however, at the core of this conception is the idea that artists have ‘something to say’ [NH,1:5]. Some artists maintain that they have ‘a contribution to make, it’s not important and it’s not not important, […] it’s an offering’ [MI,1:2]. One important aspect of this sense of contribution is that it is not couched in terms of exchange, but in terms of giving something as an offering. Artists are hopeful rather than expectant that audiences will relate to their art works and that some level of communication will be achieved, ‘because that’s sort of what it is about right? Like looking at things that you’re interested in, things that you’re interested in thinking about, hopefully someone else is’ [RB,1:5].

It’s about sharing, to some extent, sharing my experiences. […] It’s not about being didactic. […] My work is often fairly ambiguous in regard to what I want people to take from it. […] What I feel that art is doing quite well is putting
someone in a position where their previous perceptions, in this context about life, are being challenged. What they then choose to do with that, is really up to them. But saying that, I feel that I’m engaged in an area that we have very little cultural language to engage with, both verbal and visual. So in a sense [...], it’s an ongoing experiment in trying to articulate and develop some kind of a language, a cultural language around the issues that I’m interested in exploring. [OC,1:2]

In this statement by Oron Catts one can observe the particular ways in which art practice is defined as communication. Firstly, in line with giving something and offering there is an emphasis on the notion of sharing personal experiences and interests, and an acknowledgement that this act of sharing is not prescriptive with respect to an audience’s response, since audience members can always take it or leave it. Secondly, this statement includes a conception of the ways in which the subjective experiences and interests informing the practice may potentially be of value for other people, in this case by mounting a challenge to previously held perceptions. And lastly the statement draws attention to the open-endedness of the self-assigned task for creative practice, the on-going, and experimental attempt to overcome inarticulacy, which may ultimately be the artist’s life work.

The parallels with the previously introduced dimensions of artists’ definitions of practice are significant. The concept of offering, for instance, maintains a certain level of ambivalence with regards to the audience to whom creative work is offered. What is important are the intrinsic values and concerns of the practice which are being communicated, whose potential value for a broader audience is projected by the artist. ‘It’s never nice if someone says something bad about your work [laughs], but it doesn’t bother me that much. I suppose I keep trying to come back to that idea of, [keeping] honest with myself, that’s [...] what I have to stay true to’ [PH,1:4]. If an audience does not get it, or does not respond, or responds negatively, then these apparent communicative failures do not necessarily diminish the value of the offering for the artist. ‘Often it explodes in my face, I realise that my work has been mis-used and mis-interpreted and mis-represented. But that’s part of the game’ [OC,1:9]. In a similar fashion to the conception that artists are their own harshest critics, I think the concept of freely giving something enables artists to distance their own evaluations of the success of their work from the responses elicited from audiences, even where art
practice is explicitly conceived as a communicative activity. ‘People have their own assumptions and [it’s] best not to worry about it too much’ [TG,2:12].

In many ways it is possible to construct the on-going project of articulation as an extension of the conception of creative practice as a journey. ‘The actual image itself takes its own road. I have got particular parameters that I’m working within, and I try to hold onto them, but [...] they do their own journey and when they’re finished they’re completely open for interpretation’ [NH,2:11]. Artists talked about the discovery and transformation of what they felt they had to say through creative practice, and again through contact with an audience. ‘That dialogue is really important, that’s what’s so great about having an exhibition. [...] You’re able to put works together in different configurations or arrangements and they speak very differently’ [MI,2:9]. ‘Like a solo show, a group of works, [...] it’s not just a single piece of work [...] people can see all those works together and they bounce off each other and then the viewer can make the links they want to make and then [that] can trigger off things for them’ [PH,1:3]. Ultimately it is the imperfect articulacy of the artist’s creative work that keeps them striving, and taking the creative journey. ‘A lot of things I do, I feel [...] I’ve failed at that deeper thing I’m trying to describe’ [PB,1:8]. ‘You can spend your whole career dealing with the same thing because you’re trying to work out exactly what you’re trying to say’ [RB,1:12]. In this sense, the on-going project of articulating what the artist has to say becomes a key element in the continuity and wholeness of artistic practice.

What is most specific to this communicative dimension of artists’ definitions of practice is the notion that artists maintain that they have something of value to say and offer to an audience. Stuart Elliot says that:

[art]work has to be a viable articulation of what you think is important. That important thing might just be about what harmonious colours are, but it also might be, like Chernobyl was very bad, but either way the work has to be informed by its subjective base, and by its intentions and in the end it has to be true work. [SE,1:6]

Most significant here is the highly subjective determination of what is important for the artist and their creative practice. This important thing provides the motivation and
intent for practice, and an artist’s capacity to speak about it comes directly from personal experience and engagement with it. The vital truth underlying the work of art is ultimately the artist’s belief in the importance of the creative work that they are undertaking.

The specific important things that artists have to say take many forms and are derived from artists’ personal engagement in many contexts. Barbara Cotter says, ‘I can only really talk about me and my life. I don’t have the ability to talk about someone else, someone else’s problems or someone else’s concerns. I don’t really have a close personal connection to global concerns so I have to come from a personal perspective’ [BC,1:9]. For Caitlin Yardley, having something to say was a matter of finding her voice in relation to international art history. ‘I needed to start implicating in the paintings, what I was, where I was, how I was experiencing painting in a relation to the history that gets thrown at me and why these American white men, were being thrown at me, as the young (I was 19, 18 when I was studying) female working in Perth’ [CY,2:12]. For Larry Mitchell there are local and global political and environmental contexts that are significant. ‘Most of my coastal landscapes I try to make them so beautiful that people re-fall in love with the environment and care for it. So they may just appear to be landscapes, but for me they’re always slightly political, but without slapping people about the head’ [LM,1:6]. While Rebecca Baumann articulates important things that she relates to more universal aspects of human sensation and experience, ‘I’m interested in colour as being something which is a bit beyond language, [Michael Towsig in What Colour is Sacred] talks about something called the “bodily unconscious” […]', sort of how we think, but in terms beyond language’ [RB,1:12].

What artists have to say is also an important dimension of what artists believe distinguishes their practices from ‘a self-indulgent career, that I just painted because I enjoyed painting’ [CY,2:12]. Cecile Williams says that the notion of telling a story through her practice made it incompatible with practices focused on ‘just making things and then having exhibitions of those objects […] I just wanted to talk more about things through my art works and tended not to be in group shows as much, because I couldn’t do it there’ [CW,1:9]. For other artists, having something to say stood in distinction to ‘just manufacturing commodities’ and made the art gallery
(even a commercial gallery) ‘not a shop, it’s actually, it’s much more of a forum for ideas’ [SE,2:4]. Nigel Hewitt states, ‘I’ve got something to say and commercialism is not my imperative, [...] it’s an important part of it, of course, but it’s not a driving force. I’ve got a lot to say and I say it through my work’ [NH,1:5].

2.3.2.5 The Labour of Defining Practice: Conclusions

From my engagement with the collected data, I see the labour of defining practice as producing two things that are essential for artists’ professional creative practice. In the first instance these definitions produce a degree of self-sufficiency and autonomy such that artists can hold that, ‘I never paint for response’ [LM,1:4]. ‘When you get to the point when you are making work for somebody else, when you’re thinking “oh, will they like this?” well then you’re in the wrong business, you should be running a restaurant, because you’re the one that has to live with it’ [SE,1:6].

As has been seen in the above discussions, artists can maintain such stances because they themselves are their own harshest critics. No other critic or audience possesses the intimate knowledge of their creative practice and processes required to evaluate the products of creative practice. Moreover, by conceiving of creative practice as a process of going on a journey, whose destination is obscured even from the artist themselves, artists reinforce the notion that creative practice cannot effectively be evaluated from a vantage point outside of the practice. On some level discrete art objects and exhibitions are merely landmarks that artists pass through on their journey, and their success or failure can only be viewed with reference to the ground previously covered and the future directions that a particular creative passage opens up.

Secondly, artists’ definitions of practice establish a raison d’être for creative work by making a strong case for the necessity of the artists’ labour. As has been suggested above, artists maintain the necessity of their practice by holding that they have something important to say, something that they are struggling to articulate. The deep personal significance of what artists have to say focuses their practice and keeps them motivated to persist in the project of trying to articulate it for themselves and for
others. At the same time, the notion that the journey towards articulacy cannot be mapped out in advance ensures that artists have a lifetime’s labour ahead of them, that they have a reason to continue to press on.

In the end, the collected data suggests that artists define practice in a way that renders the core concerns and processes of creative work in terms that are intrinsic to the practice. These definitions also suggest grounds on which the various kinds of external evaluations to which an artist’s work may be subjected may be held to be illegitimate. I suggest that these definitions are not intended primarily to elevate the artist to a status above critics and audiences; it is not necessarily evidence of artists’ aspiration to genius. Rather, I think, that these definitions are critical in allowing artists to continue to succeed in their own terms, even when externally allocated successes (such as sales, critical acclaim and other forms of recognition) aren’t to be had. As Bernard Beck has stated, artistic professions are distinctive in holding onto the ‘sentiment that not doing well in the world of the arts is not a reason for quitting [...] As a matter of fact, if you quit because you are not doing well, you probably should not have been here in the first place. It becomes a kind of test of whether you are the “real thing”’ (Beck, 1988, p. 47). Significantly, artists’ efforts to define practice in the particular ways described above illustrate the various ways in which visual artists in Western Australia make themselves the real thing to the extent that they can continue to pursue creative practice, irrespective of whether they are doing well.

2.3.3 Creating Conditions

In the previous section I have presented the notion that Western Australian visual artists are involved in the effort to define their own creative practice, to make it real for themselves and intrinsically self-sufficient. In this section I will present data that outlines the additional labour of artists to create the conditions under which it is possible to continue to define and maintain a creative practice. On one level artists’ efforts to create conditions can remain essentially inward looking, as might be the case when making one’s own time and personal resources available for the pursuit of an art practice as a hobby. For most professional artists, however, creating conditions involves negotiations with the interests of third parties whose cooperation is required
on some level to pursue creative practice as defined by the artist. Such cooperation does not necessarily imply that third parties regard the artist’s creative practice as real and significant for anyone but artists themselves, but others may yet accommodate the interests of artists in various ways. Creating conditions is an activity in which artists are involved in their personal lives and relationships, where partners and families are an important consideration with regards to the allocation of time, resources and attention. Creating conditions also involves the procurement of material resources, and striking a sustainable balance between economically fruitful activity and creative practice, which may or may not be a viable source of income. Artists may also work to create very specific conditions that are conducive to the particular needs of their creative practice, such as privacy in the studio, or overseas travel to stimulate new work.

In that which follows I will present five key dimensions of artists’ labour to create conditions, as these have emerged from the data over the course of my analysis, starting with attendance at art school, where artists have described both Intensity and Support as important conditions for creative practice. Subsequently, in relation to notions such as Surviving, Being Out in the World and Being in the Zone, and Investing in Art Practice, I will present data that demonstrates the delicate balancing act that artists perform, creating conditions in relation to lifestyle, the needs of creative practice and earning a living. Following that I will present the various ways in which artists may Relinquish Part of the Profession to other individuals/entities, such as commercial galleries, who may do some of the work of creating conditions on their behalf, and some of the different trade-offs that this involves. Finally, I will conclude with a brief summary pulling together the most significant threads running through the material presented about artists’ work to create conditions for the maintenance and on-going definition of their art practices.

2.3.3.1 Art School: Intensity and Support

Art school education is a key component of many artists’ working lives and is a purposeful activity that produces important outcomes across a number of levels in relation to the conceptual model of the labour of visual art which I am detailing in this
thesis. I would suggest that artists’ definitions of practice are influenced in no small way by the teaching and learning environments of tertiary art institutions. Applying to attend an art school via the submission of a portfolio and interview (as is the procedure for entry to many courses – though not all) is also a key form of attracting validation and confirmation of one’s prospects very early on in one’s career. Following on from this, the attainment of a formal qualification in the visual arts is undoubtedly an important form of credential contributing to the validation of an artist’s professional status. I have, however, elected to discuss art schools here because in conversation, the outcomes from art education that artists have focused on have tended to be those that create the conditions for ongoing practice. On one level, attending an art school creates conditions for practice by providing artists with the opportunity to acquire new technical skills and knowledge. Kevin Draper relates an early experience in the sculpture department:

I thought, ‘what’s he bloody got an oxy [welder] out for?’ because I could use an oxy like that, and I thought ‘that’s not creative to me.’ And he did some really nice things with it and I thought, ‘bloody hell, I know how to use that’ and it never had really occurred to me that those sorts of processes could then be used creatively. And you could tune them in and be quite [...] intuitive. [KD,1:11]

But conditions created at art school also included the establishment of ongoing support networks of peers, mentors and advocates, and the provision of the conceptual tools required for the maintenance of a critically robust and self-sufficient creative practice. Further contextual material about Western Australian art schools has been presented in sections 2.1.2.4 and 2.2.1.2.

A number of artists made statements suggesting that their time at art school provided them with a ‘really good support crew, [...] they’re all people that I really clicked with at art school [...], we’ve lived together and we’ve seen each other’s [...] lives go and [...] I suppose that’s what keeps me going’ [CW,1:4]. Anna Sabadini draws an interesting comparison between her visual art practice and her creative writing practice, in which she stresses the role of a community formed at art school:

Going to art school, you get the whole background, and the community and I know what I’m doing. Whereas, with writing it’s been always private. I don’t
In this statement it is evident that one reason to attend art school is to get the background and to feel that one has a good basis on which to establish a sense that one knows what s/he is doing. This background is partly a theoretical and historical induction or initiation, which Erin Coates suggests provides a level of orientation and self-assurance, of ‘feeling that I’d done enough tertiary study to qualify myself as an artist’ [EC,1:1]. Another aspect of this whole background is induction into an institutional community, where student artists share much of the immediate context for their creative practice with colleagues and peers; ‘postgrad was fantastic, because [as a] postgrad you were with a group of people that you could really nurture, as difficult as it was’ [PB,1:7]. Whilst most professional artists outside of institutional settings tend to work independently and in relative isolation, it seems that for many artists the community formed initially at art school can continue to play a significant role even after graduating and leaving the institution. Such community networks include on-going connections with ‘former lecturers that are still really supportive of what I do, write references, still come to shows to say “hey it’s OK, it’s alright, you’re not mad”’ [CY,2:10]. And peers too; ‘probably one of the best things out of my study was the people I studied with. Because they’re the ones that support you after you leave, more than your lecturers. […] They’re the ones that you can actually go and ask for advice afterwards, after you’ve finished your degree’ [BC,2:8].

All of these statements concerning communities established at art school have been made by female artists, whereas the male artists interviewed have not tended to specifically emphasise the supportive community dimension of their art school education. This gender difference would be an interesting topic for further investigation but it cannot be treated adequately here due to the size and nature of the interview sample.

Both male and female artists have talked about ‘the rigour, and […] the intensity […] of giving yourself three years (or seven years as it turned out) of just really getting into depth, and having someone slightly push you when you get lazy, or challenge you, that’s really good’ [AS,1:17]. Nigel Hewitt talks about possible reasons to pursue
further study in terms of ‘practising in a situation where people are critical of your work and what you’re doing, and how it speaks about what I’m talking about. To have that confrontation would be fantastic, ‘cause it’s very hard to get it outside of that situation’ [NH,2:6]. For Stuart Elliott the ‘main driver’ for considering studying for a higher degree was:

forced research. [...] Unless I can hear an academic hammer being cocked in the background, the chances of me actually hunting down Baudrillard is not good. [...] And if you were doing the study, that study would enhance, enrich and seriously inform what you’re doing on the bench and vice versa, but as it is, I feel that I don’t do anywhere near as much research as I should. [SE,2:15]

Erin Coates also emphasises the critical intensity of her postgraduate study, ‘I could’ve read all of the same stuff by myself, I could’ve spoken to my peers and friends about it, but I couldn’t have that same intensity of discussion, that sometimes would be focused on my own work. No, I couldn’t get that elsewhere’ [EC,2:8].

Through art school education, artists place themselves in an environment that is both secure and challenging and within which they can begin to, or continue to, define their practices. The conditions that artists create through undertaking studies at art school include the establishment of an enduring support network in the form of community of collegial peers and mentors with whom they have shared trials and triumphs. On the other hand, it is an environment where, ‘things are being stripped away all the time, “oh no you can’t do that, oh no you can’t do that,” you think “well what the fuck can I do?”’ [SE,1:18]. An environment where, ‘you can’t just say, “Oh well I like that.”’ [...] I said to [my students], “You can ‘just like it’ out there, when you’re in your studio, or the rest of your life, but in here there’s 40 people want to know what’s going on here”’ [KD,1:2]. By enrolling in art school education artists create conditions in which they can develop the critical and reflexive tools required to be their own harshest critics and where they learn, above all, to be resilient and self-reliant.

2.3.3.2 Surviving

One vital dimension of artists’ efforts to create conditions for the definition and maintenance of creative practice are the various ways in which artists manage their expectations in terms of life-style, living circumstances and relationships. The low
annual incomes of artists and the difficulties of making creative practices economically viable have been frequently documented in previous research (Menger, 1999; L. Steiner & Schneider, 2012; Throsby & Zednik, 2010). Whilst working a day job in addition to creative practice is a common feature of artists’ working lives, the interview data suggests that artists take a number of different approaches to ensuring their daily survival in material terms. As Peter Hill states, ‘art has been my [...] sole income, on paper, but [...] all the things I do to save money have made it possible, so the selling of the artworks pays for the materials to build the house, and I build the house’ [PH,1:11]. He goes on to suggest that by moving his family to live in the small town of Northcliffe, in close proximity to extended family, he can also draw on a network on a turn-and-turn-about basis, ‘you help each other out and so, yeah, I’ve had help from family members’ [PH,1:11]. Similarly, Monique Tippett’s decision to live and work with her family in the forests in Dwellingup creates advantageous conditions for making her practice viable, not only providing her with her subject matter: ‘my work’s all about the forest’ [MT,2:3]; but also her materials, ‘I love wood and [...] I’ve got the means to get these things out of the forest’ [MT,2:33].

Michael Iwanoff discussed his expectations in relation to living life and material needs: ‘I’m very well practised at letting things go. So I make choices, [...] but I certainly don’t feel that I’m missing out. On the contrary, I feel that I’m able to gain a freedom through not feeling that I need all those things and [I] prioritise what I use money for’ [MI,1:16-17]. Artists also talked about recycling, and living frugally and resourcefully: ‘it’s an incredibly affluent society, [...]I really enjoy using what people throw away’ [MI,1:14]. Anna Sabadini says her, ‘[migrant] background [...] comes in handy, because if I’ve learnt one thing from my mother it’s resourcefulness, and you can actually live quite cheaply’ [AS,1:13]. Similarly, Craig Boulter emphasises his modest material ambitions; ‘I only make a small amount of money, but I’m perfectly happy [...] , I don’t want to make $50000 a year or $60000, I never will, I just want to make enough money, just to survive’ [CB,1:6-7]. The notion of working towards survival, as opposed to material abundance, is echoed by a number of artists, seeking to create conditions to ‘stay afloat and keep my art practice afloat’ [RB,1:18].
Creating conditions for survival can have some significant impacts in key areas of artists’ lives, such as their relationships and family commitments.

When you’re younger and it’s just you and you only have to think about you […] it doesn’t matter if you don’t have much money. You can kinda get by, because it’s your own fault, you can cut corners if you need to. But when you actually have someone else that you need to consider, you kinda need to think well maybe they don’t want to be that poor [BC,1:11].

For these kinds of reasons, some artists felt that having a partner also involved in the arts played a significant role in enabling their creative practice. ‘I think having a partner who is an artist as well is the most important thing for me, […] possibly if I was in a relationship with someone who wasn’t speaking the same language then it would be a very different thing’ [SC,1:3]. As Kevin Draper says, ‘[artist partners] understand that selfishness of the artist and when you need to do stuff. […] We haven’t got kids, so it’s just the two of us and, if we have to work, or we have to go on that German residency, then we do, […] we can handle that’ [KD,1:27]. As well as understanding the selfishness of the artist, partners also active as artists sometimes play practical roles as ‘an assistant that is 100% committed […] for free, so that has had a huge impact on what we can achieve and what we’ll encourage each other to pursue’ [CY,2:4].

Some artists, it seems, adopt an almost counter-cultural attitude that does not pursue the material comforts delivered by surplus but instead strives for survival, and they build their lifestyles and relationships around this expectation. However, artists also work to provide themselves with various forms of security, creating conditions to help counter some of the relative precarity of subsistence living. For some artists, this sense of security is provided by the possession of skills, tools and qualifications that remain dormant as fall-back options. ‘With the facilities that I’ve got there in the workshop […] I could do industrial things, I could do design stuff, I could do furniture. […] I never got back to that yet. I always use that [to] make me feel OK about going out on a limb’ [KD,1:30]. Similarly, Penny Bovell says, ‘I became a teacher first, […] so if all else fails […] I could be a high school teacher or a primary school teacher […] and I use that as a way of feeling secure’ [PB,1:2]. For other artists security, and the conditions of freedom it provides, has been created through financial means over an extended period of time, enabling artists now to pursue their creative practice with fewer
compromises. ‘This self-adopted point of freedom is really so that I can pursue things that fascinate me, and [...] support my family; a balancing act. [...] More and more I’m allowed, by my economic circumstances, just to be able to pursue things that interest me’ [LM,2:14]. Craig Boulter says, ‘I’ve been so frugal, I mean even now, even if I didn’t have the pension, I have enough money in the bank to survive, without ever having to sell another painting. I mean I couldn’t paint if I didn’t have money in the bank, [...] I couldn’t paint if I were paying off a mortgage, I just couldn’t’ [CB,2:2]. For still other artists, security is provided by partners and family members who provide financial and/or moral support: ‘I was able to do what I was able to do because my father gave me many opportunities. He wouldn’t have me applying for a government grant in those days [...] he did give me that freedom [...] and financially helped me survive, as a student and wanting to follow a path’ [PD,1:11]. Nigel Hewitt says, ‘my partner, [...] she’s been an incredible support and I mean that really is the primary one. [...] Being in a stable relationship is a really [...] good place to be, because [...] it allows plenty of room for thinking about the stuff that you’re working on’ [NH,1:5].

One final dimension that artists refer to in terms of creating the conditions for survival is the way in which they cite aspects of their own personalities as a key resource on which they draw. As Monique Tippett says, ‘You just have to be fearless, I think. Just go for these things, [...] you do care what people think, but you don’t really, because you’re going to do it anyway’ [MT,2:4]. Craig Boulter describes himself as being ‘very pig-headed, I’m a Taurian and I don’t give a toss whether or not I’m accepted, I just want to survive’ [CB,1:2]. Other artists not only stress independence and stubbornness, but also energy and motivation, ‘there was anger and frustration that I was working against, which are significant driving forces’ [CY,2:12]. Anna Sabadini talks about feeling ‘pretty driven, and maybe that comes from being the oldest child of a migrant family, where [...] achievement is really stressed’ [AS,1:4]. Penny Bovell says,’I had a huge amount of cockiness and energy to put myself out there, [...] it didn’t feel daunting to do that, I was enthusiastic. I guess other people might’ve said cocky and bolshy, but I believed’ [PB,1:2].

Artists have also expressed doubts that they had the personal energy, resilience and confidence that it takes to succeed as artists at various stages of their careers. ‘If
you’re in shows like *Perspecta* you realise how proactive you’ve got to be and, and some of us can’t do that, we’re not that kind of a character.’ [KD,1:14] Or like Rebecca Baumann who says that as an art student, ‘I just didn’t really think I had the stomach for it in a lot of ways’ [RB,1:1]. Personal resources and character traits seem to be vital components of artists’ capacity to create the conditions for their own survival, and that of their creative practice. At some times, and for some artists, this fearlessness and proactivity seems to come naturally, or perhaps as a product of their belief in the importance of the practice that they have defined. At other times artists must in various ways overcome their doubts and insecurities to create these conditions for and within themselves.

### 2.3.3.3 Being Out in the World and Being in the Zone

One focus of artists’ efforts to create conditions for the definition and maintenance of their creative practice is on those conditions that artists suggest are essential for the creative process. Such conditions go beyond merely having enough time and material resources to pursue practice and include things like access to experiences to make art about, particular kinds of spaces in which to practice, and the application of strategies for the progression and development of practice. A key finding emerging from this data is that the relationship between time spent in the studio at creative practice and artists’ perceptions of their own productivity is less straightforward than some previous research suggests (eg. Throsby & Zednik, 2010, p. 42). It is not necessarily the case, given the opportunity to spend more time at creative practice, that artists would be more productive, at least in terms of producing more artworks. Peter Hill suggests that he hasn’t, ‘really felt that I could extend, or create more, with the workload that I had on outside of that, and as it is [the gallery director] complains that I don’t give her enough stuff, because I don’t produce very much’ [PH,1:15]. But he also says that:

[When] I have had [...] extended periods of time to do what I want, I don’t necessarily make any more work. Because, if we’re going on the idea that you’re reflecting experience, [...] if you’re locking yourself away in a white cube your whole life, you’ve got no experience to relate. So I have thought that I don’t know if I want to be every day of the week making art, I’ll always want to be doing something else as well. [PH,1:11-12]
This concept that artists need time away from art practice in order make meaningful work is one that is has been echoed by a number of the interview participants. ‘You can work and work and work, […] but […] a lot of those works have come from being out in the world, […] you’re doing something else, so […] I think that stuff is actually really important’ [RB,1:15]. Stuart Elliott says, ‘you’ve got to have something to make the art about, you’ve got to have something which you can look [at] out there and say well “this I find interesting and this I don’t find interesting”’ [SE,2:6]. Herein it is possible to see that artists’ “portfolio careers” (Bridgstock, 2005) or “multiple job holding” (Throsby & Zednik, 2011) may not in all cases be the result of economic necessity, but also be seen as contributing important life experiences upon which practice draws. Some jobs have emerged from the data as being especially valuable in terms of the experiences offered, such as teaching. ‘If income wasn’t an issue […] I think I’d probably still like to teach one class a week, because I do love the conversations, I like the feedback, I like sharing my knowledge’ [SC,1:12]. As Kevin Draper puts it, ‘teaching takes what you need yourself as an artist, so it takes a lot of effort, but it also gives a lot back’ [KD,1:30].

For a number of artists it was the case that travel to different places was a specific form of being in the world that artists considered crucial to the pursuit of their practices. In a number of instances it provided the source material and subject matter for creative work; ‘I’ve usually got to have a yen or desire to experience a place, whether it’s a group of islands or a city. […] Sometimes it’s either a desire to go there and see if it interests me, or I’m already there and it visually stimulates me’ [LM,1:8]. For others it was a matter of broadening horizons, of going ‘away, not just because you find the world’s not flat, that’s the first thing you’ll notice, but just for that experience’ [KD,1:38]. ‘It’s just so enriching to put yourself in a different environment, a different world, I can only encourage people to travel, whether physically overseas, or within themselves’ [MI,2:10].

Interestingly, not all artists consider this balance between art practice and the experiences of real life to be something that requires much articulation and negotiation. For instance, rather than making a distinction between art practice and the other aspects of the everyday, Michael Iwanoff says; ‘in German […] there’s a term
which is called Gesamtkunstwerk, which is an inclusive art practice. [...] Certainly the way that I look at it is that everything that I do is part of my creative practice’ [MI,1:6]. Or, as Cecile Williams suggests, ‘it isn’t so defined into one area and another area, because I think it should be more, like you see in those communities with the dances and the visuals, it’s just part of life, [...] they don’t see it as a separate thing’ [CW,1:17]. Clearly, in these cases where the studio door is open to the other dimensions of life, it can be argued that artists consider much more of their activity than art making (in a limited, traditional sense) to provide a vital contribution to practice.

As well as creating conditions for creative practice by attempting to establish an important balance between art making and experiencing the real world, artists also work to create the conditions that they find most conducive to creative process. For some artists this involves setting aside a private studio space, free of distractions and interruptions:

I can’t work at home, I tried, I’m messy and I don’t like mess [...] I’m really private about how I make work. I often produce a work in one session that will go for up to 15 hours and often at the end I’m so exhausted I leave without assessing what has happened. And so I view the work properly when I come back again the next time and [...] I don’t know for some time if it is good or terrible. [...] At home, family and friends always want to see what you’re doing [...] I don’t like the input, while I’m making. [CY,2:15]

In contrast, others rent a shared studio space outside of home specifically for the social interaction; ‘I need a certain amount of contact with people every day. So a group studio is probably a really good way of doing it. I just realised being stuck in the ‘burbs with [...] a studio in your house, which seemingly keeps all the costs down [...] is not necessarily good for certain people’s psyche’ [PB,2:10]. Whether private or shared, for most artists having a dedicated studio space, whether at home or outside the home, is a very significant aspect of creating conditions for the pursuit of their creative practice. ‘I had my father here, he had carers coming in up at the house, but I was always at home. The cat, dog, I think it’s been actually easier [to have a studio at home], I don’t have to travel and leave family and I can do it any time in the night, so it’s pretty good’ [RN,1:4]. For Michael Iwanoff, ‘the realisation came that I need to put time aside, not practice in the studio and actually build a studio and then facilitate the
on-going expansion or differentiation of the practice [...], and that now enables me to, to practise in a fuller way’ [MI, 1:8].

Creating a space for creative practice was perhaps more complicated for Oron Catts than for most artists, because he is working with biological materials that need to be handled in regulated and secure laboratory situations, and he says that he ‘was really lucky in getting access to the labs where I could actually develop my work’ [OC, 1:3]. Having established SymbioticA, a research centre within a university, he is in a position to assist in creating conditions for the practices of other artists working in similar ways. ‘SymbioticA is trying not to be territorial, [from] the very beginning, the whole ethos [we] started, wanting to share what we’re doing. We share the resources that we had managed to make available for us’ [OC, 2:3].

Aside from making space for practice, artists also have other strategies that help create conditions for working in the zone, or otherwise allowing for ideas to emerge and art processes to evolve.

I often have music on the studio when I’m doing an endurance painting. For a long time on repeat, one song, generally quite a flat, level song, because it’s something about a really consistent monotone sound that helps me concentrate. And there are a couple of songs that I have always used, drowning out scary sounds in old studio buildings as well [CY, 1:8].

Regina Noakes says, ‘I use a lot of classical music. Sometimes I can’t paint with classical; I have jazz, Eric Clapton, blues and then the whole body of paintings will be only that music, over and over and over again’ [RN, 1:10]. Michael Iwanoff says that, ‘ritual is important, in that it brings me into the present moment, then I’m in the zone, if you like. In psychological terms, in the flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). [...] It enables me to embody the transient, multi-dimensional, interconnected flow of reality’ [MI, 1:9-10]. Erin Coates describes her creative process specifically in terms of a range of different activities that help create conditions for the emergence of ideas:

There’s that odd kind of alchemy of when an idea suddenly forms. And it’s because you’ve put the foundations there; you’ve been observing things, you’ve been researching, you’ve been thinking about things, you might’ve been having conversations with people. And so you’re creating the ground for an idea to
emerge and then it’s there. It’s not the end, but it’s often then I have an idea, [...] a clear visual sense of what I want to work towards. [EC,1:4-5]

Note how these foundational activities include aspects of both being in the world (eg. observations, conversations, researching) and being in the zone (the connection between thinking and making). At the same time, artists suggest that ultimately, ‘you have all of these strategies and methods, it doesn’t matter whether it’s painting or drawing or even doing design work for a public art project, it’s giving it the time’ [PB,1:4]. And, as Kevin Draper emphasises, ‘most artists work really, really hard, long hours. You’ve got to, to cover the ground. And I think it’s got[ten] even harder to find those hours in a day and to survive’ [KD,1:6].

2.3.3.4 Investing in Art Practice

In the course of creating conditions for survival and being out in the world or in the zone, economic concerns continue to have a significant bearing on artists’ efforts. Even though artists may choose to live rich lives with less, they acknowledge that ‘money [...] facilitates a certain functioning within our community’ [MI,1:3]. Indeed, whatever else they may be balancing, such as relationships and family responsibilities, artists are invariably balancing the activity through which they earn their income and the intrinsic concerns of their creative practice. Artists actively invest in art practice, in some cases primarily in terms of time and energy, but often also in terms of subsidising and resourcing the practice; financial investments from which there may or may not be any financial return. Many of the artists I interviewed spoke specifically about how they prioritise their practice, and the various ways in which their investment in art practice reflected this priority. So whilst Michael Iwanoff spoke about ‘letting go’ he also says ‘I don’t ever spare [money] in terms of materials’ [MI,2:8]. Similarly Caitlin Yardley says, ‘debt is a huge, huge part of my practice [...] it’s scary and wouldn’t make business sense to anyone, but I’m happy to go into debt for my practice’ [CY,1:3]. For Penny Bovell the rent for her shared studio space ‘is at least a third of what I’m earning, [...] I’m juggling, juggling. Downsize the house, have a little bit of money in the bank so you can still, can afford to subsidise what you love doing’ [PB,1:13].
Investment in practice is not just a matter of practical necessity, however. Artists also tend to regard their level of investment in practice as one way in which they gauge their own seriousness and commitment. Caitlin Yardley is aware of the investment she is making. ‘I don’t know if that indicates some sort of a commitment to [art practice]? It doesn’t bother me. I’d love to buy a house but the accountant said I have too much debt as it is’ [CY,1:3]. Tom Gibbons says that ‘I would now regard myself, having retired [from his academic position] as more of a professional because it takes up more of my time and thoughts’ [TG,2:17]. Pippin Drysdale says, ‘one of my greatest strengths has been the fact I’ve never been afraid to work and work passionately and continuously and be totally committed. [...] There are so many people who are off and on and dilly and dally’ [PD,2:11]. In a similar vein, Erin Coates suggests that ‘opportunities are not coming up for me because I am not fully invested in my arts practice. [...] When you split your time in the way that I am, you can’t expect opportunities to just throw themselves at you. You have to keep working at them, and so it’s finding a sustainable way to do that’ [EC,1:11]. So whilst investing in art practice in various ways is a necessity, it often also entails a balancing act and leads to varying kinds of compromise. Peter Hill suggests that ‘everyone that’s an artist has a compromise of some sort. Whether it be that you survive by [...] government funding, or you survive by public art, or can survive by a [commercial] gallery, or you survive by teaching’ [PH,1:22].

If all artists face a compromise, as Peter Hill suggests, then one important choice that artists have to make in creating the conditions for practice is about the aspect/s of their work and lives where the compromise will be most keenly felt. The collected data suggests that the compromises required by investment in art practice take several forms. In the first instance, artists may choose to maintain a day job to provide a level of financial security and to resource their creative practice. Inevitably the compromise in this case is that all such work is time and energy diverted from creative practice. Other artists may choose to pursue financial returns through their creative practice, selling work with commercial galleries, taking commissions or tendering for public art projects. In this case the compromise is often felt in terms of the limitations or prescriptions placed around art practice to appeal to the market and to clients. Still
other artists are proficient at pursuing opportunities where funding is available to support their own practice or to realise specific projects, whether in the form of grants, commissions for curated shows, or residencies. In this case, the need to be untethered and available to seize opportunity at short notice can seriously compromise an artist’s ability to maintain a life and commitments outside of art practice. Artists are often negotiating between all three versions of compromise in their efforts to arrive at the best possible balance.

The fact that artists often maintain a day job is a key part of the confusion and difficulty that arises in attempts to define artists as a distinct group of professionals in society. As Kevin Draper points out, ‘it’s kind of like a hobby, a thing that you do that runs beside your real life and although it does run beside your life, it’s like having [...] any artist well tell you, [...] two full time jobs’ [KD,1:6]. For some artists, this sense of divided loyalty and dispersed energy can be lessened by seeking work in contexts that are felt to be complementary to practice.

Selling clothes was [...] really depressing and I found that my head really wanted to be working through my ideas and wanted to be thinking about whatever I’m writing at home or working on in the studio and [...] some of that depression [...] inhibited the studio as well, it would just shut me down. So I’m in a better place teaching art and it’s a really useful thing to be doing while you’re making art anyway, because you have to re-evaluate your own approach to other people’s work and that really affects your own approach to your own work in turn.

[CY,1:9]

On the other hand, some artists expressed the idea that there were advantages to keeping practice and employment distinct, by avoiding employment in the arts. Barbara Cotter says, ‘I do sometimes wonder whether working in a gallery is not a good thing, because [...] I go to less exhibitions now, working in a gallery, than I did before. [...] You come home from work and the last thing you want to do is go back to another gallery’ [BC,2:13]. Rebecca Baumann found working for:

The theatre was quite consuming because [...] you have to be problem solving and doing all that. [...] The work I want to do is either directly related to art or probably not at all, but very contained, so you can go there and just switch off from it and it’s just really about the money, rather than it being another kind of creative outlet. [RB,1:17]
For Oron Catts in his day job as Director of SymbioticA, the research centre he established to consolidate access to the scientific laboratories required for his art practice, the necessary compromise takes the form of a great deal of time ‘dedicated to support other people’s research and run the organization as opposed to do[ing] my own practice’ [OC,1:11]. On one level the income and security that a day job provides enables artists to create the conditions within which they can pursue practice according to their own definitions. ‘I have had the freedom to develop in whichever way I wanted to whether I was conscious of it or not, just follow curiosity’ [TG,1:12]. On another level, the time constraints another role imposes can inhibit that very same freedom in various ways:

Ideally one would be incredibly truthful to the absolute piece of work that you’re making at any one time and have very little regard for the audience or where it’s going to end up. But that’s not my case, because time is of the essence [...]. So I think a lot of the time in my practice, I’m working to some sort of brief. That sounds terrible, but it’s a deadline for some exhibition in which I know I’ve got X amount of wall space and it’s in this particular type of gallery. [SC,1:7-8]

One obvious solution to the difficulties of maintaining what has been described as two fulltime jobs, would be to have the fulltime job of art practice pay its own way; by selling works of art, or through making work on commission, or by being paid for other kinds of creative goods and/or services, such as might be the case for community art practitioners. In this way artists may not need to have a second job, fulltime or otherwise, for the purposes of generating an income. The first difficulty that most artists face in this regard is finding or creating a market for their artworks. Some of these problems have previously been presented in section 2.2.1.3.

Assuming that there are buyers/clients for an artist’s work/services, having the art practice pay its own way can create other difficulties and compromises. Firstly, a number of artists have talked about the pressures from within and without that can follow on from commercial success, especially the pressures to ‘self-plagiarise’ [LM,1:9], to make works ‘to suit the clients in Dalkeith’ [RN,2:7], to make ‘blue versions’ [AS,1:26] and to establish and maintain a ‘signature’ [NH,2:15]. As Michael Iwanoff says, selling work can create ‘a situation where the work is moved in a way which creates a wave of energy that pulls it along in a negative way, in a limiting way,
where it could become mannered. [...] Which I am trying to be mindful of and prevent in my practice’ [MI,1:14]. Secondly, where the practice funds itself there are other problems that impact on creative work, as Larry Mitchell observes. ‘I find it really difficult to hold works together because sometimes I have to sell main pieces to survive. Sometimes I might need another trip back to a place, can’t afford it, so I’ve got to sell one of the major pieces from the show. So the collection begins to fragment and fall apart’ [LM,1:9-10]. Thirdly, artists are wary of working on a commission basis, because, as Monique Tippett observes in the case of public art projects: ‘lots of people want to have their little input and that puts pressure on me, and it changes the flow of your creativity a bit, I think. Meetings and stuff is what sucks about public art, the amount of yeses and nos and boxes you have to tick’ [MT,2:10]. Lastly, artists who hire out their skills as a creative practitioner for community art projects and similar activities have to contend with the fact that they are in competition with others who do the work ‘voluntarily, or they’re not practising artists so they don’t rely on it for money’ [CW,1:14]. Cecile Williams suggests that this has significant impacts on the going rate for artists’ services, ‘they’d pay an electrician $60 to come and do something, but to pay an artist that much for an hour they baulk at’ [CW,1:14].

There’s too many people that do it for a hobby and if they get paid, [...] like maybe $800 a week [...] they think it’s fantastic, “money, oh you’re so lucky,” and I think, “Oh come on, that’s just like, it’s not enough!” Because you might be two weeks without work or whatever, not that that matters, but it’s what you build up and it’s your years of training to be able to do it, that they don’t see. [CW,1:14]

Selling creative work to survive seems to involve navigating between the Scylla of selling out and the Charybdis of being entirely at the mercy of market forces, including the global economic climate, never knowing whether it will be possible to recoup enough to survive. As someone even as well established as Stuart Elliott states, ‘I’ve had a reasonable income, but it’s always fraught with risk because you don’t know, you can’t depend on selling work’ [SE,1:20].

Arts funding from government or other sources may seem to offer a way around the kinds of compromises that result from having a day job, and/or selling creative goods and services. Much funding is designed specifically to give artists opportunities to
pursue their own practice and projects by removing some of the financial constraints that would otherwise limit or prevent the envisaged work from being realised.

However, one compromise that comes with the pursuit of funding is that, ‘it’s just like a career to apply’ [RN,2:10]. Artists often talked about enlisting help, ‘every grant I wrote I’ve had a team of at least seven people. [...] Writing a grant is no mean feat because, [...] in the end, they just want a paragraph that says it all. [...]You’ve got to be so clever to be able to put it down in a way that they read that and the person that’s on the panel has a complete picture [...] there’s a great art’ [PD,2:10]. For some artists the difficulties and demands of writing grants were a significant deterrent, ‘I do have trouble writing about my work in an academic way, it’s just not my thing. It takes me too long to write and that’s not why I’m here, that’s why I’m doing visuals’ [CW,1:22]. ‘Basically, it’s just an exhausting process, it doesn’t end,’ says Caitlin Yardley who also talks about researching and maintaining a list of upcoming funding opportunities and considering them in relation to the creative projects she has in mind. ‘A lot of them are really demanding too, and depending on their demands I might let them pass’ [CY,2:8]. Artists suggest that rather than removing the need a second fulltime job, applying for competitive grants and funding can be almost another fulltime job with less guarantee that the effort will pay off. ‘It doesn’t replace a job and it’s like the sale of work, it’s income that I don’t count on’ [CY,2:7].

A second compromise associated with resourcing one’s practice through grants and funding relates to the vagaries of when grants and funded opportunities, such as contracts for projects and residencies, are available. A number of artists have talked about having to remain free and flexible in order to take advantage of opportunities, even those that only last for a very short time.

I have to keep myself open for that, and that’s another thing about the way I work, I can’t commit to lots of things, [...] if there’s something really exciting that I heard about, or I want to do, that’s my priority, and I’ll just go “Oh sorry, I can’t commit till I know this other thing’s happening.” As I’ve been doing more and more over the years, I’ve been lucky to start doing things that I really want to do, rather than just taking on everything, so I’m actually focusing more in the way my art practice is going. [CW,1:12]
Maintaining this level of availability has significant impacts on artists’ financial situations and quality of life. ‘You’re open to be able to go and do those things because you don’t have a really secure job, but at the same time you don’t necessarily have the money to do it’ [RB,1:9]. As Cecile Williams relates, ‘I am still able to travel and work as an artist in some amazing and quite remote places that most people in secure jobs would pay a fortune to visit,’ and this ‘has always outweighed any of the negatives associated with being in this rather precarious and insecure lifestyle.’ A lifestyle in which ‘everything’s unknown and this can be stressful at times, you have to try and find a balance and have some down time after big projects and know this will bring in no income but […] one must remember that great memories will always outlast the dollars’ [CW,1:19-20]. These circumstances also impact on relationships, even when one’s partner is an empathetic artist. ‘We’ve got two very separate practices, well we’ve got three, because he’s also in a collaboration, so decisions we make to move affect that collaboration, […] it can be hard to make those decisions’ [CY,2:4-5]. For artists who have existing commitments that limit their availability, many career-building, funded opportunities are simply unavailable ‘because you want different things, or in [other mature artists’] case they have families, and I’ve got responsibilities too. You can’t take up residencies, it’s harder’ [AS,1:25]. Artists’ inability to structure their lives in such a way to be available for residencies and the like, in some circumstances can be taken as reflecting an absence of total commitment to practice. And this may affect the extent to which artists feel they are, and are perceived to be, invested in practice.

2.3.3.5 Relinquishing Parts of the Profession

The various compromises that result from artists’ different approaches to investing in art practice seem to present a somewhat bleak picture of the minefield that artists negotiate in creating the conditions in which they work. Artists are not necessarily on their own and without any assistance in their endeavours to create conditions for the definition and maintenance of their practice, however, and some artists draw on the services and knowledge of other skilled individuals so as to relieve themselves of some elements of this burden. In particular, artists may choose to align themselves with one or more commercial galleries who represent their interests in the market, and a
number of artists also underline the important role played by an art-savvy accountant in facilitating their practices.

As has been discussed in section 2.2.1.3 it can be difficult for artists to gain representation by commercial galleries in Western Australia. Monique Tippett relates: ‘I tried to get a few [...] galleries to show my work, but they just weren’t interested in Perth,’ she adds, ‘you look at their stable of artists and they say, “We’re not taking any more, that’s it, we’re just concentrating on those people”’ [MT,2:24]. Similarly, Penny Bovell observes, ‘all of these galleries are booked out so many years in advance and they’ve got their stable and there’s not much movement. Even people that should be exhibiting much more regularly don’t get shows’ [PB,2:6].

For those who do achieve gallery representation, their experiences of operating with a commercial gallery diverge as much as their expectations of what that relationship should be like. Penny Bovell suggests that many Western Australian galleries simply take on too many artists, with significant consequences even beyond the fact that artists do not get shows as regularly as they should:

Where it works well is where the artist steps back and completely relinquishes all of that stuff and the gallery does it, even to point that they put them in the prizes [...] and they do the applications for the public art [...] etc. That would be great if they did it. But of course when they take so many other artists on they actually haven’t got the time to do it, so they’re not going to do it well. So [...], you relinquish a very important aspect of your profession to somebody that may or may not come up with the goods, so you can’t trust it. [PB,2:8]

Other artists feel that the galleries representing them do a good job in their different ways. Peter Hill says of the director of the gallery representing him in Melbourne, ‘She’s not sitting in a flashy gallery on a busy street, waiting for people to come in off the street. That’s just not the way she works, she goes to the people. [...] She’s been given an artwork by one of her artists and she thinks “oh, so-and-so will like that” and goes to them, she doesn’t wait, she’s proactive’ [PH,1:16]. Similarly, but in relation to another gallery director, Regina Noakes maintains, ‘[she] works so hard, whatever it is she really works hard to get that gallery going, she’s always enterprising, she’s always got some scheme going on to get people in. [...] It’s not going to make big money, but it’s just something’ [RN,2:15]. Aside from proactivity from the gallery director, artists
also value a degree of autonomy. ‘She will let artists exhibit things that aren’t saleable, but not for too long, she will do it. [...] One of her great characteristics is she doesn’t try and steer, or hasn’t tried to steer me’ [PH,1:22]. There is a similar emphasis when Rebecca Baumann talks about the characteristics she hopes for in a relationship with a commercial gallery: ‘I would still want to be able to do what I wanted to do. So that’s the tricky thing, ’cause I probably wouldn’t make someone a lot of money. [...] I want a relationship where I want to work with people and I trust them, and we’re on the same page about stuff, that’s what I’m hoping can happen’ [RB,2:9-10]. Art galleries can also be key players in artists gaining access to new markets and opportunities, as Pippin Drysdale relates, ‘Marianne Heller […] would take me to Collect in London at the V&A, she took me three years in a row and then I phased out of that, and another dealer does it for me in London’ [PD,2:2].

One of the things artists value about their relationships with galleries is not having to deal with sales. ‘If I don’t have to I don’t want to, ’cause then you’ve got to get to the nitty gritty of people trying to screw you down for money and all that sort of stuff and that’s just, gonna be totally taxing on energy I could be using elsewhere’ [PH,1:14]. And indeed, not having gallery representation can have impacts on artists’ capacity to sell work, as Caitlin Yardley says, ‘a lot of people that I’ve approached […] have been unwilling to communicate directly with an artist and they won’t purchase through an artist directly’ [CY,1:10]. Artists also value the expertise that relationships with commercial galleries may provide: ‘If you were with someone, they should know how to do all that stuff and you don’t have to worry about it. That was quite a lot of stress of dealing with all that stuff last year, because you just have no idea what you are doing’ [RB,2:9]. In a similar fashion artists also talk about the importance of the services of a good accountant, as Regina Noakes says, ‘[my tax return is] a huge task for me, I can’t paint, if I’m doing that’ [RN,2:11]. Or in stronger terms, Erin Coates says;

The accountant, who has been, I think, been essential for so many artists in WA in terms of letting them know about […] how to actually exist as an artist and use that in a way that you are able to actually write your arts practice off against your other income, which you should be doing, because you are putting substantial and continual financial investment into your arts practice. […] So I get a large tax income, a refund every year, and that is often a boost for projects, […] and I rely on it. [EC,1:9-10]
The data also included discussions about forms of assistance that artists had in making works of art. Rebecca Baumann makes an interesting point when she says, ‘in the same way that I use materials which already exist [...] it’s just like using someone else’s skills [...] to create something. [...] If I was going to try and learn how to do that it’d take me probably two years to get those skills and that’s not really what’s important I guess’ [RB,2:11]. For Pippin Drysdale there is a clear division of labour between the tasks allocated to her assistants and those that she must carry out herself.

The preparation of clay, all the throwing that has to be done, because you do lose quite a lot of works; [...] [my assistant] does the throwing. Then I, of course, molly-coddle everything while he’s away from week to week, to come back and turn it all. And then, of course, I fire it all. And I’ve got [another assistant] doing the sand papering, helping me with cataloguing, brain storming, titles, photo shoots [...] the list goes on. [...] But [...] when it comes to glazing and working on each piece, no one can do that but me. [PD,2:12]

Clearly it is the case that artists to varying degrees can draw on a range of other individuals to relieve them of some key aspects of the labour to create the conditions, in which they are best able to pursue the definition and maintenance of creative practice.

2.3.3.6 The Labour of Creating Conditions: Conclusions

The foregoing discussion presents a wide range of areas and different ways in which artists labour to produce the conditions for the definition and maintenance of their creative practices. Following on from the labour to define practice, over the course of which creative practice is made real and significant for the artist, artists are then faced with the challenge of situating this practice in the real world. Whilst the ideal situation for such a self-defined practice might be an autonomous and sheltered enclave, in some ways immune from the banalities of day-to-day existence and the inconvenient interests of other people, artists generally have settle for wrestling as much autonomy as is possible from the strangle-hold of real life.

Many interviewees recall art school is a kind of sheltered realm in which to pursue a creative practice, and which provides a measure of institutionally administered autonomy. At the very least it is a realm in which the activity of creative practice itself
is not under question, as it is a core element of the curriculum for formal education towards qualifications in the creative arts. Art school acts as a kind of wading pool, in which definitions of practice can be tested, and confidence built up prior to heading out into deep water outside the institution. Whilst being a safe environment art schools are also a proving ground, where artists’ resolves are tempered and their mettle tested, where they learn to swim or they get out of the pool, before encountering the hazards of open water. Another aspect of the security of art school is that it is a communal environment, providing a measure of safety in numbers. For many artists it also provides the networks and communities which continue to offer safe havens, support and guidance, even after striking out on their own as artists. It is for these reasons that I suggest that artists’ decisions to pursue formal education in art schools frequently constitute a key component of creating the conditions for practice.

Aside from accessing ready to hand spaces for more or less autonomous practice, such as art schools, artists are also engaged in creating other conditions that approximate autonomy in the real world. The notion of survival includes an element of making autonomy more attainable by significantly containing and controlling the needs and aspirations of artists in terms of their creative practices. As discussed in a consideration of what it means to be out in the world and being in the zone, this is where artists are attempting to articulate the nature and dependencies of their relationships between the real world and the creative practices that they are seeking to define and maintain. When it comes to the notion of investing in practice, and the different compromises discussed above, freedom and autonomy generally come at a cost. Importantly, however, artists make informed decisions about how to absorb those costs and in which areas of their lives. These decisions are often made with reference to moral concerns, such as concepts of artistic integrity. Finally some artists can achieve greater autonomy in specific areas of their lives and practice, through relinquishing parts of their profession, and by become dependent on other people whose professional expertise lies in other areas. Clearly such dependencies are built on relationships and the establishment of trust, but these free some artists from certain burdensome aspects of reality, and facilitate them spending more time in the zone, dealing with the intrinsic concerns of their creative practice.
In the context of the conceptual model of the labour of visual art that I have been presenting, through the labour of creating conditions, an artist’s practice (which is real and significant for the artist) is accommodated into the larger world. Whilst this may achieve little more than allowing the creative practice to continue to be defined and real for the artist, such labour also potentially lays the foundations on which the reality and significance of the practice may be recognised more objectively and begin to be legitimated in art worlds.

2.3.4 Attracting Validation

I have been developing a picture of the labour of visual art practice as a range of purposeful activities that contribute to making creative practice real, and to making a space within a broader reality for practice to exist. It is possible that for some practitioners it may be sufficient to facilitate the pursuit of art practice in a way that is focused solely on being able to do what they want to do and achieving the means for that venture; ‘more like a hobbyist and just making things for [their] own benefit’ [RB,2:4]. Throughout the data artists distinguish their practices from those of the hobbyist or amateur by drawing attention to the way in which artists project at least the possibility that their practice may have value for others. More than that, professional, serious and committed artists actually consider this potential value to be an important reason for the existence of their practice. ‘You’re not just doing your arts practice for yourself, it’s a part of a larger thing’ [EC,1:10]. It is not simply the case that people may incidentally appreciate and/or purchase the artworks that result from the creative practice that artists define in such personal and idiosyncratic ways. Artists hope ‘that somebody gets it’ [LM,1:5]. For instance, Michael Iwanoff describes the value of his practice in this way:

So many aspects of people’s lives are [...] denying aspects of those processes and ways of being which they’d love to be able to [be]. But [...] they censor themselves, to the point where [...] whole realms of their being are frozen or stunted or contaminated. [...] I suppose I feel really empathetic or compassionate when I see that, and [...] it’s not necessarily something that you try and prevent, but [...] just bring to people’s attention/awareness. [...] That’s [...] a functional part of the process, which I try with myself primarily. [...] I've learnt through
experience, that you can shift it incredibly from all sorts of levels of inhibition through to finding a place where you can [...] live a life of wholeness and joy. Those shifts are possible and that’s what I try and practise within my own practice. I simply wish to offer this to others. [...] No one has to accept the offering, absolutely not, it’s not, “you’re missing out.” You’re not missing out on anything because [...] I’m Ok with what you’re doing, it’s your choice. [...] I’m offering the choice and it’s not that what I’m doing is better than anyone else. [MI,2:14]

Despite the common sentiment that artists are not working for a response and have few expectations that they will receive responses, artists nevertheless hope for and value responses to their work. Indeed, whilst artists are prepared to work in the absence of a response, positive or otherwise, many of the interviewed artists have also cited various kinds of positive responses to their work as providing important affirmations that have enabled them to pursue, or continue in, creative practice. The collected data suggests that the attraction of validation, at a number of different levels, is another area in which artists are labouring. Successful labour to attract validation functions not only as a significant encouragement for artists, but may also legitimate an artist’s definition of practice and support the creation of conditions for practice.

Through my analysis I have identified four key areas of artists’ activity associated with the attraction of validation, and I will detail each in turn in this section of the findings. At a fundamental level, artists acknowledge the subjectivity of their practice and consequently recognise themselves as Not Being the Best Judge of their own work, despite being their own harshest critics. So artists may attract validation by seeking the opinions of trusted peers and mentors, or may seek to place their works in situations where they will be appraised by others, as a means of providing a level of objectivity and confirmation of their own evaluations, among other motivations. At a different level there are a whole range of Credentials that have various kinds of currency in specific art worlds. Artists may attract validation by actively seeking to accrue such credentials in various ways. Artists’ CVs are a key repository of such credentials and it has been suggested that self-consciously building a CV can have significant impacts on the directions artists pursue within their practice and careers (See 2.1.1). Artists may also attract validation through establishing connections and working to maintain
relationships with *A Trail of People* who can vouch for their practice and act as advocates, facilitators and clients. A final dimension of artists’ labour to attract validation relates to the various aspects of their activity that may act as indicators that artists are *Real Players* rather than dilettantes and dabblers. ‘I suppose that people would say the same about me, “[he] is just a dilettante, now he’s doing airbrushing, now he’s doing collages, now he’s doing transfer painting, and so forth... just a dilettante; not single minded and not expressing his emotions as he ought to’” [TG,2:11]. Such indicators can, in some instances, be important for artists’ self-image as much as for keeping up professional appearances. I will conclude the section by presenting a brief summary of the understanding of artists’ labour to attract validation I have developed from my engagement with the presented data.

### 2.3.4.1 Not Being the Best Judge

Stuart Elliott talks about being ‘contaminated by your own presence’ [SE,2:21] in the context of creative practice. He says, ‘we all suffer from [a] lack of objectivity with our own work [...] you’ve got your nose right up against the canvas, so it’s really difficult to know’ [SE,1:5]. Given that, in relation to defining practice, I have previously emphasised the importance of art practice’s subjective base, quoting the same artist, this concern with objectivity may appear to be somewhat paradoxical. Indeed Stuart Elliott suggests that ‘there always seems to be a bit of a tension in visual art between the subjective and the objective’ [SE,1:5]. It is the case, however, that such subjectivities and objectivities play different roles in the context of the same practice. Whilst artists define their practices with an important *caveat* that empowers them to choose which responses to their work are valid and significant, they also hold certain kinds of responses to be important indicators that their work is objectively real and important. Such evidence often depends upon the relative independence of the appraisal. What is more, despite being their own harshest critics, artists often seek to test their own judgement in various ways. They do this especially by placing their work in situations where external appraisal provides opportunities for an objective confirmation of the subjective values of their practice, and where such validation also helps them to pursue the growth and development of that practice.
Artists spoke about a range of strategies for getting around practice being contaminated by their own presence and the sense that they are ‘not always the best judge’ [CY,1:2] of their own practice. For a number of the interviewed artists, key aspects of their efforts to attract validations of their practice are fulfilled through close relationships with trusted partners, peers and mentors. As Nigel Hewitt says: ‘it’s extremely hard [...] to judge my work when I’ve finished it, myself.[...] I’m perhaps one of the worst people to look at it and judge it for what it is. That’s why it’s tremendous that I have my partner who takes a great interest in it, and she comes down and she says, “Wow!”, or [...] “What about this?”’ [NH,1:3]. Such critical feedback and responses are valid and important because of the level of intimacy and acquaintance with an artist’s practice that has been established through being close to that practice over a long period of time. In some cases, these critical relationships are continuations of supportive and critical relationships established with peers and mentors at art school. This is the case for Anna Sabadini: ‘I still [...] ring [my former lecturer] up and say, “what did you think?” or, “what do you think?” I send him images or he comes to see the show, [...] I talk to people, and sometimes it’s not nice hearing stuff, but I do want to’ [AS,1:17]. For others, such frank appraisal and the trust that enables it is an integral part of an intimate personal relationship developed through living with another artist. ‘We have that understanding of what each of us needs to do as an artist, and we’re quite good at being each other’s critic, cut through the shit and be quite blunt about where we think something’s going with the work, which is kinda handy, without getting offended: sometimes we do. And we don’t agree, necessarily, on things’ [KD,1:27]. In these instances I think it can be seen that the work to attract validation need not extend any great distance into the public sphere. Indeed, it seems to be the case that some artists’ practices may be validated sufficiently for their own purposes by confirming that just one or two trusted and well-informed others take their work seriously, and can see some value and significance in what they doing.

Whilst it may be sufficient for the survival of the art practice to be made real within a limited clique, many artists have also spoken about the significant role of independent criticism and discussion in providing a sense of the objective impact and reach of the art practice. Erin Coates says about her work, ‘if it generates discussion from people
also beyond my peer group [...] that respond to it or talk to me about it, or I hear about it, then that kind of validates it. It’s not just me having a conversation with friends of mine that are artists, it’s just reached to some other level of conversation’ [EC,1:2].

On Oron Catts provides a concrete example of such other levels of conversation in mentioning that his work with SymbioticA ‘has been used as part of a discussion paper that has been presented to the American Congress to do with bio-ethics issues’ [OC,2:5-6]. In these cases, and others, it is the independent source of the feedback that provides artists with a sense of their objective achievement. For Stuart Elliott such an experience provided an important early validation of his creative work:

[My friend] started reading [from the newspaper] the review [of my exhibited work] and that made me feel really very odd. Because [...] all of a sudden someone’s actually talking about my work that doesn’t feel morally obligated, that is actually looking at the work, and doesn’t know me from a hole in the ground. [...] Yeah, that was a pretty special occasion. [SE,1:3]

Interestingly, though, artists have also pointed out that these kinds of responses to artists’ work may be hard to come by. In Western Australia specifically, artists have suggested that, ‘it’s hard in Perth; you can’t say that a work is not successful because it doesn’t get a review, because there’s so little arts writing done here’ [EC,1:2]. More generally it has also been observed that responses to creative practice may not be instantaneous: ‘I met a guy, [...]and he talked about [...] work I had in a show, about 12 years, 15 years before that. So, if something stuck with someone for that long obviously it struck some chord with them, good, bad or otherwise. So that kind of notion of there being a response to the work, it’s really multi-levelled’ [SE,1:4]. In these cases it can be seen why artists may need to fall back on their own personal convictions about the value and significance of the creative practice that they are defining, rather than relying on the validation provided by responses to their work. On the other hand, however, responses where there is a great distance (geographically or temporally) between the presentation of the work and the feedback generated add significantly to the sense that artists’ have that their practices have attained a level of objective reality in the wider world.

In addition to conversations and reviews, artists also noted that other forms of response can provide them with important validations of their creative practices. For
instance, aside from providing the artist with some financial return on their investment in art practice, ‘if people buy stuff, then that’s often a fairly tangible kind of feedback, particularly if you don’t know them’ [SE,1:5]. Monique Tippett says, ‘selling stuff is good. People appreciating it and actually wanting to give you their money for something you’ve done’ [MT,2:3]. What is interesting about artists’ statements about sales is that the artists emphasise the ways in which the sale of work can indicate that the ‘work […] is breathing for [the purchaser/collector] in some way’ [SE,1:5]. Or, as Rebecca Baumann puts it; ‘people have bought that work, […] well that means it must resonate in some way’ [RB,1:5]. Pippin Drysdale says that:

It’s exciting to know that people are happy to invest in you, and spend the money. Because I never wanted to be a mugs, jugs and casserole girl, I always wanted to produce just things that were beautiful and seductive and had a timelessness about them. I think gratification’s one of the most valuable things that keeps you going as an artist. [PD,1:8]

This last statement sets out the values involved for the artist with respect to the purchase, where the purchase of art is made clearly distinct from purchases motivated by the more instrumental function of ceramic objects such as mugs, jugs and casseroles. Instead of opting for a useful piece, the buyer invests in the artist, by buying into the intrinsic values that the artist holds about her work: its beauty, seductiveness and timelessness. These things are confirmed as real by virtue of the exchange of the artwork for real money. Furthermore, whilst sales may help keep artists going in a material sense, what is important is the way in which such gratification serves as a vindication of the artists’ investments in creative practice.

While most artists have talked about the role of other people and their responses to creative work as a means of getting around the problem of being contaminated by their own presence Michael Iwanoff also presents another approach to gaining a different kind of perspective on creative work. In this case, the practitioner says that not all of his creative work is for public exhibition or for sale; some works are private and play a key role in his practice: ‘The important touchstones are works that I certainly keep, and regularly bring out and view and experience and let them work their energy on me. I put them next to what I’m doing at the moment and make sure that I’m moving somewhere else within my practice’ [MI,1:8]. He says that this process
is not about a comparison or measurement, but about achieving a dialogue between works because, ‘you can get so entangled in the process [...] I don’t know if it’s like a filter, but [...] it clarifies something when I put a work that I’m really happy with or feel is genuine or true, [...] next to the new work and see what it does’ [MI,2:9]. In particular this dialogue enables the practitioner to sense the directions in which the journey of creative practice is taking the work, he says, ‘I don’t get excited about doing the same things over and over again [...] if the chord or the feeling or the sensation or the energy that’s in the work is not shifted slightly, or opening up new possibilities then I’ve got to keep going with it basically’ [MI,2:9]. So, where other artists have talked about other people providing much needed perspective on creative practice, for Michael Iwanoff some of this perspective is provided through strategies of re-focusing and achieving fresh attention that are contained within the practice and through the use of creative works and processes.

2.3.4.2 Credentials

As previously suggested, artists may be able to attract enough validation from their immediate circle of peers, partners and mentors to motivate their own practice and to reassure them that their ongoing investments in art are not misguided. There are many situations, however, in which artists working in the public realm are called upon to produce credentials that provide assurances of their status as a professional and to offer some measures of the quality and significance their creative work. Professional artists, unlike many other professionals, are unable simply to draw attention to their completed tertiary qualifications, and their endorsement by and membership of the appropriate professional organisation, as might be the case for doctors, lawyers, accountants and so on. There is no one administrative body that definitively certifies practitioners’ capacities to operate as artists, regulates their conduct and provides some assurance to the public that such individuals’ practices meet some minimum standard in terms of quality. Though all of this is true, it is abundantly clear from the collected data that there is a range of very real credentials that play important roles in the context of artists’ activities as professional creative practitioners. And so it is that one important aspect of artists’ efforts to attract validation is activity directed towards the collection of important credentials.
In section 2.1.1 I have presented interview data and a discussion of the nature of artists’ CVs. It will suffice to note here that the CV is a key documentary repository of artists’ credentials, and that many of the credentials that will be discussed below can be found on artists’ CVs.

So what are the credentials that matter for artists aspiring to maintain a professional practice? In the most general terms, important credentials stem from instances where artists’ work has achieved some kind of positive response, especially instances where such responses are manifest in a tangible and documentable way. Many credentials of significance to artists’ professional status also depend in no small measure on the established credibility, or social capital, of the individuals or entities who have responded positively to their work. In the case of sales of artwork discussed earlier, such sales may become significant credentials by virtue of the status of the purchasing collector, or the institution in whose collection the artist’s work is represented. In most cases, artists regard representation within institutional collections to be more important as credentials than purchases by private collectors. Penny Bovell talks about the kinds of collections that are significant as credentials.

The state collections and [...] Australian Gallery and things, but they’re very difficult places; the institutions that really support, for example ECU that purchases West Australian art, [...] that’s really good [...] - you know that you’re going to be seen within a group of other artists, so that it creates a good history; serious collectors, but they come and go, and it doesn’t really mean much, I think. [PB,1:2]

Such credentials also play a significant role in providing validation that may influence future sales. According to Pippin Drysdale ‘[buyers] also [...] think: “Oh, if [...] she’s in major collections throughout the world, her work has some credibility,” and [...] when you buy art, you want artists to have some sense of credibility’ [PD,2:8].

Artists may also attract validation through entering art prizes. For Regina Noakes, her entry into the art world in which she now operates was achieved through art competitions. ‘I got first [prize], first, first, and people approached me. [...] I entered competitions and then people spotted my work and that’s the way I got into galleries’ [RN,2:6]. Whatever the benefits of entering art prizes in terms of the intrinsic values
for an artist’s practice, it is undoubtedly the case that art prizes and other competitive situations (such as applications for funding) function as situations in which important credentials can be acquired. Larry Mitchell talks about his entries into the Wynne Prize earlier in his career, ‘I wanted to be something, […] I’m a landscape painter, this was the major landscape prize in the country, so I thought, well, I’d have a bash’ [LM,2:18].

As is the case with sales of work, all art prizes are not equally significant as credentials. As Nigel Hewitt points out, ‘the first question I really want to know is who is judging the prize. I know of no other profession where unqualified people in the field would judge the quality of their work, but it happens in the world of art’ [NH,2:6]. So, in order to provide validation and to function as credentials for artists, events such as art prizes should be ‘endorsed by, or juried by, selected by, a group of experts in the field’ [SC,2:2]. Regina Noakes suggests also that the standing of other artists who enter the prize is also significant. ‘It’s what kind of artists have gone before […], if it’s just the people I teach at home at Fremantle then there’s no point, so I usually try and compete with the top ones’ [RN,2:2]. A number of artists maintain that the prize money is not a primary motivator for entry into art prizes. As Peter Hill says of making works for prizes, ‘they’re just black holes, you just throw the money at that hole and it disappears’ [PH,1:23]. The prize money can also be significant, however. In much the same way that sales convert symbolic values into quantifiable values, ‘prizes with the most amount of money […], there’s a lot of kudos behind them… and, it’s good to have that on your CV’ [NH,2:7].

As well as such clear instances of validation where individual works have been selected for acquisition or for the award of a prize, there are other ways in which artists’ activities may be of significance as credentials. In particular, the venues and institutions with which artists are associated and in which they have exhibited work each provide their own level of kudos and suggest particular relationships with specific art worlds. As Anna Sabadini puts it, ‘you’re aware of different levels of galleries, like there are the top guns, that represent the hot artists’ [AS,1:29]. Whilst such evaluations are important, it is the case that there can also be multiple systems of value at play, giving rise to different credentials for different purposes.
When someone’s scanning your CV and they see ‘Oh you’ve shown [in a big public gallery],’ it ticks a box for them, they think ‘Oh well […] you’ve attained that level of established artist because you’ve shown there.’ But I think other people might be looking and seeing, ‘well actually this person’s been in some interesting non-gallery spaces,’ […] It has another, a different feeling, a different cred to it in a way, a kind of cool to it that public galleries can never really have. [EC,2:2-3]

Such different systems of value between art worlds are brought home in situations such as that related by Oron Catts:

I’ve just been to China, and a very big show at the National Arts Museum of China and we gave a talk in this artistic district in Beijing called 798 […] The very first question in the panel that we had was, “What’s our credentials?” In the sense of how much we sold our work for and what collections the work belongs to? And we were five artists that could be considered to be well established within the field of art, technology and stuff like that, and none of us have any of those types of credentials. So it’s an interesting thing to see that within […] the commercial art world, the gallery world, we are considered to have no credentials. [OC,2:1]

A final kind of credential that has emerged from the interview data is linked to the opportunities that artists have, and the connections between those opportunities. As Caitlin Yardley puts it, ‘one person saying, “Yep, you’re OK” leads to the next person saying “Yep, you’re OK” and I’ve been really aware of that. Someone providing credibility has contributed to the linear path’ [CY,2:15]. A number of the interviewed artists indicated the ways in which, ‘opportunities kind of line themselves up to give you a further push forward’ [RB,1:6]. Some artists relate these situations as a chain of events, where one opportunity is the direct precedent for the next. ‘In the terms of the events of the last couple of years; I won that SOYA [QANTAS Spirit of Youth Awards] Prize which meant I went to Berlin, which as result meant that I was curated into New, which meant that I made that work’ [RB,1:6]. So it would appear to be the case that artists’ efforts to attract validation through the various means discussed here – by selling works, by entering prizes, by showing their work in the right places and situations – can result in credentials that beget other credentials. Artists may eventually get to a point where they no longer have to allocate much effort to the attraction of validation, as the validation comes to them in the form of opportunity, invitations and in some cases honours. It is clear that such credentials free artists from
some of the work of creating conditions for practice, as Larry Mitchell relates after more than 30 years of painting: ‘Just beginning in the last three or four years, [I’m] starting to get interest from more institutional organisations that aren’t interested in selling work […], which is liberating to say the least’ [LM,1:10]. Or, in Pippin Drysdale’s case, ‘the only time I didn’t have to say […] how I’d spent [the grant money] was getting the life-time fellowship award. And that was your payment, I suppose, saying, “look you’ve really worked hard all these years and you’ve got a track record and you’ve shown all around the world and you’ve done this and you’ve done that. Well, you deserve it’” [PD,2:11].

2.3.4.3 A Trail of People

One key element within all of the situations in which artists are seeking to attract validation is the social aspect of professional art practice. Ultimately, unless there are people who are willing to acknowledge that the creative work being undertaken is art, and that the individual pursuing it is an artist, and to treat art and artists as if they have some objective social value in the world, the professional artist cannot exist. In the foregoing sections there has been some evidence of just how small and self-contained the reality of creative practice might be. Even so, it has also been shown that art practices may acquire some very significant and extensive objective reality in the world. In this section, I intend to direct the discussion specifically towards the work that artists do in order to establish, cultivate and maintain important social relationships that play significant roles in the labour of attracting validation.

One very interesting case in this regard is the practice of Craig Boulter. Though he has in the past shown work, and had working relationships with commercial galleries, since the mid-1980s Craig Boulter has displayed and sold his work at his home in an annual exhibition and so personally takes on roles that otherwise would be performed by a commercial gallery. He explains this approach: ‘I enjoy having my exhibitions at home, and […] I’d hate to go to a commercial gallery, because of all that commission they charge, and […] they can take up to six months to pay you’ [CB,2:2]. One revelation emerging from Craig Boulter’s story is some of the effort that goes into connecting with the people to whom the 400 invitations are hand-addressed. He says, ‘they’re
mainly people who’ve been buying for yonks and yonks. I always get fresh blood in. I always like to have about a dozen new names every year and then I always get rid of about a dozen. But all the regulars come, year after year after year’ [CB,1:9]. He explains his approach to getting new names for his invitation list: ‘I get invited out a lot and whenever I go out I always take a little note book with me and I always get new addresses. Like down at Nannup, it’s like a goldmine [...] It’s at the B&B, I stay there, because I paint birds and flowers and everything, they always want to come to my shows’ [CB,1:10]. As Craig does not operate a computer, all of these names and addresses are meticulously maintained on cards in a shoebox, along with records of who has purchased work.

‘I sort of cater for the people that live between South Beach and Mosman Park,’ Craig Boulter says, ‘they always turn up and they always buy’ [CB,2:13]. It is precisely this dependable clientele and their consistent investment in his work that provides him with sufficient validation (and income) to pursue what he loves to do. He says, ‘I’m not saying my work is good, [...] I never win prizes, but I always sell. I like to think of myself as the Mums’ and Dads’ artist, like most of the people that come here are local people and they like what they see, and they buy it and I’ve survived’ [CB,1:2-3]. At the same time as maintaining these modest commercial ambitions for the survival of his creative practice, Craig Boulter also derives an important sense of validation from the support of a number of significant and knowledgeable individuals within Western Australian visual art, who frequent his exhibitions and regularly buy work. ‘[A former commercial gallery director] liked me and she liked my work, but it wasn’t quite what they were looking for. My work’s still quite conservative and she was more cutting edge sort of work, which I couldn’t understand, way back in the late 60s. But [she] came to my last show and she buys my work and so I must have succeeded’ [CB,1:2].

For other artists, maintaining relationships with important clients happens on a smaller scale, but nevertheless involves significant personal investment and energy. One artist describes the relationship with a client and collector, ‘we meet up for coffee, and I’ll send out the invitation, but I’ll also personally write an email or a letter. Sometimes I’ve phoned her, sometimes she phones me to find out if I’m doing anything. I’ve had dinner at her house’ [source withheld]. About these artist/collector relationships, the
artist says, ‘I don’t know that [the purchases have] been such a big deal for [the collectors], but they’ve been a big deal for me. So I’ve delivered the work and then I’ve just tried to be a bit friendly and hang around, we discuss how they’re going to install the work in their homes’ [source withheld]. It can be seen in these kinds of instances that such social relationships centred around works of art expand upon some of the validation achieved through sales. By maintaining these connections with clients, artists have tangible proof that their creative practice is real for another individual, who has been willing to invest. At the same time, cultivating mutual interests around an artist’s practice may strengthen to possibility that a client will continue to invest.

For other artists the key relationships that they maintain in order to attract validation are not so much with clients who may purchase work (because in many cases the work isn’t readily saleable), but rather with individuals who may facilitate or provide access to opportunity. As Erin Coates says:

Some of the opportunities that I’ve had have come up from people I know in the arts that have seen opportunities and then assisted me to get them. [...] So the show that I was in at the National Portrait Gallery came about because [a curator] suggested me for the project, and there was a whole other process, then, of selection that went on, but it was definitely [...]through a recommendation. [EC,1:3]

These connections seem to be especially important to West Australian artists with aspirations to work interstate or overseas, for reasons that have also been touched upon in section 2.2.1.4. Caitlin Yardley talks about how ‘curators from the east[ern states], I think, don’t necessarily go out and visit studios. I think they talk to a trail of people and that trail, obviously, will be a bit incestuous, which [...] is natural’ [CY,2:11]. Connections with curators provide some artists with important forms of validation, whether through mentoring and support, or through advocacy and opportunity, or both. Rebecca Baumann talks about the development of her relationship with a curator. After being introduced:

I started sending her images when I was doing things - I did after my show at Fremantle Arts Centre [...] and then after my show at Freerange, so just keeping her a bit in the loop [...] And then I won that SOYA thing. [...] Because I was going to be traveling and stuff, she was interested in what I would do from that and she was curating New [...] in February and she asked me to be in the show. And
at that point, she became a bit of a mentor and she also ended up being in Berlin for about six weeks and so I spent a lot of time with her and actually became friends with her [...] I will ask her [...] what she thinks about things and I do really inherently trust her [...] and her opinion. [...] That for me has been a really great relationship and I’d love to work with her again [...] because [...] she’ll be kind at the right times and she’ll also kick your arse at the right times. [RB,2:8]

In other instances these important relationships are cultivated in other ways through social means, as Oron Catts relates: ‘Through those personal connections, through mutual interest, through getting drunk in a hotel bar after a conference, through all of those types of relationships you tend to generate more interest and more opportunities, that’s something that’s undeniable’ [OC,2:9]. As can be seen in these few examples, artists are not simply invested in the solitary work of studio practice, but are often engaged in managing a whole range of interpersonal and social relationships that impact in significant ways upon what may be achieved through practice. Each of these relationships, established around mutual interest in the creative practice, as defined and maintained by the artist, is also an additional person for whom the art practice possesses some objective reality.

On still another level, artists may seek to attract validation through their relationships to specific communities. On the one hand artists may perceive that their active involvement in a particular community is a vital part of their practice, especially when just starting out as emerging artists or in instances where creative works and events may not be presented in conventional or designated art spaces. ‘I’ve done shows with friends and those kinds of things are important in giving you opportunities [...] It’s through doing all the other things [...] that people see your work and so I think the community is [...] really important’ [RB,2:16]. As Erin Coates says of the audience for her work:

it’s [...] that contemporary arts network here. [...] It’s the same kind of network that tells people about shows at FAC at PICA, about little happenings that are going on. [...] There was a performance at [an artists’] house last night and that was on facebook and everyone in the arts that I know, that are interested in installation, event, video type stuff, we all knew about it, so it’s that kind of network. [EC,1:13]
In this instance there is perhaps a kind of validation that is accessed even by simply being in the know about what is going on in this community.

On the other hand, artists have also talked about avoiding involvement in specific arts communities for various reasons. Anna Sabadini states; ‘I’ve consciously tried to keep out of all [local art associations] because I don’t want to be part of all that politicky stuff. And there is a sense here of being really supported, but the danger of that is that you could feel supported no matter the quality of your work, just because it’s so community based’ [AS,1:27-28]. Some of the other drawbacks of local art communities are highlighted by another artist: ‘[the] Perth […] scene’s quite small so, for example, if you wanted to have […] a group exhibition with [artists working in my medium], there’s a couple of people you have to invite to actually exhibit; if you don’t then you’re just causing problems for yourself, there’s internal politics’ [source withheld].

For still other artists, there is a sense of having outgrown the local community in various ways and no longer needing to, or having the time, to invest in, or draw on it; ‘I’ve got friends, I mean I do ask people things, but I guess in some ways I’m not generating things for the art community here because I kind of feel satisfied with what I have available to me immediately or something’ [RB,2:17]. Such detachment from local communities may also be driven in part by dependencies on maintaining an international profile to keep the funding bodies happy. As Oron Catts says:

I [only] have so much energy and so much ability to interact and to engage. So, at the moment, because I’m in a position where I actually have to refuse invitations from overseas, that I don’t really need to work too hard to get gigs, I feel that trying to push [my work], either locally or nationally, is just a waste of my energy […] and it’s not me being arrogant it’s just me trying to manage my time. [OC,2:8]

Perhaps what is interesting in these negative instances is again in the way that the value of the community depends upon its capacity to provide a specific level of validation, rendering the practice objectively real for others in a way that is significant for the artist. The undiscriminating support of community art associations does not provide this level of objectivity for the artist because the support is based upon politics and interpersonal dynamics rather than a sincere appraisal and investment in the significance of the creative practice. Similarly, when artists’ work is already extensively and objectively real and present in far flung places, there is little incentive to continue
to test the practice’s significance and reality for the local community, especially when these distant activities function as important high-level credentials in artists’ advancing careers. It can be seen overall that artists’ efforts to connect with and maintain relationships to important trails of different people, are one means of attracting important validations by establishing a group of people for whom the artists’ creative practice is a real and significant concern in various ways.

2.3.4.4 Being a Real Player

One of the most important forms of validation sought by artists is that which offers confirmation that artists may legitimately be considered serious or professional artists, rather than hobbyists and dilettantes. The judgements of experts and the public, the accumulation of credentials, and the endorsements of a trail of people, all contribute the presentation of an image of artistic professionalism. There are other ways, too, that the requisite seriousness and commitment of artists may be demonstrated.

Within the interview data artists discuss a whole range of different measures of seriousness. Stuart Elliott says:

> When people want to know, ‘oh have you got a card?’ And you say ‘oh well no, I haven’t…,’ it’s almost like, ‘oh, I guess you’re not that serious yet,’ or something. And these days, of course, someone’ll say, ‘oh so, you got a website?’ and no I haven’t got a website. So again, I’ve got the CV, I’ve got the business card, so I’ll have to get the website soon.’ [SE,2:1]

Rebecca Baumann suggested that registering her art practice as a business was a key moment, at least in her own recognition of her commitment to creative practice, ‘I got an ABN [Australian Business Number] which was [...] was actually quite an important step in a lot of ways, because you go, “OK this is something, I’m going to start planning things”’ [RB,1:3]. Kevin Draper suggests that a part of his early identification as an artist was the conversion of ‘the old dairy on our farm, I made that into a studio, and I suppose if you’ve got a studio, you’re an artist!’ [KD,1:1]. Other artists have also drawn attention to more specific aspects of the role of the studio, ‘working out of the front of my house [...] I wouldn’t have had the same contacts or networks to draw from. And this place has added [...] a credibility and seriousness to what I’m trying to achieve. I’m paying for a space to make my work in and that adds a bit of [...] professional[ism]’
As has been suggested in earlier discussions, artists also measure their own seriousness and commitment with reference to the extent and kinds of investments that they make into their creative practices.

Perhaps what is interesting in relation to measures of seriousness are those instances where artists spoke about problems with establishing their levels of commitment to art practice, often in the context of their CV and in competition for grants and other opportunities. In these particular contexts, it seems, artists’ commitment to practice can be measured in quite limited and prescriptive ways. Cecile Williams, who maintains her practice through community art projects and work in other areas of the arts says that:

> It’s really hard in the area I work in, because I am jumping in so many different fields of the arts. [...] I’ve just done a body of work so I’ve got the slides. But often there might be a six year break, [...] I mean, I’ve been doing work, but [...] the last one might’ve been four years ago where I’ve had a big body of work [...] and they want the most recent in three years or something. [CW,1:16]

Rebecca Baumann talks about an aura of seriousness created through activity, ‘it’s like doing a lot of things you look serious, [...] you sort of are serious, and people then look. [...] You have to stay on the hamster wheel of making things and keeping active, so that people are keeping interested’ [RB,2:18]. Artists perceive that there is a required minimum frequency for solo exhibitions, ‘one of the galleries keeps saying to me [...], you’ve got to maintain your public profile, like you’ve got to have a show at least every second year.’ [AS,1:25] Such perceptions appear to be confirmed by artists’ experiences in applying for opportunities, as Penny Bovell relates:

> they turned me down because I hadn’t had enough solo exhibitions, I hadn’t been exhibiting consistently. So I’m well aware professionally that it looks better. But I also think that if those sort of blinded people would really look, they could see that I had been incredibly prolific on a number of different levels, all the way along. [PB,2:14-15]

What is important about these kinds of measures of artists’ seriousness is that it suggests that many of the activities that artists undertake to resource their practice, in the variety of ways previously discussed in 2.3.3, are not considered by the selection criteria of arts funding bodies and in other situations to be valid indicators of artists’
seriousness and commitment. So whilst existing research has discussed the great
variety of work in different areas that artists undertake specifically in order to create
conditions for the pursuit of art practice (Australian Centre for Industrial Relations and
Training, 2001; Bridgstock, 2005; Throsby & Zednik, 2011), only very specific kinds of
work provide evidence of artists’ commitment to practice in some contexts: consistent
exhibition activity; residencies undertaken; works sold into collections; art prizes
awarded and so on. As Penny Bovell suggests, for instance, ‘the artistic public has a
perception that there’s a difference between public art and art. They see this
difference, that if you do public art there’s something that you’re letting go of’
[PB,2:16]. Tom Gibbons relates his own experience: ‘it doesn’t go down well to be a
writer and a painter, [...] people want to pigeonhole. [...] In my case, as an academic
I’m regarded with suspicion because you’re a rather arty [...] crafty figure. As an artist
either amateur or professional, regarded with suspicion because I have these academic
leanings, can’t be placed’ [TG,2:18]. Even in the context of the commercial gallery
scene, Regina Noakes encountered similar obstacles. ‘I went to New York, there’s a
man said, “Oh, I love your work and everything, are you married?” “Yes,” “Got
children?” “Yes,” “Oh well, I can’t take you, because you will not be able to put 100%
into your work.” But I have put 100% into my work, although I have put 100% to my
family. I work very, very hard’ [RN,1:4]. In contrast to conceiving of artists’ activity
outside of the studio as indicative of letting something go, Susanna Castleden
maintains:

I think it is one holistic identity. I mean you throw kids in there, you throw in
being a partner. [...] I’m certainly not the one that would like to declare I’m an
artist and only an artist and I sit in my studio and be an artist. I’ve never wanted
to be that, and I don’t also want to dilute my role as an artist because of that. I
think that’s an old-fashioned and unrealistic view of the artist of 2011 to be
someone who shuns teaching, shuns art awards, shuns commercial galleries, it’s
a load of bollocks. So I’m happy to declare that I’m part of that and I’m part of
academia as well. [SC,2:3]

Aside from creating an impression of professionalism which addresses queries about
whether an artist is ‘a real player, or are you dilly-dallying or something?’ [AS,1:28].
artists also face other challenges in maintaining their professional image. One of these
struggles is in achieving a level of on-going visibility for their practice, as Caitlin Yardley
relates: ‘I’ve always tried, particularly [in Perth] just to keep doing what I’m doing, [...] I try to keep myself a little bit public and don’t disappear’ [CY,1:9]. Some of the issues associated with the visibility of Western Australian artists stemming specifically from artists’ geographical locations have already been discussed in section 2.2.1.4. Staying on the hamster wheel of making and showing work promotes an image of seriousness precisely through maintaining a constant visible presence in the public realm. Artists recognise, however, that exhibiting work provides only a limited exposure. ‘You are pretty much relying on people who have seen the shows that you’re in and that, especially here, is quite small, and even within Australia’ [RB,2:3].

One of the ways that artists seek to combat this limited reach is to create and maintain a website. For many artists their site primarily functions as an online portfolio. ‘If you’re talking to people, whether it’s other artists or friends or, [...] if you’re talking to a curator, you can direct them to your website, it’s an online [...] database of images’ [EC,2:10]. Artists also consider their websites to be a means of connecting with people interested in their work. ‘In the long term it is a way of taking a step to just linking with people, other people, outside of [the gallery director], because I need to start doing that, because there’s only so long that she’ll have a gallery’ [PH,1:13]. Creating and setting up a website is another investment that artists make in their creative practice. As Barbara Cotter says, ‘I am in the process of [...] developing a website. I gotta get good photographs first, which is expensive, to get good photographs of jewellery’ [BC,2:17]. Monique Tippett points out that artists’ investments in their websites are not just financial, ‘that’s another job, isn’t it, managing your website’ [MT,2:28]. Erin Coates similarly observes, ‘I don’t update [my website] as much as I should. It can be a chore sometimes too, but there’s a selection process that goes on. [...] [Artists are] choosing something to project about how they want their practice to be perceived, so it’s really quite self-conscious in a way.’ [EC,2:10]

The collected data suggests that websites are a means of attracting validations for artists’ practices in a number of ways, and are successful to varying degrees. Rebecca Baumann says, ‘my website has been a really valuable tool for me [...] I’ve had a lot of people from overseas contact me and I’ve had a lot of opportunities come up through it’ [RB,2:2]. Other artists, however, have suggested that the inquiries that their
websites generated are hit and miss, though Caitlin Yardley indicates that her website is becoming increasingly important in other ways, ‘a lot of applications for grants, scholarships, everything, [they] now ask to see it’ [CY,2:1]. Other artists have argued that the capacity to look at the amount of traffic through their website, was also an indicator of the interest generated by their work. ‘You can see how many hits your site has had, and when you go into that you start realising that yes there is, there have been a lot of people going and viewing. That’s nice to know, that actually people are wanting to have a look’ [NH,2:1].

Beyond achieving a level of visibility, artists also stress that another dimension of being a real player in some art worlds hinges upon an artist’s ability to be ‘seen as someone who’s relevant’ [RB,2:15]. For some artists, this notion of relevance is perceived to be at odds with the kind of work that they do. For instance, Anna Sabadini feels ‘a bit archaic’ and that her work is ‘not hip,’ because it is ‘dealing with issues of home, and domesticity and still life’ [AS,1:24]. The work of other artists derives its significance in no small measure from the ways in which it is perceived to address pressing contemporary issues. Oron Catts’ profile, for instance is tied directly to a critical engagement with contemporary scientific advances, provoking discussions that may not otherwise be happening. He says:

> We’re still not coming to terms with the fact that we are responsible as humans in the creation of new life forms that, because we don’t have a way to classify them, actually they are rarely being discussed or rarely being observed. And you can see [...] an exponential increase in the amount of human-induced life forms that, because we don’t have the cultural language to engage with them, there’s very little discussion about what’s their place and if they’ve got a place in our world. [OC,1:6]

Furthermore, Oron Catts suggests that the particular relevance of this work was helped by its coincidence with the contemporary aims of the Australia Council’s New Media Arts Board in the early 2000s that provided SymbioticA with early credibility through funding. He says:

> my feeling was that they were trying to show that new media was more than artists working with screens, and there were very few other examples of artists working with new media technologies which were not digital. So we were
benefitting from that, as a showcase of showing off that artists can do stuff other than just working with a computer. [OC,1:10]

Still other artists address the issue of relevance by dealing with comparatively universal subjects, as Penny Bovell relates:

when I started using the sky, I saw it as a subject [...], that was huge, that you could map, or that you could mine and so it would be a way of keeping on going. And it wasn’t personal, so it wasn’t about me trying to deal with important things that were in my life or [...] trying to find something that was meaningful. It was just a subject that was a difficult, big subject. [PB,1:8]

In terms of attracting validation, it is very interesting that all subjects and all media are not perceived to be equally relevant in every art world. Even within the comparatively sheltered environment of art school artists perceive that there are fads: ‘sculpture was basically the only thing that seemed to be regarded in any real sense, and I was doing printmaking. And so you felt like you weren’t cool or you weren’t doing something or things that people were interested in’ [RB,1:4]. So, whilst artists may strive to pursue what interests them, according to the definitions of practice that they have established for themselves, there are undoubtedly barriers against and fast-tracks to the attraction of validation arising from the contemporary vogues at play in different art worlds.

One final dimension of artists’ efforts to establish themselves as real players involves their efforts to position themselves, and to project the kind of image that they feel is most useful and appropriate for the continuation of their practice. The work of positioning may involve decisions about their representation by commercial galleries. As one artist puts it:

I look at my position, I look at the gallery that I’m with [...] and the thing that concerns me is the way that other people are viewing me, [...] people look at me and think [the Gallery], and they think [the Gallery] and everything that [...] [the Gallery] represents and I’m thinking now, “does [the Gallery] stand for the things that I represent?” And I’m questioning that and thinking “well, I’ve got to look at that and accept it, or change it” [source withheld].

Similarly, other artists talk about their decisions to decline invitations and opportunities, ‘one of the galleries [that approached me] obviously were setting up more of a domestic environment [...] I think I probably made the kind of work that fit that space at the time, but it disappointed me because it wasn’t the kind of work I
wanted to be making’ [CY,1:9]. Regina Noakes makes an interesting observation about the ways in which these kinds of decisions make an artist’s sense of the values of their practice clear when she says: ‘I think when you tell people you don’t want to do something then you know yourself a bit better too’ [RN,1:8]. On the other hand, artists also feel that these decisions are scrutinised and may have repercussions: ‘I was told that if I left a gallery it might not look good, it might look like I’m an amateur and nobody will represent me’ [AS,1:28].

Other forms of positioning may also help artists to practice. ‘Being a woman and a painter and them all being male, big guns of the history of art. Translating my concerns, translating across a medium, I suppose I just look at a lot of images and think about how I position myself in relation and that seems to be important’ [AS,1:11]. So, as a quote like this suggests, professional artists reach beyond articulating what they have to say through their practices, and work towards obtaining the right forum in which their voice is valid, relevant and is most likely to be heard in the way that the artists are hoping for. For some artists, the choice of forum is about connecting with existing audiences associated with established galleries and other institutions, attracting validity by their admission into those fora or, in some cases, by removing themselves from specific situations. On another level, artists are also struggling to find their voices in an arena overcrowded with historical precedents, struggling to find what is left for them to say and what they have to contribute that is unique to them. In these efforts artists are positioning themselves amongst the other real players in the field, past and present, and derive some sense of validity by identifying where their particular contribution may add to existing conversations. As Anna Sabadini puts it, ‘sometimes I feel like I’m actually having a conversation. And you do, don’t you, when you make work? It’s like “you’ve done that, here’s this,” or whatever, so it’s that kind of relationship’ [AS,1:12].

2.3.4.5 The Labour of Attracting Validation: Conclusions

Having presented the notion that artists labour to make creative practice real for themselves, by defining their practice, and then labour to create the conditions required to pursue that practice in the real word, the data presented here about the
labour to attract validation might be conceived as the work that artists do to make their art practice a real part of the real world. It is through this labour that art practice is made real for other people, in ways that don’t merely accommodate practice in a place set aside (like a personal, leisure-time pursuit). In this section of the findings I have presented data that suggests that art practice is validated and made real by having people talk about it and buy it; by other measurements of its worth that take into account the status of those individuals and institutions that endorse it; by establishing and maintaining social circles and networks centred around the art practice; and by living up to, or overcoming, the cultural expectations that may exist about who artists are and what they should be doing.

This research, once entitled “the poet’s work” (see Introduction) is an attempt to collect empirical data in which it may be possible to observe how contemporary artists reconcile these different aspects of the labour of creative practice. What I think is significant in the data presented so far, is the great variety of ways in which the ‘invention of reasons for accounting the practice admirable’ (Borges, 2000, pp. 121-122) can be integrated into the things that artists do, even when defining the values and processes intrinsic to creative practice itself. All self-conscious professional artists, I suggest, must cross this threshold, translating intrinsic values into public values, subjective concerns towards objective significance. It is clear, however, that such translations are achieved in a number of different ways, and that the invention of reasons for accounting the practice admirable can take many forms. Artists may not themselves invent reasons in all cases, not being the best judges, but they place their work in situations where it will attract such independent and objective responses as will validate the on-going significance of their practice. By collecting credentials and building a CV, artists are engaged in a process of making clear the extension of the objective reality and the level of significance that their practice has attained. This process may not invent reasons but it certainly aims at presenting a strong case for other people taking the practice seriously. By maintaining relationships with a trail of people, artists invite other individuals into conversations (and other transactions) that centre on their art practice, and so it is that clients, mentors and advocates all become investors in the reality of the practice, and party to the project of inventing reasons.
Finally, artists position themselves as real players of the sort that they would like to be, by self-consciously seeking to manage their relationships with other players and entities in the field, and by recognising that some alliances and distinctions can in themselves function as reasons to admire and value the practice.

### 2.3.5 Maintaining Integrity

In previous sections of these findings I have discussed artists’ labour in terms of the various ways that they build their creative practice, making it more extensively real and significant. There is a further kind of purposeful activity in which visual artists are engaged, that of maintaining integrity, which upholds an ethical and moral dimension within the practice of visual art and has both a personal significance and a public face. This is an aspect of art practice that has been variously defined and named by artists in the interviews. Sometimes artists have spoken about ‘authenticity’ [AS,1:2], sometimes ‘integrity’ [PB,1:4], at other times ‘truth’ [SE,1:6], and ‘honesty’ [EC,1:2], are invoked, on still other occasions it is more implicitly registered in the attitudes expressed by artists. Tom Gibbons says:

> You do have to fall back on something really quite personal there, and to say that you would hope never to produce something which is unworthy of you. [...] Notions of honour, I think, lie just below the surface. [...] These assumptions about honour and authenticity turn out, even in my own case, to be Romantic. [TG,2:13]

Stuart Elliott similarly hints at some of the historical foundations of such conceptions of integrity; ‘being true to yourself, to try and be as honest, to keep as much integrity as you can of what you do and I think, in the end, just those old Victorian things about trying really hard to maintain what you regard as good character’ [SE,1:7-8].

Though it usually perceived or understood as an attribute of the artist or their practice, in practice integrity is a social product of artists’ actions; it is performed as much as it is possessed. This is clear in discussions in which artists talk about the ways in which integrity is to be preserved, and the ways in which it can be compromised. Integrity is an intrinsically conceived whole that is situated in opposition to the pressures and pull...
of external influences that tend to erode, disperse and contaminate that integrity. The maintenance of integrity can then be conceived in terms that consider the artist’s agency in different situations, in relation to actions of theirs that are intended to moderate external influence. In this sense maintaining integrity operates in different ways from the other kinds of labour previously discussed. Rather than seeking to overcome obstacles and to push boundaries in order to allow the practice more space in the world, the maintenance of integrity involves self-regulation and setting limits around the practice and its intrinsic values. This integrity is instrumental in visual art practice as an important creative and personal resource and as an integral part of a professional reputation, which in turn has some significant bearing on the distribution of opportunity in art worlds.

Most significantly, as the conceptual model depicted in Figure 15 suggests, the maintenance of integrity is a kind of labour that impacts on and is impacted on by the remainder of the artist’s work to define practice, create conditions and attract validation. Artists’ actions, decisions and aspirations in each of these other realms of the labour of visual art are perceived to have the potential to compromise integrity in various ways, and so it is that artists talk about the importance of this ethical dimension as something that influences the ways in which they practice. In the following I will present material from the collected data that elaborates on the nature of professional artistic integrity, and the work that artists do to maintain it. Initially, it will be seen that whilst the concept of integrity is something that underpins all of the artists’ practices that were the subject of this study, artists perceive of threats to their integrity in different ways. So it is that artists recognise that there are Different Ways of Being in it, and correspondingly different art worlds in which different moral and ethical codes result in slightly different conceptions of artistic integrity and the things that contribute to its loss. Following this, I will detail the two forms of compromise that have been most prominent in the collected data: Commercial Imperatives and Taking on the Ambience of Contemporary Art. Here it will be seen that whilst artists are differently exposed to the dangers of these compromises, in fact most artists are conscious of navigating a narrow path between the two. I will then present material that illustrates some of the ways in which artists moderate influence by Keeping
Distances and other practical strategies for maintaining integrity. Finally I will conclude by bringing together the key ideas about artists’ labour to maintain integrity that have been pursued in this analysis.

2.3.5.1 Different Ways of Being in it

In many studies of art and artists, emerging from most fields of inquiry including the social sciences, it is typically acknowledged that within art there exists what Bourdieu has called a dualist structure (Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 121-125). In its most common form, this dualist structure is expressed in the long-standing conceptual opposition between high and low art, or fine art and popular art. Even within studies that limit themselves to just painting or visual art, distinctions are made between serious and important art (which may be of contemporary, or historical significance) and the production of so-called ‘chromos’ (Moulin, 1994) or ‘junk painting’ (Moulin, 1987 [1967]). Indeed, the study of CV data that I have undertaken as a part of this research, also confirms the existence of two principal clusters of Western Australian commercial galleries and associated artists around distinctive values (See 2.1.3). The artists that I have interviewed for this project have also made similar distinctions between the kinds of work that they perceive other artists to be doing, and the kinds of art worlds within which they perceive themselves to be operating.

On the one hand there is ‘mainstream’ [LM,1:4] art, in ‘which there’s very much a sense of getting a gallery, getting a reputation, career building, layer by layer by layer, developing a name, being recognised, and career’s very much just a tool of all that climbing’ [LM,2:1]. On the other hand there are artists who are seen to be ‘prolific and commercial’ [LM,2:17], who may take different approaches to maintaining the practice: ‘I am in business as well, I mean, if something works for me […] fiscally speaking, well, I’ll do a series of works that I think will sell so that I can make some money for my family and so that I can refinance my travels and what I’m doing’ [LM,1:9]. In terms of the maintenance of integrity, what is significant about both of these versions of being in an art world is that they are both perceived to achieve a measure of independence and autonomy for the artist, but by different routes. The
passage into the mainstream art world, through formal art school education, says Larry Mitchell, was ‘too institutionalised for me.’

I think I would’ve been under pressure not to be able to shoot off at tangents and not felt free enough to, and [...] some of the areas I would’ve innately gone into I would’ve been discouraged against, like the slightly commercial, or like the slightly [...] topographical. [...] And there’s all that politics about landscape and panorama and all of that stuff, which interests me, and I read a lot about it, I’ve written a lot about it, but I [...] didn’t want it to dominate what I do. Because you can get lost in all that sort of stuff. Sometimes I just want to look at something beautiful and try and get it. So [...] I have resisted that. [LM,2:8]

By the same token, Cecile Williams says of being focused on the commercial aspects of her practice, ‘it [...] influences the way I work. Like if I think I’ve got to sell it, then I think in a different way. Whereas if I think [...] “I want to make it to tell a story about what I’m doing,” then I don’t have to think about it selling, or where it’s going to go and all that’ [CW,1:3]. Nigel Hewitt describes the outcomes of a commercial focus in another artist’s work:

The subject is exactly the same as it was ten years ago; same fruit on the same sort of table. But the cloth lacked integrity, [...] it wasn’t a folded cloth, [...] it was like tonal adjusted paint. [...] I just start wondering how on earth can you keep doing that? And it must be, [the artist’s] imperative must be commercial because, he’s been successful. [NH,2:16]

There may be a temptation to suggest that the mainstream, and the prolific and commercial, are opposed and mutually exclusive stances with respect to the values at play in different art worlds. In fact, a number of artists in the interviews have drawn attention to the hazards of compromise in relation to both routes to (relative) creative freedom. Furthermore, it is not necessarily the case that there are only two ways that artists can be in it. As Penny Bovell says:

Things keep on changing, so you either deeply care about it and want to participate in it and keep up with it, or you go, ‘Hey, I’m just going to go over to the other side of the play-ground and make my own game,’ and get on with it. You’ve just got all these different ways that you can be in it and you certainly don’t want to be jaded and cynical and bitter about it. You’ve got to be strategic, so that you keep on enjoying doing what you’re doing, don’t let anyone spoil it. [PB,1:14-15]
Artists have invoked the concept of truth and honesty with respect to what artists deeply care about on the level of the important things that artists wish to communicate through their creative practice. There is a perception that work has integrity because it is not striving to achieve any ends other than the exploration and articulation of those subjective interests and intrinsic values in which artists are fully invested through creative practice. ‘There’s a very rare chance, no matter what’s happened in your life, that you may come up with something interesting if you’re not doing it for anybody other than for yourself’ [LM,2:18]. Here it is possible to see where the various situations in which artists may feel a need to “keep up with it” may be at odds with such a conception of integrity, whether artists are striving to maintain their visibility and relevance in the mainstream, or whether they are trying to remain prolific and commercially successful in a particular market. In Bourdieu’s estimation, what has here been termed the mainstream is a market for symbolic goods (Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 142-143), but a market nonetheless, and so perhaps the compromise is essentially the same in both art worlds: production is shaped by patterns of consumption. I will be returning to the ways that artists have talked about these market pressures in a subsequent section.

As well as measuring their integrity in terms that consider the creative practice to be an autonomous whole, artists also talk about their responsibilities as artists, not only to themselves, but also to other people. Artists are aware that art practice is always treading a fine line between being frivolous or self-indulgent and a fundamental aspect of being human. ‘[Art]’s the mint you have at the end of the dinner [...] and not necessarily affordable’ [PB,1:6], or, as Rebecca Baumann puts it, ‘sometimes I think “What is all this wank [...] that I’m dealing with all the time and why?” So many other things are more important. But then other times it’s just so exciting and I think, “Oh, what would the world be like without art?”’ [RB,1:16]. This sense of doubt, and the need to maintain a level of perspective about the value of creative practice, seems to have led artists to adopt different positions with respect to the maintenance of integrity. On the one hand, some artists have dealt with the uncertain public value of their practice by limiting the number of others depending on them, and on their practice: ‘I’ve made decisions, like not having children and stuff like that, because then
you really have responsibilities that you can’t avoid […] and maybe that gives me a bit of leeway, I think’ [AS,1:12-13]. For other artists, maintaining artistic integrity can involve a certain amount of delegation or other forms of managing their responsibilities and commitments, if the means are available. ‘My father […] put [my son] into Guildford Grammar to board, so I had the freedom during the week […] and Mum would support me, and that was after […] I left my marriage, and I left marriage because I knew in my heart that I wanted to be a free spirit and I wanted to express myself’ [PD,1:11]. By limiting or containing their responsibilities and commitments, artists also limit the number of pressures external to their practice that could impact on their sense of artistic integrity.

For artists without the means to manage their existing responsibilities and commitments in these kinds of ways, maintaining integrity can involve the establishment of hierarchies of responsibilities and needs in which art practice may not occupy the highest level of priority. As Peter Hill relates:

> I have definite memories of the first show I had after our first child. […] Having a child really did help with the big picture and I just take a step a back and go, “well it doesn’t matter, […] [making art] is just this tiny little thing and really doesn’t make much difference in the world, so don’t take it so seriously.” So they really help just levelling me out and bringing me into the world. [PH,1:6]

Or as Larry Mitchell says:

> I’ve been aware at times - and this is […], geographical isolation, marriage, supporting [family] - I’ve been here doing stuff that I know that is going to damage my reputation, but I simply don’t have a choice and that at times can be quite painful. But […] I don’t have to do that anymore, and I’m quite proud of the fact that I put other people before my art ego, […] in retrospect. [LM,1:12-13]

In these cases the codes and mores of art worlds are subordinated to a greater sense of ethical integrity in which artists’ roles as providers and parents (for example) are equally important aspects of their identity and social being. Thus it is that decisions which may not create conditions for the advancement of a career, or may even inhibit or damage a career, might be perceived by artists as maintaining a sense of integrity which is essential to their personal authenticity and carries through into their ability to practice.
There are probably some disadvantages for being an artist based in Perth if you want to be an über-international artist, [...] but I don’t want to be an international über-artist. [...] I don’t want that to seem like I’m just taking what I can get and [I’m] not really ambitious, because I quite like making art and I like being in national shows, but I wouldn’t relocate my family to New York to do that. [SC,2:13]

There are a whole range of responsibilities that artists must balance and prioritise in relation to their professional creative practice. Whilst each artist’s sense of integrity is distinctively their own, there exists a moral hierarchy of responsibility within some art worlds and against which artists’ priorities are evaluated. The priorities that artists decide upon are revealed through monitoring their performances in relation to many aspects of their practices, ranging from the content and execution of their artworks through to decisions about lifestyle and sources of income.

2.3.5.2 Commercial Imperatives and Taking on the Ambience of Contemporary Art

Within the interviews, artists identified two dominant external pressures against which they must guard in their efforts to maintain integrity. In the first instance, artists have spoken about the pressures derived from pursuing art practice as a commercial enterprise in the art market, noting that where ‘commercial imperatives’ [NH,1:5] dominate the course of creative practice, artistic integrity is at peril. In the second case, artists have spoken about pressures derived from seeking to compete in the world of contemporary art, where to succeed one has to achieve visibility and relevance in relation to current local and international vogues in order to attract attention and opportunity. In so doing, artists run the risk of ‘taking on the ambience of contemporary art’ [AS,1:4], of making work and engaging in activities calculated to deliver short-term impact and currency, work that ‘all looks the same, it has that kind of “now” look’ [LM,2:6], at the expense of being authentic and being able to follow one’s own path in terms of career and creative practice.

At the core of both kinds of compromise to artists’ integrity are issues associated with reproduction, repetition and replication. This might be the apparent ‘self-plagiarism’ [LM,1:9] that indicates that one has stepped out of the realm of creative practice and
is instead, ‘just manufacturing commodities,’ [SE,2:4] or ‘making blue versions’ [AS,1:26]. As Nigel Hewitt says:

I’ll be honest with you, I have fallen into the trap a couple of times where some works have been successful and I’ve thought, ‘I’ll just do a few more of those’ and, the idea might be [...] ‘well I might be able to sell them,’ but I just hated doing them and they always failed because they did not have the integrity of that first work that I did. [NH,2:16]

On the other hand the compromise may take the form of following a largely predetermined career pathway that is a strategic reproduction of some model of a successful career within a specific art world. As Larry Mitchell says:

Life’s more interesting than that, [...] if you do understand how reputations are built, and you don’t ignore it, you’re going to be pressured into doing all sorts of things to prop that up and maintain that reputation. [...] And what if your interests suddenly go off elsewhere? You think ‘well [I] can’t do that because they might think...’ [...] I’ve always quite liked people that just went down their little tracks in a way, pissed people off if they needed to. They didn’t do it intentionally, they were just exploring stuff. So there is a difference between the way society builds the assemblage of a reputation and sometimes the way an artist operates. [LM,2:17]

Beyond this, artists also perceive that decisions to work with certain subject matter, or even materials, can have some bearing on the maintenance of integrity. For instance, ‘some gallery owners purely celebrate the work that sells and if it sells they want more of it and that can lead to a gallery full of camellias, representations of camellias, not art using camellias as its subject’ [NH,2:4]. Alternatively, an artist’s choice to work in certain media and with particular subject matter can be perceived to exclude them from even participating in certain art worlds:

This whole new media thing, there’s an institutional need to buy art or to have art out there and visible. And these sorts of things quickly fill the gaps, they come and go and it’s fun to have something in a public space, projected on a building, and then that’s it. Whereas I feel like I’m more interested in something a little bit more sustaining than that, and maybe, the audience for that is more limited then? [AS,1:24]

‘I’ve never applied for a grant, [...] I would never bother, because I don’t do that sort of work, I mean you’d never call my work cutting edge’ [CB,1:2]. And so in these latter cases, remaining authentic to one’s own definitions of creative practice and
maintaining one’s integrity is seen to come at the cost of access to various forms of institutional and government support which is seen, perhaps, to favour ‘biennale art.’ [AS,1:4]

On one level, artists maintain their integrity by producing work that is driven exclusively by internal rather than external motivations. Regina Noakes talks about her mentor in the UK: ‘it was a time when the younger people coming, [...] it was a different kind of painting, so it was quite hard for her. But they all stuck to it, that whole generation. [...] They [...] never went up and down for fashion, they just painted what they felt like. So I learnt that from her, just paint what you feel like, what you really like’ [RN,1:5]. Or, as Penny Bovell describes her reticence about re-entering the commercial gallery scene, ‘I would hate to be in a position that I was creating pot-boilers [...] that didn’t [...] create the right sort of emotional pull that I wanted them to create, so I would to be just forcing it out there’ [PB,2:14]. On another level, integrity can be maintained, despite perceived compromises, by persevering with professional creative practice against the odds. As Larry Mitchell describes it:

You’ve got to be successful enough to make enough money and have enough recognition in order to be able to be released to do that. Well obviously I’ve got a family, I’ve got three children, I’m sub-educated, I’ve had all that since I’ve been very young, and so that’s been really difficult. [...] It’s prolonged the process, [towards being] able to work full-time as a painter and establish any kind of career, but it’s been absolutely worth it. [LM,1:6]

He goes on: ‘people don’t realise that that is an ethical decision. They think that you’re just selling out to make pots of money, but I don’t have a boat in the driveway or a house in Dalkeith and I’ve just had to survive’ [LM,1:13]. Integrity may also involve the dynamic pursuit of an authentic voice through a naturally evolving practice. As Peter Hill says, he never wants to;

get to the point where I’m feeling that I’m stagnating. [...] I do really think there’s pressure in the art world, especially the gallery art world to not do that, to just stay with something that’s successful. So to continue to expand and grow, that’s my goal, so if I can keep doing that and survive financially, [...] so that I try and be true to myself and be honest with myself about whatever else is going on in real life, not the art world, and to be making artworks about that, that’s the goal. [PH,1:3]
As can be seen in these instances, the maintenance of integrity can motivate artists to pursue the commercial success that enables them to be full-time artists, satisfactorily acquitting them of their real responsibilities in the real world, releasing them to pursue the practice that they wish to pursue. It can also motivate artists to avoid exposure to commercial success, or to pursue work that isn’t in contemporary vogue, so that they remain sure that their work has not been influenced by mercenary interests. Or, as in the last instance, the maintenance of integrity can inform a whole range of complex aspirations, self-regulation and decisions about how one is best to proceed on the tight-rope between the pressures of commercial imperatives and the temptations of the ambience of contemporary art. All of these different takes on integrity follow on from the very different ways that artists are trying to ‘be in it’ [PB,1:15] and especially from the very different circumstances and conditions in which artists are operating.

It is also true, however, that whilst the maintenance of integrity provides artists with a moral impetus that enables the ongoing labour of artists to define practice, create conditions and attract validation, it does so by identifying the moral deficiencies of other approaches. Distinctions are made on the basis of various tangible indicators that are read as providing a measure of an artists’ level of integrity. For instance, artists’ choices of media and subject matter may play this role in positive and negative ways. As was presented above, a decision to paint flowers exclusively, or to stay with one subject for ten years may contribute to a perception that an artist has been swayed by commercial imperatives and has thus compromised the integrity of their work. A corollary of this situation may be that the decision to make or display work that is expected to be unsaleable may imply other motives more profound and noble than commercial imperatives, and in some situations therefore may be indicative of a greater level of integrity. As Nigel Hewitt says of a commercial gallery in Perth, ‘they have great integrity about their choices of art that they hang. I saw a show there […] it was in the last festival I think, really, really interesting work. […] That was really celebrating challenging creative art […] and they’re going out on a limb with that, because it might not sell, but then again it might sell very well’ [NH,2:5]. From another perspective, however, some challenging creative art may simply be indicative of artists striving to be accepted into the, ‘upper echelons of art […] blue chips, the avant-
garde,’ which is all, ‘manipulated by certain people, as we have seen with the recording of art history’ [MI,2:11]. Such work, and the artists that produce them, may tick all the right boxes institutionally but be soulless and inauthentic: ‘She’s done Masters of this, and Masters of that, but the work doesn’t sell. To me, if I was teaching her […] I’d tell her they’re not finished, not enough soul in there’ [RN,2:1].

In these conceptions, integrity is associated with a natural and organically evolving authenticity that can be tied both to the practice and the practitioner. This integrity is contrasted with the artifice and mercenary inauthenticity of artists who allow themselves and their practices to be swayed by commercial imperatives and/or the ambience of contemporary art. Such an opposition sets out the landscape of art worlds in which artists are operating such that success, whether commercial or career success, may be seen to be tainted by the suspicion that some compromise has been involved. The absence of these kinds of successes would therefore imply the uncompromising maintenance of integrity on all levels. So some features of this conceptual landscape may allow artists to succeed on the level of values intrinsic to their practice, even to the point where being unsuccessful may be perceived to be a great virtue.

2.3.5.3 Keeping Distances

Clearly, however pure and authentic an artist may wish to be, for most professionals the need to define their practice in a sustainable way means that at some point they will be exposed to the pressures of commercial imperatives or the ambience of contemporary art. Indeed, as artists labour to define practice, create conditions and attract validation they are increasingly negotiating with the interests of others in order to maximise their capacities to establish a level of tangible autonomy within which they can continue to practice on their own terms. As a practice becomes more extensively and objectively real outside of the artist’s studio and personal circle, correspondingly there are a greater number of individuals, institutions and other entities that have made some level of investment in that practice. Whilst each of these
investors in some way validates creative practice as defined by the artist, it is also true
that potentially each investor becomes another stake-holder that may consciously or
unconsciously influence the artists’ own definitions of practice. So it is that much of
professional artists’ labour to maintain the integrity of their creative practice is
directed towards activities designed to moderate influence, and to keep sufficient
distance from influences that artists deem to be undesirable.

Within the collected data, artists talked about actively keeping their distance from a
number of different influences. Interestingly, whilst the importance of support from
teachers and mentors has been stressed in previous sections, artists also talk about
the importance of cutting their ‘ties with the […] father figure lecturers. […] You love
them and you get a lot from them, but you realise their limitations and you realise also
that you are starting […] to be inscribed with them and to take on certain things’
[EC,2:5]. As Craig Boulter says, ‘I just admire what he does, he’s an inspiration, but I
find all the artists get swallowed up by him. Like there’s about 30 artists who have,
have come under [his] influence […]and they all paint like [him], they all talk like [him]
[…], I thought, “I want to keep my distance from you”’ [CB,1:6]. For some artists,
keeping distances from such influences has involved physical distances. As Anna
Sabadini says about her move from Perth to Albany in the south of the state:

It’s nice to put a distance between me and Curtin. […] I guess a sense of maturing
as an artist, because I do hear [my mentors’] voices, and sometimes I feel like I
do need to get a distance from that, as much as I value their input. And there is a
sense of having come down here to be serious and work, and I like that space.
[AS,1:19]

For other artists, their decisions about the geographical location of their creative
practice may be similarly motivated by a perceived need to keep their distance from
specific influences. For instance, Peter Hill says that his lack of interest in critical
feedback on his work, is ‘represented by where I live [in Northcliffe]. I try to distance
myself from most parts of the art world, other than the creative part of it, so what a
critic says about my work is not that important to me’ [PH,1:4]. Larry Mitchell similarly
talks about living in a southern suburb of Perth, where he feels he can be himself, and
about deliberately disappearing from the art scene: ‘The choice to live here […] is […]
about feeling comfortable. I don’t really always feel comfortable in highly intellectual,
or highly self-consciously intellectual, [...] or cultural places or gatherings, there’s a
different kind of intelligence going on here, which I really rate’ [LM,2:10]. Similarly,
because of the limited commercial opportunity for artists Michael Iwanoff sees Perth
as ‘a really great place to get on with your work and to evolve your work and to make
the sort of work that could easily have been influenced negatively by a ready market’
[MI,1:14].

The effort to maintain integrity doesn’t only take the form of keeping distances. In
some cases it might be seen as the establishment of specific parameters which artists
set around their creative practice. In particular, these kinds of parameters have been
discussed with reference to creative projects in which the interests of third parties are
explicitly felt, such as making work on commission, public art projects and even some
relationships with commercial galleries. Several artists talked about different strategies
for maintaining their autonomy and integrity whilst being engaged in commission
work. Regina Noakes, says about dealing with clients for commissions: ‘they’re not
artists, so they’ll think something in their head which is not going to work, [...] whatever you do it’s not going to be the right thing, it will be “we didn’t expect this or
that.” So I just do three and then they choose and that’s my way of doing a
commission’ [RN,1:9]. Similarly, Nigel Hewitt says, ‘I do like doing portraits, but I don’t
like someone saying, “well look, if you come and do my portrait I want it done like this,
this and this,” so my approach [is], [...] I’ll say “can I paint you?” and they say, “yes,”
and I’ll paint them, and I just hope that they buy it’ [NH,1:14]. For other artists, it is
simply the case that, ‘I don’t want to do commissions. I don’t want to ever feel that I’m
making work for an endpoint other than the artistic process’ [AS,1:26].

In a similar way, artists make decisions about opportunities that may arise, such as
offers from commercial galleries, with reference to the maintenance of the integrity of
their practice. As Anna Sabadini relates, ‘a gallery contacted me from Melbourne and
at first I thought, “oh, how exciting,” and then I talked to her and she basically just
wanted landscapes of a certain size, because she could sell them, and I don’t ever want
to be put in that position’ [AS,1:26]. Where artists feel pressured or controlled by
commercial galleries, these situations often inform their decisions to look for
alternative representation or to operate in different ways altogether.
I actually went to [the gallery director] [...] a long time ago, to have exhibitions, to get in there and [the gallery director] wanted me to have my paintings ready for an exhibition three years in advance. [...] So it was very controlling and she wanted to come and see every painting that I did and critique it before she put it on the wall [RN,2:12].

Another example discussed a combination of control pressures and the need to maintain a professional image:

I found it a bit frustrating working for them [...] [they didn’t want] to release my work, even if they’d had it for six months [...] and if [they were] going to release it, [they] wanted to know why I was wanting it and where I was going to put it. They were too possessive and I’m not really interested in that, because I believe that [...] there should be this relationship with a gallery that you work for them, they work for you. [...] My experience is I do a lot of work for the gallery, they’d do very little work for me. [...] Also it was the other people that had shows there, [...] some art that was really, really concerning, in the sense of quality, [...] and I know as an artist you do get associated with the gallery that you’re with [NH,2:3].

As for Catlin Yardley, she sees her early decisions as having important impacts on the kinds of work she is doing today. ‘Had I gone down a different path, straight into some of the early commercial galleries that approached me I think I would be making a really different body of work. I don’t think it would be as research based, I don’t think I would’ve stepped outside of painting too easily’ [CY,2:14]. For still other artists, there is a reluctance to commit to showing with one particular commercial gallery. In Kevin Draper’s case this is because he felt that, ‘I’d much rather have had a show here, a show there, different spaces for different reasons, different kinds of work’ [KD,1:40]. Similarly, Cecile Williams says:

I don’t actually choose galleries [...] with galleries they want you, they hold onto you, you’ve got to do work every two years. [...] I’m terrible at committing to these sort of things that lock me in to a time frame and even a continued style of artwork. So I tend to go with people that I’ve known before or have heard about, that aren’t those gallery-type situations. They’re much more spontaneous and open to new ideas and concepts about showing artworks, installations and hearing your story whatever that may be etc. [CW,1:1]

Public art projects are another situation in which artists sometimes see a need to set clear parameters around what they can do in order to maintain the integrity of their
practice. In some cases, the artist’s strategy is about keeping their distance, as Stuart Elliott says about public art projects:

You’re dealing most of the time with people […] who are not voluntarily in that position, they have to have that work, because that’s what the law says [Percent for Art Scheme, see Appendix C.3]. The architect is very territorial: ‘You’re not going to put that on my building, my building was already art.’ And consultants will always take the shortest possible route because the quicker you can wrap the job up the sooner they get their commission, and so it goes. And so in the end we get public art which looks like our city. It doesn’t look like it was ever designed for people, it’s a drive-by opportunity, so I’ve dealt with as little of that as possible. [SE,1:20]

For other artists it is a matter of choosing very carefully the projects in which to involve themselves. As Penny Bovell says, ‘you’ve got to push to do the best work you can in whatever area, and not make compromises, so you don’t let yourself get turned into a designer if you’re doing public art, you say “no” to those jobs, you don’t get greedy and say “yes” to everything, you pick the jobs that you think your work will suit’ [PB,2:16]. In Michael Iwanoff’s case, certain kinds of interaction with other parties are key and desirable aspects of public art projects:

The projects that I have been involved in have been incredibly organic, […] where it’s a to and fro between you and the architect and the designers, where you can literally come with suggestions. […] It’s like an analogy of dance, you make your move, and your partner responds and you can negotiate or we can work things out. And […] they have certainly been the richest.[…] A lot of projects are not organic enough for me, […] because in many ways that’s easier to control, or easy to come up with a known outcome, people will prefer to employ that. People want that guarantee, as with so many things in life, people want certainty and I’m not interested in that. I prefer change, fluidity, […] and responsiveness and being able to explore those aspects of my being where I can respond in fresh ways, or ways where I’m perhaps waking up those parts that have never found expression. [MI,2:7]

Another way that artists maintain the integrity of their creative practice is to partition off their art practice from the other activities in which they may be engaged. For instance, Kevin Draper maintains that the best strategy for dealing with the compromises associated with public art projects was to treat his involvement in that realm as something distinct. ‘The gates, the panels and even some things that even sit inside a building, they’re on that perimeter, you could still say they’re sculptural […]
For me, I ended up doing the things like the gates for the Chinese Consulate, which I still really enjoyed doing, but it’s not art, it probably is public art I suppose, but that’s not my art practice’ [KD,1:32]. Similarly, Barbara Cotter makes both limited production jewellery (which has a design emphasis and is more saleable) and art jewellery (which has an art emphasis) and both have important and distinct roles to play in her studio practice. She says: ‘making the art stuff does take a lot more energy and actually I find it quite cathartic to make that limited production stuff. So I don’t actually mind making both, it just comes back to balance, ideally I’d be making more art stuff’ [BC,2:4]. Rebecca Baumann also talks about distinguishing between her day job/s and her art practice when she discusses her CV. ‘I definitely wouldn’t put my employment history on [my CV], and some people do that too. […] I don’t think that stuff’s relevant, and so I want to separate my art career from my working career’ [RB,2:1]. Also in relation to day jobs and income earning activities, Pippin Drysdale states her position on the maintenance of the integrity of her practice:

I could never combine being an artist and doing a bread and butter income. So I was never prepared to sacrifice my creativity and my experiment and my journey of being spontaneous about my work, I just had to go through that and nature’s looked after me ever since and I have to say I have survived on my art. [PD,1:16]

2.3.5.4 The Labour of Maintaining Integrity: Conclusions

In the above presentation of material from the collected data it is clear that integrity is both a personal resource and an appraisal that is deployed in order to make distinctions and value judgements. It also seems that while integrity is constructed as a personal attribute, it is an attribute under constant scrutiny, measured and assessed on the evidence provided by artists’ actions on many different levels. In this way, integrity is something that artists are working to maintain.

On a personal level, the labour to maintain integrity is about ensuring that definitions of practice at the core of artists’ creative practices are still identifiably their own as they seek to create conditions and attract validation. Artists’ definitions of practice are not static but evolving in response to the situations in which they are being developed, and so it always remains possible that practices may be redefined. In this way, personal integrity is not perhaps the incorruptible and transcendental ideal that it may
sometimes be taken to be; it is quite possible that artists’ own definitions of practice will, over a number of iterations, assimilate elements from other sources and be shaped by various influences. In order for the artist to maintain their vital sense of the integrity of their practice, it is important that the definitions, processes and outcomes of their practice are all matters in which they see themselves, and hear their own voice.

The labour to maintain integrity may therefore involve a range of actions including the strategies of keeping distances, and setting up parameters and partitions. For instance, by relying on subsidy and institutional funding Oron Catts suggests that SymbioticA is able to pursue its important non-utilitarian creative research program with integrity and avoid becoming, ‘yet another cog in the machine, producing more meaningless objects.’ He says, ‘we need to fight hard and strong to allow those spaces to operate without them needing to try and justify themselves commercially or in monetary terms because that’s the wrong yard-stick to measure them with’ [OC,2:10]. The labour to maintain integrity, however, may also involve the constant work of filtering, redefining and paraphrasing that transforms a range of influences and circumstantial impacts into influences with which artists are able to identify. This is the kind of process that Monique Tippett talks about in relation to public art projects; ‘you have to get the bits that they like and put it in, and keep morphing until they say “oh yeah, that’s what I like.”’ [...] It’s not exactly what you want to do, because there’s a few [...] different people’s opinions in there,’ but she concludes, ‘at the end of the day it is what I want to do’ [MT,2:9]. Ultimately, personal integrity appears dependent upon the artist’s capacity to take ownership and accept authorship of the outcomes of creative practice, even in cases where outcomes are significantly shaped by influences external to the intrinsic concerns of that practice.

It has been seen, however, that integrity is not only a personal resource but also instrumental in social situations as the basis for qualitative and moral distinctions between practices and practitioners. Whilst many key features of the related concepts integrity, authenticity, truth, and honesty are shared, the data presented here confirms that the practical applications and the tangible evidence of these values are intimately associated with the different ways that artists have of being in art worlds.
The version of integrity to which artists aspire depends upon their personal circumstances and responsibilities, and it depends upon the moral hierarchies that are prevalent in the art worlds in which they are seeking to operate. In the mainstream art world the moral deficiencies of commercial imperatives are writ large, whilst for artists who are prolific and commercial it is the modish adherence to the ever shifting international ambience of contemporary art that is viewed with suspicion. Most significantly, a number of the interviewed artists talked about negotiating their own path between the compromises associated with the pressures of these two distinct markets. Nevertheless, authenticity and integrity are maintained in part by making distinctions and drawing attention to deficiencies in other practices and art worlds. Many decisions artists make, whether about their subject matter or media, or the people and institutions with which they are associated, or the way that they earn their income, and so on, can be instrumental in implicating the art world to which an artist belongs and the system of values to which they might subscribe. Such indicators can be deployed by artists themselves and others, in both positive and negative ways, providing evidence of the integrity of a practice, or of its compromise. What can be seen clearly, however, is not an opposition between practices in which the concept of integrity is paramount, and those in which it is absent or compromised, rather it is the case that integrity, differently perceived, has a role to play in all art practices and in different art worlds. Furthermore, such integrity is a conscious concern of the artists I have interviewed, and its maintenance is an important dimension of the purposeful activity that is the labour of visual art in Western Australia.


Exhibit- 18: Regina Noakes, *By the Water's Edge*, 2012, oil on canvas, 180cm x 130cm. Photographed by the artist.
PART THREE: The View from Here: Discussion
3.1 The Research Questions

I conclude this thesis by drawing together the key findings of this project addressing the research questions posed at the outset. As the first three research questions have been addressed in detail in earlier sections presenting the findings of this study, in this conclusion I briefly revisit and summarise the relevant findings. The majority of this conclusion will be concerned with the final research question, and will compare and contrast some of the key findings of the present study in relation to some Australian studies that have preceded it. The scope and limitations of this research have been previously discussed at length in section 1.2 of this thesis and will not be revisited here.

3.1.1 Research Question 1

*In what kinds of circumstances and through what kinds of labour do visual artists living and working in Western Australia establish and maintain their professional creative practices?*

This research has drawn on an understanding of the local field derived from my analysis of CV data, and it has also consulted 20 artists in detail about their experiences and perceptions of living and working as professional visual artists in Western Australia. This study has presented a range of detailed depictions of the circumstances in which artists work in WA, both from the perspective of artists, but also as revealed in the more quantitative study of a large number of artists’ CVs. In contrast to previous national studies that necessarily assume a certain amount of consistency to the situations within which artists work, whether they are in Perth, Sydney or Albany, this study has drawn out a range of circumstances that are peculiar to Western Australia. It has highlighted the fact that Western Australian artists perceive they face a range of specific logistical problems and cultural obstacles to professional art practice that result from the scale and isolation of Western Australia. These dimensions are not adequately captured in the aggregated understandings of
artists’ working lives drawn from national surveys, and necessitate a ground-level engagement such as has been attempted through this study.

Perhaps the key outcome of this research has been the development of a conceptual model of the labour of visual art in Western Australia. Working from qualitative empirical data and encompassing diverse practices and practitioners, this new model offers an understanding of artists’ production across four different areas of activity: defining practice, creating conditions, attracting validation and maintaining integrity.

With Bourdieu, it has been argued that artists are actively engaged in the process of producing themselves as artists through their artworks and their other activities (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 104). Drawing on Znaniecki I have suggested that the problem of understanding professional art practice may best be understood by examining artists’ labour in multiple dimensions to establish and maintain the objective cultural reality (2010 [1919]) of their artistic identities and their artworks. In this way, it might be possible to understand how visual artists make decisions in their working lives that make little sense when viewed in relation to pre-existing understandings of human behaviour (eg. economic models). Such an approach also goes some way to suggesting the full range of dimensions and different systems of value that artists perceive to impact upon their creative practice and how this in turn impacts in different areas of artists’ lives.

### 3.1.2 Research Question 2

*Through what methodological avenues and from what data sources is it possible to undertake a mapping of the field of cultural production in Western Australian visual arts?*

In this study I have drawn on both conventional and unconventional sources of data in order to map the Western Australian field of cultural production as it relates to visual arts in this state. The approach that I have taken to the collection and analysis of artists’ CVs demonstrates the possibility of collecting a large quantity of freely available and fairly detailed information about the activity of visual artists in Western
Australia and beyond. In this research I have shown how the analysis of this data is able to illuminate aspects of the field in great detail, in overview and at different depths of focus in between. Most importantly, I have argued that this data, considered through the right conceptual framework, provides access to the systems of cultural and social values that operate in the field, and which inform the construction and presentation of these social documents.

Considering that one researcher expending no money (though on a scholarship stipend and using basic University resources – eg. access to SPSS) has collected, prepared and analysed data from a sample of 322 visual artists over just a few months (in total) there seems to me to be great potential for future development of such a method, and/or the research findings that it facilitates. Furthermore, this project demonstrates that cultural values can be studied on a large scale from empirical social data. As indicated at the end of the presentation of findings from the CV study in this thesis, such data also presents real possibilities for methods of analysis that I have not explored in depth, such as Social Network Analysis (Bottero & Crossley, 2011).

Finally, this study also demonstrates how the analysis of such data can work in concert with other forms of data collection and analysis, such as qualitative interview data in this case, each informing the other. In this study, for instance, the close examination of CV data about activity at the Art Gallery of Western Australia was able to interrogate and illuminate data emerging from the interviews, whilst value concepts such as penetration and extension that have informed the CV analysis were drawn from interview discussions. Whilst the mapping achieved in this PhD project is necessarily limited, focusing upon an understanding of the relative positions of different gallery cohorts in the local field, such preliminary mappings also lay the foundations for other mappings in greater detail and/or extension.
3.1.3 Research Question 3

To what extent do values as mapped in the Western Australian field of visual arts correspond to those discussed by Pierre Bourdieu in relation to the French fields of cultural production?

The mappings of the field of cultural production in Western Australia that have been achieved in this research project exhibit similarities and differences from those discussed by Bourdieu in *The Rules of Art* (1996), relating to historical French fields of cultural production. There are significant historical and cultural contexts that differentiate between these fields. In particular it may be observed that a field containing commercial galleries has in reality only existed for only about 60 years in Western Australia, and that there is no long-standing tradition of visual art practice here and few reliable sources of patronage (See Appendix C.3). Furthermore, it should also be noted that the field that I have been mapping in Western Australia is a contemporary field in which there is a ‘rampant proliferation of models and media’ (Heartney, 2008, p. 9), in contrast to the field of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century painting examined by Bourdieu.

Amongst the similarities between my own mappings and those of Bourdieu is the evidence in the local field of a dualist structure, roughly along the same lines as Bourdieu identifies (1996, pp. 121-125). In my mapping of the local field I sought to examine the data inductively and to avoid prematurely employing the concepts of economic, social and cultural capital that inform Bourdieu’s analysis. In my analysis of the CV data I considered a total of nine different indices of value, each clearly accessible from the available data. Even considered across these many different measures, there were perceptibly two primary clusters of gallery cohorts around particular values in the field. On the one hand there were galleries that primarily represent artists who had seniority in the field, and whose work is in demand in the secondary market. On the other hand there were other galleries that tend instead to represent artists who had undertaken high levels of art education, who were successful in applying for competitive grants and funding, and who tend to dominate as exhibitors in key WA contemporary art venues. Loosely speaking, these two groups
correspond to the two contrasting approaches to art identified in the interviews, the first group are artists who are prolific and commercial while the second are mainstream artists.

Whilst these two different camps are clearly evident in Western Australian visual art, distinctions in the field are complicated. For instance, there is evidence that artists with seniority in the field have comparatively more access to exhibiting at key local venues, and they also have strong connections to activity in the secondary market – possibly an indicator of investment values. As a result there are several gallery cohorts that appear to straddle both mainstream and more commercial art worlds. Indeed, as indicated in Moulin’s study (1987 [1967], pp. 51-52) of the French art market, it may be a deliberate strategy on the part of gallerists representing predominantly mainstream artists to also represent a few artists whose work may sell well on the basis of seniority. And similarly, galleries representing prolific and commercial artists may find it advantageous to also represent some artists who have credibility in the mainstream art world, but nevertheless sell well on the basis of their seniority. Such cross-overs illustrate the limitations of a singular scale of value that opposes commercial and symbolic values in the field, or at the very least may suggest the need to consider the spectrum of negotiated values in between these two extremes. There are also gallery cohorts that do not share all or many of these pervasive characteristics. This may be explained in a number of ways: for instance by noting that these galleries represent new-comers to the more established field; or that they may operate in regional locations and therefore within different market contexts (eg. the tourist market). The very existence and eccentric positions of these gallery cohorts suggests, however, that they are successful on some level that is not adequately captured in the distinction between mainstream art on the one hand and prolific and commercial art on the other, and amongst the nine indices that I have considered in this study.

The presence of a dualist structure in the local field shown by this study, combined with the strength of this indication in relation to nine different indices of value may also suggest that Bourdieu’s conception of homologies between fields (1996) has some validity, even in Western Australia. Evidence also suggests, however, a greater level of complexity to values in the local field than can be referenced only to the exchange of
one form of capital for another. Therefore I conclude that it is possible and useful to map the field in a fashion not unlike Bourdieu in *The Rules of Art* (Bourdieu, 1996), but there may also be a compelling case to pursue such mapping on the basis of appropriate empirical data, and with consideration of as many different indices as can be brought to bear.

### 3.1.4 Research Question 4

In this part of the conclusion I intend to address the following research question:

*To what extent are the circumstances and labours of Western Australian visual artists adequately represented in existing national research and reports as consulted by policy-makers?*

In considering this research question I will also revisit several Australian and Western Australian studies and the articles and reports that have published the findings from these. To my knowledge, this is the first detailed study of Western Australian visual artists’ working lives, and perhaps one of the first Australian qualitative studies, with a focus on visual artists. Therefore there is a need to compare the findings of this study with others that are diverse in terms of methods and specific populations. Whilst three of the publications with which I will offer some comparisons have a focus on visual artists, they do so at a national level (Anderson, 2001; Australian Centre for Industrial Relations and Training, 2001; Throsby, 2006). The remainder of the publications addressed consider visual artists only under the broader category of artists (Throsby, 2007; Throsby & Zednik, 2010, 2011). Only two of these publications have a specific focus on Western Australian artists including, but not exclusively so, visual artists (D. Bennett, 2010; FORM, 2008). Though I am aware of other relevant research currently being undertaken through the *Creative Workforce Initiative* based at Curtin, as yet this has resulted in few publications on visual artists that would facilitate direct comparisons with this study in relation to these research questions. The comparisons
and contrasts will be structured thematically, around some key new contributions to knowledge that the findings of this study have made.

3.1.4.1 Education and Training

Some of the most interesting findings from the present study are connected to higher education and training in the visual arts. Existing studies have engaged with the links between tertiary education and careers in the arts, particularly around readiness of graduates for a career in the real world (D. Bennett, 2009) and also around tracking graduates in the creative and cultural industries into employment (Bridgstock, 2011). While accountants and architects are qualified in their professions by virtue of having completed the appropriate university degree, as Throsby and Zednik note (2010, p. 14), such indicators are less conclusive in the case of artists. Yet reports such as Throsby and Zednik’s frequently emphasise that artists, and visual artists in particular, are highly educated, spending significant periods of time in education and achieving high levels of qualifications. Clearly, higher education is important to many visual artists, but given that there is no qualification that automatically entitles graduates of this field to practice as bona-fide professionals, why is higher education important to artists? And what is it about higher education that artists find to be useful and significant in their later careers? My research has produced some important findings that help address these questions.

Existing research has examined data about education exclusively in terms of the level of the award attained and the time spent in studies (Throsby & Zednik, 2010, pp. 26-29). Such research has often drawn common-sense conclusions which suggest that decisions to study art, the length of time spent studying art, and the highest levels of study undertaken, are indicators of the commitment of artists to their profession (Anderson, 2001). The interview data I have collected indicates that a number of artists undertook undergraduate studies in visual art not because they considered it to be a viable profession or career path, but rather because it was seen to be a natural continuation of high school studies in visual art and because they did not know what
else they wanted to do at university (see 2.2.2.4). For these artists, decisions about embarking upon higher education in visual art did not initially indicate a decisive intention to pursue a career in art practice (see 2.2.2.3). This only became clear after graduation. This finding is perhaps corroborated by the ABS data reported on the Australia Council’s Art Facts web page that ‘many visual art graduates go on to careers outside the arts’ (2013). This finding may not indicate that art students have failed to find work in their chosen field, but rather that they decided to pursue something else. For some artists, a decision to undertake formal tertiary level education in visual art at entry level (ie Diploma/Bachelors degree) is indicative of a commitment or aspiration to a career as an artist (See 2.2.2.4). There is also evidence, however, that suggests that correlations between career aspirations and study choices should be viewed with caution, particularly with respect to school leavers.

A further dimension to information about education and training emerging from the CV data is that while studies of artists generally collect data about their levels of education, rarely do they consider the specific institutions at which they studied. The CV study indicates that this previously unexamined dimension of art education may be important, in Western Australian visual art practice at least. In particular, the CV data provides compelling evidence, corroborated by the interview data, that graduates of Curtin may have some significant professional advantages as practising artists in Western Australia. Even taking into account the greater number of graduates produced by Curtin and its predecessor institution (WAIT) in comparison with any other Western Australian art school, Curtin graduates are disproportionately represented within activities in the Western Australian mainstream art world. Curtin graduates dominate as exhibitors in key public, institutional and commercial galleries and there are close connections between Curtin and two of the most prestigious commercial contemporary art galleries in the state, Galerie Dusseldorf and Goddard de Fiddes. There is some truth to the notion expressed by Julian Goddard, Head of the School of Design and Art at Curtin, that ‘everybody who’s anybody in local art and design has come through here, either as a staff member or a student’ (Quoted in Moorhouse, 2013, p. 10). Whilst this art world dominance is often taken as indicative of the comparative quality of Curtin graduates, it is possible, according to some of the
interviewed artists, that studying visual art at Curtin opens more doors in WA than studying at any other Western Australian institution. For this reason, in Western Australia one visual art degree is not necessarily the equivalent of the same degree obtained at a different educational institution, in terms of its significance for a career as an artist. It is also important to consider that decisions to undertake formal tertiary education in visual art may in fact be motivated substantially by the institutional networks to which such study provides access, and not just by a perceived need to obtain a qualification.

The interview data suggests that artists value their art school education for a number of different reasons and that technical skills and vocational knowledge do not always figure prominently among these. Some artists reported that art school education provided the necessary background for practice, that it functioned as a kind of initiation or induction into art, and enabled them to feel that they had done enough study to call themselves artists. A number of artists also said that one of the most important outcomes of their art school education was the establishment of a community of peers, and sometimes mentors, who continued to provide support and advice after leaving the institution. Finally, artists emphasised the unique critical intensity and self-guided nature of art school education. This was developmentally important in establishing themselves as their own harshest critics and providing them with resilience and independence, characteristics vital to professional practice outside the academy. Throsby and Zednik (2010, p. 28) found that 72% of visual artists felt that the most important training to become an artist was their formal art education/training. The findings of this study suggest a number of different ways that artists may understand the importance of formal education and training. And this importance may be quite distinct from the way in which a student of accountancy may think about the importance of their training towards a formal qualification.
3.1.4.2 Career Progression

In many studies that deal with artists, researchers have sought to deal with some of the problems associated with defining artists as professionals by constructing artists’ careers as involving stages. In Throsby’s economic studies/reports, professional artists’ careers are considered to progress through four major stages: Beginning/starting out, becoming established/emerging, established, established but working less intensively than before (Throsby & Zednik, 2010, pp. 30-33). My study illuminates this career progression.

First of all it is relevant to consider the notion of establishment in the light of the conceptual model of the labour of visual art practice that I have previously described. There are two particularly interesting cases amongst my interview participants: Craig Boulter and Michael Iwanoff. Craig Boulter’s case, which spans decades of professional practice, is not a broadly based art world establishment but rather a self-contained establishment amongst a limited audience of several hundred regular clients, who view and purchase his works at his home which is where he holds an annual exhibition. He is sufficiently established for his own needs to have maintained a full-time painting practice since 1987. On the other hand, Michael Iwanoff maintains that he has not tried to build a career as an artist and yet by most measures he would be considered to be an established artist. He has a significant record of public exhibitions, has won art prizes, undertaken public art projects and has taught art for 30 years at Curtin. These two cases introduce difficulties in relation to understanding whether an artist has reached the threshold of establishment. Firstly, there is a question about the reality of an art practice necessary to constitute professional establishment. Does an artist need to do anything more to be established than attract enough validation to sustain their creative practice on whatever scale they choose? Secondly, given that in Michael Iwanoff’s case establishment as a professional artist is not an explicit aspiration informing the practice, the notion of establishment may be assessed independently of the artists’ intentions and commitments. I suggest that establishment may not be a simple threshold marked by indicators such as access to a certain status of exhibition venue etc. rather, to be meaningful it must be understood in relation the artist’s ambitions and aspirations, modest or expansive. Indeed, perhaps the conceptual
model I have developed (Figure 15, 2.2.1) gives access to different ways of understanding the career progression in terms of what the artist sees as their objective reality.

Also significant in this regard is that the model of career progression discussed by Throsby and Zednik (Throsby & Zednik, 2010, p. 30) is uni-directional. Several of the interviewed artists identified a particularly problematic and critical stage which they termed “mid-career”. Western Australian mainstream artists, having achieved a certain level of establishment, recognition and success whilst their work was new and fresh, encounter difficulties in mid-career because their work is no longer the newest and the freshest. Furthermore collectors and institutions have bought as many works from that artist as they are likely to purchase for quite some time. So there is every possibility that establishment may be closely followed by a plateau or regression in terms of having to once again undertake many of the activities that were involved in starting out or becoming established. The interview data also suggests that emerging artists may be able to emerge, or may find themselves perceived to be emerging, more than once, eg. by returning to do postgraduate study, or because of a period lacking in public outcomes. In my conceptual model of the labour of visual art, artists are considered to be engaged constantly across all four realms of cultural production in different ways. So, for instance, the successful attraction of validation may prove advantageous in creating conditions or defining practice, but it does not entirely supersede artists’ exertions in these other areas. The model does not chart a linear progression but a dynamically interacting system.

Perhaps a more useful notion than establishment is Bourdieu’s term *consecration*, (1996, pp. 122-123) which shares some characteristics with Throsby and Zednik’s final stage of career, ‘Established, but working less intensively than before’ (2010, p. 30). My data also suggests the existence of a certain threshold in terms of the attraction of validation, beyond which artists no longer have to be so invested in creating the conditions for their practice or in attracting further validation. At some stages of their careers, usually in the later stages, artists may increasingly receive invitations to be involved in things, rather than having to pursue opportunities. They may receive honours and accolades, and their work may become the subject of critics’, historians’
and art collectors’ investments. All of these developments may result in the relatively stable status of consecrated artist with a more or less permanent and secure position in the local field. It is for this reason that artists may be working less intensively to create conditions and attract validation specifically. Interestingly, as might be the case for Tom Gibbons in my interview sample, consecration in the local art world need not be associated with a particular demand or high prices for the work of the artist. Nor does it require the official award of honours and accolades. It may simply be a level of esteem and historical and/or social association that manifests itself in opportunity and respect. Incidentally, I am sure that Tom Gibbons would have objected to the notion of his consecration on principle.

3.1.4.3 Work Preferences and Multiple Job Holding

A great deal has been written about artists in relation to labour markets. Much of this material has drawn particular attention to the ways in which artists allocate their time, and also to the fact that many artists hold more than one job (Menger, 1999; L. Steiner & Schneider, 2012; Throsby, 2007; Throsby & Zednik, 2011). Throsby and Zednik (2010) and NAVA research (Australian Centre for Industrial Relations and Training, 2001) both discuss artists’ allocation of time in relation to three kinds of work: creative work, arts-related work and non-arts work. Creative work ‘includes all activities related to the creative practice including rehearsals, practice, preparation, research, marketing and career administration’ (Throsby & Zednik, 2010, p. 39). Arts-related work includes ‘teaching in the artists’ artform, arts administration, community arts development and writing about the arts [...] includes paid employment and unpaid arts-related work such as volunteering [...] or studying’ (Throsby & Zednik, 2010, p. 39). Non-arts work includes ‘paid work not related to any artistic field and unpaid work [...] outside the arts’ (Throsby & Zednik, 2010, p. 39). The emphasis in these studies is that: most artists a) are seldom able to work fulltime on what they would most like to work on ie creative work; b) are not able to spend most of their time even working in the arts generally; and c) that the reasons for this are that artists cannot make enough money
from their creative practice and arts work to support themselves and their dependents. Throsby and Zednik present results that suggest that:

there is a significant gap between the proportion of time artists spend on average on their most desired work, and the proportion they would prefer to spend if there were no constraints affecting their working patterns. The gap is a direct indicator of the shortfall in potential creative output from the arts in Australia as a result of external difficulties besetting professional art practice. (2010, p. 42)

The results of my own study point to many of these same problems and constraints, and to artists solving them by dividing their time between art practice and other kinds of activities inside and outside of the arts. Further my study also suggest some interesting dimensions to consider in relation to this picture of a shortfall of potential creative output.

One significant finding of this study is the way in which artists conceive of resourcing their creative practice across a number of dimensions. Firstly, artists talked about the importance of time away from practice and being out in the world as a vital resource on which their art practices drew. From the perspective of Throsby and Zednik’s study, considering whether such time away from practice was constructed as an integral part of creative work is important, given that artists in interview considered that it played a role in art practice. It may be argued that work outside of creative work, in arts-related or non-arts domains may indeed contribute in important ways to creative practice as experiences of being out in the world. Whether Throsby and Zednik’s survey was able to facilitate artists expressing this kind of nuanced insight regarding creatively productive interrelationships between the three kinds of work is a worthwhile question.

There is also an assumption in Throsby and Zednik’s appraisal that creative output would increase if artists were better resourced and therefore had more time to devote to their creative work (Throsby & Zednik, 2010). It is unclear as to whether this increase would be in quantitative or qualitative terms, or both. My interviews, however, lead me to question such an assumption. In the first place, some artists suggest essentially that there are absolute limits to creative output, and that what is
crucial is unhurried time for work to evolve. Furthermore, as creative processes involve trial and error and unanticipated outcomes, there is no guarantee that more time in the studio will produce more creatively successful work. Other artists have talked about having too much creative work on their plate, even whilst allocating most or all of their time to it, such that they are not satisfied that the outcomes are as good as they would like them to be because they feel the work has been rushed towards a deadline. What this indicates to me is that, as well as time and resources being an issue, there is also a need to consider the commitments artists make and the expectations that artists have about their own production.

An understanding of how artists split their time can be gauged through a consideration of the complex ways in which creative practice is connected to different systems of values. Some of this complexity is revealed by my analysis and through the identification of three different approaches to earning a living in relation to creative work; self-subsidy, selling work and gaining funding. As whole, I think the conceptual model of the labour of visual art provided by this research offers a way forward in understanding how visual artists weigh up the apparent benefits and costs of their actions in relation to different systems of value.

In relation to multiple job-holding, it is an important finding of this study that one of the real costs of multiple job-holding for visual artists can be in projecting to others the requisite picture of a single-minded commitment to their artistic career. Diverse activities across different fields of endeavour may contribute many important things to visual art practice, including material and creative resources, but in some circumstances such activities do not positively contribute to an artists’ professional image, and such activities may leave gaps or introduce distracting elements in a CV. Artists have talked about the very limited range of activities that indicate their seriousness and commitment to their visual arts practice in the eyes of curators, gallery owners, arts funding panels and selection committees. So whilst much has been made of the ways in which artists are capable of employing and do employ their skills and knowledge in arts-related and non-arts work, little has been said about the ways that portfolio careers (Bridgstock, 2005) affect artists’ capacity to market themselves as real players, and the importance of this image of single-mindedness for a career in
visual art (at least in Western Australia). This is something Alison Bain identified in her study of visual artists in Toronto (2005, p. 41).

3.1.4.4 Creative Migration

The two Western Australian research publications that I wish to discuss here both take as their focus the problems associated with attracting and retaining creative workers (including artists) in Western Australia. On the one hand is Dawn Bennett’s paper, Creative Migration (2010), which examines the attitudes and experiences of Western Australian artists who have emigrated in order to further their artistic careers. FORM’s publication Creative Capitals (2008) offers a broadly brushed statistical picture, within a creative industries conceptual framework, of the movement of creative and other workers to and from Western Australia in relation to other capital cities in Australia. Both of these publications suggest that there are both push and pull factors that encourage artists to leave Perth and to practice elsewhere.

Many of the issues reported by Bennett’s eight participants are echoed by participants in my own study, though from the perspective of people who have remained in Western Australia. Emerging from my study is a range of additional insights into the appeal of interstate and overseas destinations as places to practice and show visual art. The CV data presented on the penetration of key exhibition venues in Perth and the extension of artists’ activities interstate and overseas, provides additional perspective on some of these push and pull factors. For visual artists actively seeking to build their profile and to pursue a climbing career path, which is of great importance in the mainstream art world, there are simply too few significant exhibition venues to continue to progress professionally whilst working within the state. After an exhibition at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, or the Fremantle Arts Centre, there no further local venues at which to exhibit that do not appear like a backwards or sideways, rather than a forwards step for a mainstream artist. On top of this, according to my conceptual model of the labour of visual art, the geographical extension of artists’ activity is an important element in attracting validation for artists. Thus to
attract validation in distant places like Sydney or Melbourne, or London or Berlin is a much more compelling confirmation of a practice’s objective reality than the validation such a practice attracts from local audiences. For artists seeking to continue to progress in their careers according to such measures, being active in the local art scene is not a constructive use of their time.

The FORM publication, *Creative Capitals* asks ‘if Perth isn’t fostering, retaining or attracting talent, where are these people choosing to move to and what influences their choices?’ (2008, p. 22). My study suggests a number of issues that local visual artists perceive have influenced the cultural vibrancy of Perth as a base for artists. Amongst the factors that interviewed artists feel influenced their dissatisfaction with Perth as a place in which to create art are the following:

1) A sense of community and conversation. Artists lamented the absence of art writing and publications, noted the negative effects of competition for limited resources in terms of an unwillingness to share and talk about local practice with other artists, commented upon the demise of catered social occasions that brought artists together, and discussed the lack of community relevance and leadership of the premier art institution in the state – the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

2) Affordability. Artists spoke about previous ages where Perth was an attractive place to get things done because it was cheaper to rent studios, workshops and exhibition spaces in the metropolitan area than in Melbourne or Sydney. They also note that it is prohibitively expensive to actively participate in interstate or international art worlds whilst remaining in Perth.

3) Visibility and Recognition. Artists perceived that arts activity at a national level tends not to consider the inclusion and contributions made by Western Australian artists. National arts event organisers and curators are often not looking as far as Western Australia when they distribute opportunity.

4) Infrastructure and Markets. Artists have also noted that the commercial gallery scene in Western Australia offers very few opportunities for new-comers, and even struggles to deal adequately with those already represented. Since commencing this study five of the 17 commercial galleries examined in my CV
study have announced their closure (Buck, 2012; Diciero, 2010; Eakins, 2012a; The West Australian, 2012). A few new ones have opened, however, so perhaps this situation is shifting.

Addressing and investigating the causes of these local issues could be combined usefully with Bennett’s suggestion that ‘much could be done to connect local artists with national and international networks including those involving creative migrants. This would enhance the value of the experience brought back to the local context’ (2010, p. 126).

3.1.4.5 Talent and Excellence

In this final section I examine my findings in the light of an article by David Throsby in which he proposes an artistic production function specifically for Australian visual artists in economic terms (2006). In this article Throsby draws on data from the economic study of the working lives of visual artists that preceded Do you really expect to get paid? (Throsby & Zednik, 2010), entitled Don’t give up your day job (Throsby & Hollister, 2003). My focus in this instance is on the series of assumptions and inferences that Throsby makes in order to create proxies for cultural values drawn from existing survey data, so as to provide variables within the economic equation that he proposes. The findings of the present research are able to offer some further insights and to help query aspects of these approaches to accounting for cultural values. The two concepts that I wish to address most closely here are the quality of an artist’s creative output (excellence) and the creativity (talent) considered to be an aspect of the artist’s input.

In relation to the notion of excellence, Throsby suggests that the following survey responses selected by respondents from a list of 20 options ‘indicate a distinctive degree of excellence’:

- Had a one-person show at a major gallery (public or commercial);
• Had a work or works selected for exhibition at a major gallery;
• Had a work purchased or commissioned by a public gallery or institution. (2006, pp. 4-5)

In addition he notes that artists indicating that they had received a grant from a funding body such as a State arts agency or the Australia Council in the past five years also provided evidence in the survey of ‘a clear recognition of quality in the recipient artists’ work’ (Throsby, 2006, p. 5). I think there are two dimensions to the problem with accounting for excellence through such measures, both relating to a larger problem about the systems of cultural values within which artists operate. What Pierre Bourdieu calls a dualist structure is a commonly acknowledged aspect of visual art worlds. In basic terms this dualist structure identifies antithetical ways of understanding successful art, either in symbolic terms of excellence or in commercial terms (Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 142-143). The CV data from this research similarly suggests a bifurcation of the Western Australian field of visual art production along similar lines. These different art worlds I have labelled in line with my interview data as mainstream artists and prolific and commercial artists. Indeed, Throsby in his article distinguishes between creative and commercial artistic outputs, though his focus is on how artists might negotiate between these different ends by balancing their different kinds of employment etc.

In fact, in Throsby’s economic reports this dualist structure does not register at all, and it is assumed that all serious professional artists are working towards the same conception of excellence and success, and that this can be assessed by the same means. In my mapping of values in the WA field of cultural production, however, and in my interviews with Western Australian visual artists, it is clear that excellence is a notion that is differently understood by artists working in different ways. So where a mainstream artist seeks to achieve visibility for their work by showing it in a prominent or prestigious gallery where it will be seen by the right people, the prolific and commercial artist instead seeks to ensure that there is enough work around in different places that the potential buyer is going to encounter it. Thus the concept of a
major gallery or public gallery has a different level of significance for the prolific and commercial artist when compared to the mainstream artist.

Of even greater significance is the concept of peer review and the award of grants as a measure of excellence. My mapping of the local field indicates that amongst the distinctive features of mainstream artists are that they have high levels of formal art education, and that they are the predominant recipients of grants and funding. These are the artists most likely to be capable of writing a grant application in the required language, they are most likely to need subsidy, and they are most likely to be considered peers by a panel that is also likely to be highly educated and interested in subsidised forms of art. On the other hand, prolific and commercial artists are less likely to be considered peers subscribing to the same measures of excellence, and less likely to apply because they support their practice through sales of artwork. Tempting as it is to argue so, it is not necessarily the case that work produced in a prolific and commercial mode is necessarily devoid of excellence. In fact there have been studies that demonstrate the interconnectedness of commercial values and values associated with excellence in the art market (Becker, 1994; Moulin, 1987 [1967], 1994). There is a need to give greater consideration to such indicators of quality, and especially to address the problem of whether and how to include or exclude different understandings of professional artistic achievement and excellence in studies of this kind.

The concept of drawing upon existing survey data to compile a proxy measure of creativity or talent as a human capital input is a proposition worth unpacking. Throsby suggests that it may be appropriate to use a number of possible survey responses as indicators of creative ability. In the first case he suggests that artists identifying their talent as a factor, or the most important factor, contributing to their artistic development may, on a self-evaluation basis, be considered to have high levels of creative ability (Throsby, 2006, p. 6). Secondly, he proposes that artists indicating their family background as a factor, or the most important factor, contributing to their artistic development may also be considered to have high levels of creative ability. He says ‘it is known from studies in psychology that creative individuals tend to emerge from family backgrounds that are supportive of creative talent, (Albert, 1994; Runco, 1999)
perhaps because creativity is an inherited trait that is easily detected and developed within a supportive family environment’ (Throsby, 2006, p. 6). Finally, Throsby suggests that artists who have indicated they have applied for a peer-assessed grant may also be indicating that they have a particular level of confidence in their creative abilities (2006, p. 6).

Looking closely at these indicators contributing to a proxy measure of creative talent, it is relevant to reconsider the use of a grant application as an indicator of creativity because of the very particular value systems surrounding the competitive arts-related grant application process. An artist’s confidence in this context may have as much to do with their knowledge of the application and selection process, the help that they can call on, and in their ability to write in the prescribed manner, as it does to do with creativity. In addition my interview data offers a contrasting understanding of the relationship between family backgrounds and creative ability. In their accounts of childhood and the development of an artistic identity, presented in Section 2.2.2, there does not seem to be any clear relationship between creative ability and family backgrounds. In my sample artists experienced different levels of support from their families, ranging from incomprehension and hostility through to an unwavering acceptance and total support from parents and extended family. It would seem inappropriate to suggest that those artists who had to overcome resistance from their families in their pursuit of an artistic career had less creative ability or talent than those whose artistic aspirations were actively encouraged. Whilst artists took different, long and short, clear and obstructed routes towards achieving a professional artistic practice, the data collected suggests that visual artists can nonetheless realise professional creative practices emerging from a range of different origins and family backgrounds, supportive or unsupportive.

Throsby acknowledges (2006, p. 11) that these proxies are necessarily crude indicators drawing on a survey instrument that was not designed to capture the culture values he is trying to account for in the context of his paper. My study shows that this is indeed the case and demonstrates how cultural values such as excellence and talent/creativity may be less clearly accessible through the kinds of indicators that Throsby has used. Following this discussion, the range of common-sense assumptions held about such
values is revealing, and shows how the specific collection of more suitable empirical
data is capable of illuminating the problems that these assumptions create. One final
comment is to suggest that perhaps the emphasis in Throsby’s conception of an artistic
production function is ultimately in error. The findings of my study suggest that the
concept of artists’ productivity requires some significant unpacking. It cannot be
assumed, as Throsby does, that the primary aim of the artist is to produce art works.
Equally important to an artist’s career is the production of a professional art practice
and the production of oneself as an artist. Whilst all are intimately connected, it is the
interrelationship of these different cultural products, and the different systems of
value relative to each, that ultimately informs the artist’s decision-making. The
conceptual model of the labour of visual art that I have developed in this study helps
to illuminate important aspects of the complex balancing acts that artists are
constantly engaged in to build value in the right places. This is not a matter of
introducing cultural values as variables to correct for artists’ economically irrational
behaviour; rather economic concerns should be constructed as only one dimension of
the multi-dimensional networks of values through which artists are constantly
negotiating a passage.
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presented at the Multiculturalism: Perspectives from Australia, Canada and China Conference, Sydney.


Appendix A: Tables and Charts from the CV Study

Table A-1: Percentage of Curtin University/WAIT graduates within Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts and calculated proportion of graduates of these institutions representative of greater population

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>% Western Australian Institute of Technology</th>
<th>% Curtin University of Technology</th>
<th>% Total Curtin and WAIT</th>
<th>% Curtin Threshold (55% of Degree+ qualified artists)</th>
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324
Table A-3: 22 Most active artists at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, indicating number of exhibition activities and presence in the collection

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<th>No. of activities at AGWA in CV data</th>
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Reduced Data, Assigned Levels: EXH1 EXH2 EXH3 AWA1 AWA2 AWA3
Table A-5: CV data in Education and Grants/Funding categories as originally coded, showing new values following data reduction

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<th>Honours / Postgrad Diploma</th>
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Reduced Data, Assigned Levels: EDU1 EDU1 EDU2 EDU2 EDU3 EDU3 GRA1 GRA1 GRA1 GRA1 GRA2 GRA3
### Table A-6: Ranking of cohorts’ Educational activity

<table>
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<th>EDU3</th>
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<th>Applied</th>
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### Table A-7: Ranking of cohorts’ Grants and Funding activity

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<th>GRA3</th>
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<th>Applied</th>
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Table A-8: Lots listed on Art Sales Digest, and number of artists with a presence in the secondary market by cohort

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<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Total listings on Art Sales Digest for Cohort</th>
<th>No. of Artists in Cohort</th>
<th>No. of Artists in cohort with Art Sales Digest listings</th>
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A.1 Discussion: The Secondary Market

Less than a third (just 28%) of all artists captured in the CV data have any presence in the data compiled by the *Australian Art Sales Digest*. Furthermore, just two artists (Robert Juniper and William Boissevain) between them account for 55% of all the *Australian Art Sales Digest* (Furphy, n.d.) data for artists in my CV Study. The preeminence of these two particular artists is indicative of the different values associated with the secondary market. The strong presence of Robert Juniper’s work in the secondary market reflects the judgment of art history (Moulin 1994, p6) upon the work of this consecrated artist (Bourdieu,1996), as is also reflected in my examination of activity at the Art Gallery of Western Australia (see 2.1.2.5). This artist’s work is valuable in this context especially because it is perceived to be a sound investment.
William Boissevain is also a senior, and well-known Western Australian artist, however, I believe that it is the conventional, conservative nature of his work (ballerinas and nudes reminiscent of Degas) that accounts for the strong presence of his work in the secondary market. An inference also borne out by my analysis of AGWA (See 2.1.2.3) with which this painter has no strong association as exhibitor, nor presence in the collection. So it can be observed that the secondary market is a strongly conservative market, in which buyers are interested in secure purchases, whether in terms of return on investment, or in terms of purchasing work that does not offer much challenge to conservative tastes.

Table A-9: Ranking of cohorts’ relationship to the secondary market based on the percentage of artists within cohorts with some presence in the secondary market

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>% of total Art Sales Digest Listing per Cohort</th>
<th>% of Artists within Cohort with Art Sales Digest Listings</th>
<th>Ranked Groups by Secondary Market Data</th>
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<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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### Table A-10: Ranking of cohorts’ activity at Perth Metro A Venues (penetration)

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* See Figures 4,5,6 for more detail

### Table A-11: Ranking of cohorts’ interstate activity (extension 1)

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<th>Applied Tiered Ranking</th>
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<td>vi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linton &amp; Kay</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>vi</td>
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<td>v</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Stafford Studios</td>
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<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lk Contemporary</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boranup Gallery</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>i</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* See Figures 4,5,6 for more detail

### Table A-12: Ranking of cohorts’ international activity (extension 2)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Percentage of Cohort</th>
<th>Applied Tiered Ranking</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gallery East</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford Studios</td>
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<td>v</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goddard de Fiddes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>v</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elements Gallery</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>v</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gallows Gallery</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>iv</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Linton &amp; Kay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gomboc Gallery</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Galery 360</td>
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</table>

* See Figures 4,5,6 for more detail
Figure A-1: Ranked Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts and exhibition activity Interstate and in Perth Metro A Venues

<table>
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<th>i</th>
<th>ii</th>
<th>iii</th>
<th>iv</th>
<th>v</th>
<th>vi</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GF</td>
<td>L&amp;K</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>GL</td>
<td>GH</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>GdF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
- BO = Boranup Gallery
- EL = Elements Gallery
- EM = Emerge ARTSPACE
- GD = Galerie Dusseldorf
- GdF = Goddard de Fiddes
- GE = Gallery East
- GF = Gadfly Gallery
- GH = Greenhill Galleries
- GL = Gallows Gallery
- GM = Gomboc Gallery
- G360 = Gallery 360
- JR = Jahroc Gallery
- L&K = Linton & Kay
- LK = LK Contemporary
- PG = Perth Galleries
- SS = Stafford Studios
- TG = Turner Galleries

Figure A-2: Ranked Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts and activity in Higher Education and International activity (Extension)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>i</th>
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<th>v</th>
<th>vi</th>
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<td>BO</td>
<td>G360</td>
<td>LK</td>
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<tr>
<td>EL</td>
<td>GM</td>
<td>EM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JR</td>
<td>G360</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
- BO = Boranup Gallery
- EL = Elements Gallery
- EM = Emerge ARTSPACE
- GD = Galerie Dusseldorf
- GdF = Goddard de Fiddes
- GE = Gallery East
- GF = Gadfly Gallery
- GH = Greenhill Galleries
- GL = Gallows Gallery
- GM = Gomboc Gallery
- G360 = Gallery 360
- JR = Jahroc Gallery
- L&K = Linton & Kay
- LK = LK Contemporary
- PG = Perth Galleries
- SS = Stafford Studios
- TG = Turner Galleries

332
Figure A.3. 17 Western Australian commercial gallery cohorts, grouped by means of profiling of median cohort CV data in seven categories of activity.

- **EXH** = the median number of exhibition activities recorded at different levels on artists' CVs.
- **AWA** = the median number of awards/art prize activities recorded at different levels on artists' CVs.
- **GRA** = the median number of grants and funded activities recorded at different levels on artists' CVs.
- **EDU** = the median number of art education activities recorded at different levels on artists' CVs.
- **INTST** = the median number of interstate activities recorded on artists' CVs.
- **INTNL** = the median number of international activities recorded on artists' CVs.
- **SPAN** = artists' median span of practice in years.
Figure A-4: Rankings reduced from six tiers to weak and strong relationships to measures on chart axes

Table A-13: Cohorts' strong (+) and weak (-) rankings relative to six indices (mapped by ranking)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Perth Metro A Venues (Penetration)</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Grants and Funding</th>
<th>Secondary Market</th>
<th>Interstate Activity (Extension 1)</th>
<th>International Activity (Extension 2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emerge ARTSPACE</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goddard de Fiddes</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallery East</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turner Galleries</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galerie Dusseldorf</td>
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<td>+</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greenhill Gallery</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gomboc Gallery</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth Galleries</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boranup Gallery</td>
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<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements Gallery</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gallery 360</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gadfly Gallery</td>
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<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jahroc Gallery</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linton &amp; Kay</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford Studios</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table A-14: Cohorts’ strong (+) and weak (-) rankings relative to six indices (mapped by CV profile)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Span of Practice</th>
<th>Indigenous Artists (from remote communities)</th>
<th>Regional Location</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Grants and Funding</th>
<th>International Activity (Extension 2)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Boranup Gallery</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerge ARTSPACE</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallery 360</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galerie Dusseldorf</td>
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<td>++</td>
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<td>+</td>
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<td>Goddard de Fiddes</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallery East</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Gomboc Gallery</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linton &amp; Kay</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>LK Contemporary</td>
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<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth Galleries</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford Studios</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turner Galleries</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
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A.2 Discussion: Variance in Findings from Two Methods of Mapping

Table A-13 and Table A-14 share three of six indices used to map the field and so it is possible to compare the variance between the different measures employed. Table A-15 presents again Table A-13, but in this case variances in results for the three shared indices from the two different mappings have been highlighted in orange.
Table A-15: Variances (marked in orange) in findings indicating relationships of cohorts to three indices utilised by different methods of mapping the field

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Perth Metro A Venues (Penetration)</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Grants and Funding</th>
<th>Secondary Market</th>
<th>Interstate Activity (Extension 1)</th>
<th>International Activity (Extension 2)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linton &amp; Kay</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford Studios</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking at the values at variance between the two tables, seven of the eight variances register cohorts plotted on the borderline, between rankings iii and iv in relation to the different indices. In the eighth instance, the educational ranking of the LK Contemporary Cohort, the variance is much more pronounced, being ranked ii in Figure 9 and situated on the positive side of the education (EDU+) line in Figure A-3. In part this reflects the fact that in Figure 9 educational activity has been ranked in descending order relative to the percentage of *postgraduate* qualifications held by artists in the cohort, whilst in Figure A-3 the line has been drawn between degree level qualifications (EDU2) and lower, so the analytical threshold is in a slightly different place. It may also reflect the different ways in which the evaluations have been achieved. The percentage of the total educational data contributed by the cohort is affected by the comparatively small number of artists in the cohort, whereas the
median data used for the CV profiles reflects is not impacted upon by the comparative size of other cohorts. What is most significant, however, about the comparison of the two tables is the degree to which they agree on the relative positions of the cohorts within the overlapping indices. 84% of the results in the 3 shared indices are in agreement. Including the seven borderline cases the figure is 98%.
Appendix B: Gallery, Artists in Profile

In this Appendix to the thesis I present some material intended to provide unfamiliar readers with some basic background information and a brief introduction to each of the 20 artists who have been interviewed for this project. Each profile is approximately 500 words in length and follows essentially the same format. It begins by presenting pertinent demographic and background information summarised from artists’ CVs and augmented by information from interviews. In the following two paragraphs of each profile I draw heavily on the artist’s own words in the interviews in order to present 1) a sense of the way that the artist positions themself in terms of their professional careers and 2) some descriptions of the artist’ practice in terms of processes, subjects and approaches. In all cases but one this textual information is accompanied by an image of an artwork – one of two images selected by artists and provided for inclusion in the thesis.

The profiles and images within this gallery have been presented in alphabetical order, by artists’ surnames. Art worlds are never value-neutral environments, and I have made every attempt in this thesis to both acknowledge the systems of value at play, and to treat conflicting and multiple systems of value each as valid understandings of the worlds in which artists are operating. It is partly for this reason that I have resisted some common approaches to profiling artists (such as employed in exhibition catalogues) in which artists’ credentials would be the focus. I have tried, where possible, to allow artists’ own words to convey their evaluations of their own practices. In drawing on artists’ own words, I also hope that the reader will have better access to artists’ own understandings of their practices, and be less reliant on my interpretations.

500 words and one or two images can hardly summon an adequate picture of artists’ careers and creative works, even if drawing upon artists’ own words to do so. The profiles presented here are not necessarily statements that represent the participants in the way that they would usually represent themselves, had they been asked to write their own profiles. Artists’ situations comprise their backgrounds, current circumstances and future aspirations, and the ways in which their creative practices
are established and maintained relative to those considerations. As a result, the profiles I have developed here are not purely focused upon studio practice and its products and art world credentials, but instead draw in situational elements that help demonstrate the unique perspectives contributed by each participant to this study. It is intended that these profiles provide the reader with a basic means of assessing the diversity of views and experiences contributing to this research. Also, these profiles may serve as a helpful introduction to the artists who have so generously contributed to this study, and offer unfamiliar readers a glimpse at their creative works. In many cases, alternative representations and profiles of the interviewed artists can be accessed via artists’, galleries’ and other websites, exhibition catalogues and even published books and monographs in a few instances.

In addition to these profiles, I have also provided a diagrammatic representation of my existing relationships, where applicable, to participants in this research (Figure A- 5). This provides the reader with further means to assess the outcomes of this study in the light of the perspectives captured and the methods employed. Table A- 16 lists the relevant interview dates for each artist, and provides a map reference for Figure A- 6 and Figure A- 7, showing the location of interviewed artists’ studios in WA.

Table A- 16: Artists and interview dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Map Ref</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Date of First Interview</th>
<th>Date of Second Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1</td>
<td>Anna Sabadini</td>
<td>13/10/2011</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>Cecile Williams</td>
<td>14/10/2011</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td>Craig Boulter</td>
<td>25/10/2011</td>
<td>5/12/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3</td>
<td>Erin Coates</td>
<td>11/06/2011</td>
<td>2/12/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4</td>
<td>Larry Mitchell</td>
<td>7/10/2011</td>
<td>1/11/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M5</td>
<td>Michael Iwanoff</td>
<td>27/06/2011</td>
<td>1/11/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R3</td>
<td>Monique Tippett</td>
<td>28/10/2011</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M6</td>
<td>Onon Catts</td>
<td>6/06/2011</td>
<td>25/08/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R4</td>
<td>Peter Hill</td>
<td>14/10/2011</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M7</td>
<td>Pippin Drysdale</td>
<td>15/06/2011</td>
<td>9/08/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M11</td>
<td>Regina Noakes</td>
<td>11/01/2012</td>
<td>16/01/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R5</td>
<td>Kevin Draper</td>
<td><strong>16/01/2012</strong></td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M12</td>
<td>Barbara Cotter</td>
<td>*21/04/2011</td>
<td>19/01/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M13</td>
<td>Rebecca Baumann</td>
<td>13/12/2011</td>
<td>26/01/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M14</td>
<td>Nigel Hewitt</td>
<td>23/01/2012</td>
<td>30/01/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M15</td>
<td>Penny Bovell</td>
<td>27/07/2011</td>
<td>9/02/2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Trial interview: subsequently cleared for inclusion
** Regional artist interviewed in Perth
Figure A-5: Diagrammatic representation of researcher’s relationships with participants

Key:
Circles: prior acquaintance of researcher
Social relationship: social contact with artist outside of institutional contexts
Collegial relationship: contact with artist within institutional contexts in the regular course of studies
Segments: Institution and period of researcher’s studies during which acquaintance was established
Specific nature of collegial relationship indicated in brackets (where applicable)
Persons marked in blue text are non-participants in this study
Blue arrows: contact established with participants through recommendations
Figure A-6 shows the location of the studios of the interviewed artists living and working within metropolitan Perth.

Figure A-6: Metropolitan studio locations of interviewed Perth artists (Modified from source: Holiday in Western Australia: Your Guide to Perth + Fremantle, n.d.)

Key:
M1 = Caitlin Yardley
M2 = Craig Boulter
M3 = Erin Coates
M4 = Larry Mitchell
M5 = Michael Iwanoff
M6 = Oron Catts
M7 = Pippin Drysdale
M8 = Susanna Castleden
M9 = Tom Gibbons
M10 = Stuart Elliott
M11 = Regina Noakes
M12 = Barbara Cotter
M13 = Rebecca Baumann
M14 = Nigel Hewitt
M15 = Penny Bovell
Figure A-7 shows the location of the regional artists interviewed for this study.

Figure A-7: Locations of regional artists interviewed for this study (Modified from source: auinfo, n.d.)

Key:
R1 = Anna Sabadini
R2 = Cecile Williams
R3 = Monique Tippett
R4 = Peter Hill
R5 = Kevin Draper
B.1 Rebecca Bauman

Rebecca Bauman was born in Perth in 1983, daughter of a commercial pilot and a librarian/archivist. At the time of interview Rebecca had a subsidised studio with Artsource in Fremantle, and also worked from her home in the suburb of Mount Hawthorn, where she lived with her partner, who was also an artist. Rebecca completed a BA in Fine Art at Curtin University of Technology in 2003, specialising in printmaking, but soon after graduating opted to work and travel rather than actively pursue a career as an artist. Encouragement and opportunity to make a new work for an exhibition curated by a friend in 2007 acted as a catalyst in her re-engagement with art practice. When we spoke Rebecca had recently sold some works of art, but her practice had largely been dependent upon various forms of funding, and she has worked in various arts management roles on a contract basis to pay the bills. Rebecca was not represented by a commercial gallery.

Winning the QANTAS Spirit of Youth Award (Visual Arts section) was a key moment for Rebecca, ‘because […] a lot of the other short listed people were like from […] [the] eastern states and some of them were a lot more established or had made a lot more work than me […] I was actually really shocked that I won, because I just wasn’t expecting to so it was at that point I thought “OK, maybe I should be saying I’m an artist first”’ [RB,1:3]. She goes on to say that ‘as you do more things, you have less time to be working anyway, so you sort of are a full time artist’ [RB,1:3]. Of her ambitions Rebecca says, ‘I don’t necessarily want to be just an Australian artist, […] I would like to be talking to a worldwide audience and to be, […] an international artist, […] I think that’s quite hard to attain, but to be getting those opportunities to be showing in different places, in Biennales’ [RB,1:7].

Rebecca says that ‘a lot of my work wouldn’t exist without opportunities, […] career, well professional success or something like that is important to a degree,’ because a lot of projects and artworks are dependent on ‘that framework or that site or that opportunity specifically’ [RB,1:6]. ‘My work is very intrinsically tied into all that kind of stuff, to be able to realise and finish a lot of the bigger things I’m interested in doing’ [RB,1:14]. She says that her creative process begins with imagining, ‘this really perfect
thing, [...]which just does what it’s supposed to do,’ but, ‘it just never works out like that’ [RB,1:14]. So then she asks ‘what’s the essence of that idea and how do you do it in a different way? And most of the works are like that and I often think they’re probably better for that, [...] if I had made the things that I originally imagine they wouldn’t be much better, just [...] a lot more expensive’ [RB,1:14]. About her work Rebecca says, ‘I’d never want to assume [...] how people will respond. [...] I’m [...] interested in [...] the [...] universality of our experiences [...] I guess I’m trying to tap into some of those things [...] how there’s shared experience across cultures’ [RB,1:13].

Exhibit- 20: Rebecca Baumann, Automated Colour Field, 2011, 100 flip-clocks, laser-cut paper,130cm x 360cm x 9cm, duration: 24 hrs. (Edition of 3) Collections: Private Collection, Museum of Contemporary Art (Sydney), Art Gallery of Western Australia. Photographed by Andrew Curtis. Originally commissioned by the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art for NEW11
B.2 Craig Boulter

Craig Boulter is a painter living and working in the Perth suburb of Beaconsfield, close to Fremantle, from where he is able to ‘get around’ and access ‘most of the galleries, [which are located] between [Fremantle] and Perth’ [CB,2:4]. He lives on his own, paints at home and holds an exhibition of his works in September of each year also at his home, to which he regularly invites around 400 people and many of them purchase his paintings. He was born in 1945 in Margaret River in the South West Region of Western Australia, the son of publicans in that town. After an unhappy period working for the Bank of New South Wales upon leaving school, he convinced his reluctant parents to allow him to attend Perth Tech and completed a Diploma in Commercial Art (1965). Craig then worked as a draughtsman, whilst also painting and exhibiting his work with a number of commercial galleries around Perth. Upon resigning from his job in 1987 the artist sold his home in the suburb of Victoria Park and relocated to his present home, establishing for himself the financial security that has allowed him to be a full-time painter since 1987. Since reaching the official retirement age in 2010 the artist has also been in receipt of a part pension.

For Craig it has been a life-long journey to be able to dedicate himself full-time to his painting practice, which he describes in the following way: ‘With sports people, like footy players and that, they’ve got to practise, practise, practise and it’s the same with creative [people], whether they’re writers or poets or painters you’ve just got to keep at it, all the time’ [CB,2:11]. He says, ‘you can tell when you look at my work that I’ve been a draughtsman, I’ve tried to break away but […] I was made to do it for 20 years and it paid off the mortgage’ [CB,2:15]. During this period, he recalls, ‘I’d paint for about an hour before going to work, and then when I came home, I’d paint after work, but, […] it was terrible, and I like to think my work’s improved since I’ve been painting full time’ [CB,2:16].

Craig says ‘I’d like to do more flower studies, I also like painting water and I like painting architecture and I like painting landscape, it has to have something man-made in it’ [CB,1:3-4]. About his exhibition he says, ‘I suppose you could dismiss my show as a Mum’s and Dad’s show, I don’t care,[...] I’m here to survive’ [CB,2:13]. He stresses
that his work is aimed at a very specific clientele, who ‘just want paintings of the
groyne at South Beach or the groyne at Cottesloe, or the tower at [...] UWA, it sounds
dreadful but it’s true’ [CB,1:5]. Though the artist maintains ‘I’ve trained myself to be
commercially successful’ [CB,1:5], his commercial aspirations are very modest, ‘I only
make a small amount of money, but I’m perfectly happy’ [CB,1:6]. He says ‘people buy
my work so, I mean, they must like it’ [CB,1:2]. So whilst selling the work is an
important measure of success for Craig, it is not driven by profits but because, he says,
‘I love painting and I like exhibiting’ [CB,2:2].
B.3 Penny Bovell

Penny Bovell was born in 1956 in Mount Barker, in the Great Southern Region of Western Australia, the daughter of a bank manager. She qualified initially as a school teacher at the Western Australian College of Advanced Education (1976) but moved on to do a Diploma of Fine Art and Art & Design on scholarship at the Byam Shaw School of Art in London, UK. She has also completed a Grad. Dip. in Visual Arts at Curtin University (1993) and an MFA at the University of Western Australia (1999). As well as having studied at a number of Western Australian tertiary institutions, Penny has taught at all three WA Universities offering degrees in Art, and in the TAFE system. For 20 years Penny was also involved in a foundation offering patronage to Western Australian artists, conceived by and named after her late husband, architect Mark Howlett. Widowed in 1991, Penny reared two young children, whilst maintaining her art studies, practice and teaching commitments. When we spoke, Penny was renting an industrial warehouse unit as a studio with two other artists, and was not represented by a commercial gallery.

Penny said: ‘I’m trying to finish off and close down and simplify, and take the time out to see whether my energies can let me build up another body of work that is convincing enough to exhibit, and that’s where I am right now’ [PB,1:10]. Previously, she had been, ‘playing things against each other, a bit of admin, a bit of teaching, a bit of art, you get burnout. Now I am just doing my own work, I’m trying to get a public art project once or twice a year if I’m lucky, that will bring in a little bit of money’ [PB,1:13]. At the time of interviewing she felt that she was, ‘out of synch, […] because I fell out of making in a regular way so I couldn’t commit to an exhibition and I didn’t have an exhibition to commit to, and then I’ve got a little bit tentative’ [PB,2:14]. But she says, ‘I want [my work] to be about something and about nothing, invisible and visible, that sort of thing and so […] it’s a fine line as to whether it works or not I think, and, for that reason I think it’s much better that I get the work done first and then book the show’ [PB,2:15].

Penny says, ‘when I was in London […], there was a lot of feminism and there was a lot of theoretical things and I could immerse myself in that, […] those ideas drove my art
work’ [PB,1:7]. But coming back to Perth in the 80s, ‘I had to learn to find a new
audience in a way, and a new way of working that might meet that, and I sort of
returned to a more traditional way of working, exploring, making objects, making
paintings’ [PB,1:7]. For ‘20 years I’ve been interested in trying to imagine the sky,
image the sky, picture the sky, paint the sky and then realising actually the sky is
something that’s way over there, and that it’s air’ [PB,1:7]. But she says that the sky
was ‘a difficult, big subject, impossible to paint really, [...] but you could keep on
mining it and I think that that’s what was important, that I actually, consciously made
that decision’ [PB,1:8]. Though, she says, ‘it’s horrible being called “the cloud painter”?
[...] it doesn’t take very long for you to get that position, [...] people like to put you in
boxes’ [PB,1:9].

B.4 Susanna Castleden

Susanna Castleden is an artist living with her artist partner and two teenaged children in Fremantle, where she has a studio in the family home. She was born in 1968 in London, arriving in Western Australia in 1977 with her parents, who are still active in the arts community and as collectors. Her father was a surgeon and her mother a nurse and artist. Susanna is currently studying for a PhD with RMIT University (Melbourne, VIC) and has previously completed a BA (1989) with Honours (2001) and an MA (2002) in visual arts at Curtin University. Susanna has held a number of technical and teaching roles in printmaking and visual arts at different Western Australian Universities since 1990, and has been employed as a fulltime lecturer at Curtin University since 2003. At the time of interviewing, Susanna was represented in Perth by Galerie Dusseldorf.

Susanna talks about the way her commitment to her various roles as academic, parent, and partner can encroach on the time she has for studio practice: ‘I’m at Curtin four days a week and I’m at home one day a week and that one day is quickly consumed with [...] things that aren’t necessarily making your art practice’ [SC,1:12]. Further, she notes that ‘a lot of my work gets made [...] at [...] weekends, and [...] in that sense it’s a compromise in terms of family life too. [...] My kids know that I’d much rather on Sunday be at home in my studio than I would going and doing [...] fun things with kids’ [SC,1:12-13]. On the other hand she says that aside from a steady income, there are other benefits gained by working as an academic, she says that ‘there’s a lovely relationship between teaching and making [...] if I won lotto I would still like to teach something or talk to a student or talk [...] about art with colleagues, I quite enjoy that as a part of my own practice and I would never lock myself in my studio and just pump out art all day every day’ [SC,2:15]. Further she says that ‘having the facilities at Curtin, [...] I’m really lucky, [...] if I was away from the institution I’d have a really hard time trying to get a lot of stuff done, like big screen prints, for example I’d have to be working with industry’ [SC,1:4].

Susanna describes her work as ‘answering questions [...]’, visually, so if there’s things that I’m interested in, [...] I start to try and develop the best way to visualise those
ideas, with the given skills and knowledge that I’ve got of materials’ [SC,1:5]. She says that she works in series partly because ‘I don’t feel like I can ever answer the one question in only one way. But I think part of it too is being quite selective, that you can’t try and embed every single idea and thought you’ve ever had into one piece of work’ [SC,1:6]. An important part of her creative process is ‘play, lots and lots of play.’ She maintains that she is a ‘true believer in studio research, [...] I collect stuff and I look at it and it sits there and then I start to actually play [...] you’re constantly questioning yourself and relating it back to the things you had in mind when you started to do that and there’s a lot of, [...] failures along the way’ [SC,1:5]. Though her background is in printmaking, Susanna says that she is not limited by this, and makes work in a range of different media and ‘predominantly hand, lo-tech processes’ [SC,1:5], ‘whatever’s most appropriate for the thought that I’ve got to execute’ [SC,2:8].

Exhibit- 23: Susanna Castleden, Making the World at the Correct Position and Correct Shape, 2012, screen print and water colour on rag paper, 55cm x 55cm x 55cm. Photographed by the artist.
B.5 Oron Catts

Oron Catts was born in Helsinki, Finland in 1967, to Israeli parents. His father was an executive consultant and his mother a physiotherapist. Growing up in Israel, Oron attended a special agricultural high school where an interest in biology was nurtured alongside his own creative inclinations. Oron came to Australia in 1991 and to Perth in 1992, where he undertook a BA in Design with Honours (1996) at Curtin University of Technology; later he completed a MA in visual arts (2003) also at Curtin. With his partner Ionat Zurr, Oron founded the Tissue Culture and Art Project in 1996 and was artist in residence at the School of Anatomy and Human Biology at the University of Western Australia. From these beginnings, Oron was able to establish SymbioticA, The Centre for Excellence in Biological Arts within the same school at UWA, and is now director of SymbioticA, as well as pursuing his own art practice and research. Oron lives in Perth with his partner, who also works at SymbioticA, and their two young children.

Oron says that ‘where I am now has to a large extent, far exceeded my expectations in regards to […] where I thought I might be’ [OC,1:1]. But he says, ‘because my work, […] although it can be seen as successful, […] traditional art doesn’t really acknowledge it as such. So having some of the more mainstream traditional art world recognising that - in the form of having my work on the cover of a very established and traditional art magazine, or having stories about my work in that context and obviously having quite high end critics and art historians […] recognising my work - is really what seems to be an acknowledgement’ [OC,1:2] of the success of his work. He says ‘I see myself as an advocate to this field, […] I don’t know if it can be considered part of my artistic practice, but mainly part of my interest in […] helping this field to grow and […] develop […], I spend quite a lot of time linking local artists and scientists and helping people out’ [OC,2:7].
Oron says that his creative practice is focused on addressing the problem that, ‘we have no cultural language to deal with the issues that we are faced by, in contemporary biology and contemporary cultures, to life’ [OC,2:6]. In particular he sees that artists ‘are well positioned [to develop this language], because [...] they’re less agenda driven than other professions, we’re not trying to sell any particular point of view, besides our very subjective one’ [OC,2:6]. Oron says that ‘working with the new material of tissues [...] fifteen years down the track I’m still exploring [...] trying to engage with the materials and seeing what they [are] capable of. How can you visually translate what’s going on there in a somewhat coherent way, or articulate it in a way which I feel comfortable about?’ [OC,1:4]. He also points out that ‘mounting an exhibition of our work can be extremely difficult and problematic and many galleries are either afraid of doing it, or they perceive it to be too expensive [...] so, most art organisations [...] just invite us to give a talk or maybe run a workshop, they would prefer that, than putting our work up [...] so I end up doing more of that than actually showing work’ [OC,2:7].
B.6 Erin Coates

Erin Coates was born in 1977 in Albany in the Great Southern Region of Western Australia. Her parents worked in a range of different jobs, her father being an electrical technician, professional scuba diver and shell dealer and they ran various small business ventures including a Bed & Breakfast. Erin completed her BA (Hons.) in visual art at Curtin University (2002) and also a MFA at the University of British Columbia, Canada (2006). She has previously held lecturing positions in Art at the University of British Columbia, Edith Cowan University and the University of Western Australia. At the time of interviewing she was exhibitions co-ordinator at the Fremantle Arts Centre and involved in various curatorial projects at that institution and elsewhere. She lives in the suburb of North Perth and makes her work at home and in other places around town. Erin was not represented by a commercial gallery.

Erin feels that her time is somewhat divided between her own creative practice and her curatorial and professional work at the Fremantle Arts Centre. She says, ‘I’m always processing ideas and constructing something and it can be quite autonomous and internal and it doesn’t need to be even realised […] but yeah, it is a bit disheartening sometimes when I’m working with […] Perth artists and […] two or three months into the project they’ll be like “oh are you an artist too?” […] so it’s those moments where I realise I need to be doing more of my own stuff’ [EC,2:4]. However, she sees that the artist/curator role as an important kind of ‘creative practice because […] by putting things together, you’re constructing meaning, you’re altering the way things are read, and so I’m very interested in curating as a creative practice, but also curating myself into shows as well’ [EC,2:11]. She goes on, ‘because a lot of my time and energy is focused really on my other work, I find that when I am thinking about my practice I have to be very pro-active […] I actively want to create the context that [my work is] shown in, I want to speak to the other artists and set up this kind of discourse, by having my work […] in the same context as theirs, in proximity to their work and. So part of it is not being passive and not being waiting to be in those kinds of shows, I want to actually create them’ [EC,2:12].
Erin works in a range of different media, including sculpture, installation, drawing and video. She says, ‘the sculptural work, a lot of the time it’s quite abstract, but it still references the body, it’s quite corporeal, and it’s about the built environment and our relationship, our visceral, bodily relationship to these structures around us’ [EC,2:6]. The video work, she says is ‘maybe more our visual experience of urban space, how we move through it, and its relationship also to screen culture, how we experience the city from the point of view of a car or as a pedestrian and how we experience moving image on the screen’ [EC,2:6]. She says that these works in different media ‘come together in terms of this interface between the body and the environments that we occupy’ [EC,2:6], and that she is ‘getting closer to finding, ways of exploring them together’ [EC,2:6].

Exhibit- 25: Erin Coates, *Thirst* [video still], 2012, HD video with sound, duration: 5:09 minutes, sound design by Stuart James
B.7 Barbara Cotter

Barbara Cotter is an artist creating jewellery and small objects from her studio/workshop at home in the Perth suburb of Morley. She lives with her husband, a business executive working in lotteries, and at the time of interviewing she also held a part time position as Collections Manager at the John Curtin Art Gallery. As I write this thesis, Barbara has become a new mother, and so her commitments have been re-focused on this new role. She was born in 1971 in Perth, to parents originally from rural Victoria. Her father, an electrical fitter by trade, suffered from chronic illness and was on long-term sickness benefits. Barbara undertook all of her tertiary level art education at Curtin University, completing a BA (1991) from entry as a school-leaver, followed by a Grad. Dip. (1995) and a MCA (2005). At the time of interviewing she was not represented by a commercial gallery (though she had previously had relationships with galleries) and was creating work on commission and for jewellery exhibitions, also selling some work at the John Curtin Art Gallery where she worked.

As an artist, Barbara says that whilst she’s had small successes with the sale of work and being selected to participate in interstate jewellery exhibitions, she doesn’t think ‘there’s any major achievements that I’ve had’ [BC,1:2]. After several years of frequent international travel maintaining a long-distance relationship with her partner which impacted on the continuity of her practice, Barbara says that, ‘I’m at the point now where […] [I] really need to be more pro-active and actually get more gallery space. […] if I’d like to arrange an exhibition, I don’t quite know where to go, […] because I’ve actually got to start from scratch almost’ [BC,1:5]. This is a difficult process because she says, ‘I’m an artist more than I’m just a jeweller’ [BC,1:9], and ‘the spaces that tend to do jewellery aren’t, particularly art orientated jewellery, it’s more limited production, which really isn’t what I want to do’ [BC,1:5]. This makes exhibiting in specialised eastern states galleries an attractive prospect, though, ‘it’s a matter of deciding whether I can […] spend the money and go over and see them. […] But then again it’d be much easier to approach an eastern states gallery if I at least have presence here’ [BC,2:12].
About her work, Barbara says that, ‘I’m quite inspired by my own life [...] I have to come from a personal perspective.’ She also says, ‘the way things are developed in nature I find interesting’ [BC,1:9]. Her artistic process begins with the exploration of ideas, perhaps by ‘drawing source material, [...] like maybe drawing the body again,’ rather than, ‘drawing what it is I want to make’ [BC,1:7]. Moving on, the process involves ‘experiments in metal. I usually go straight into metal because I usually find it easier to explore ideas in that and then, once you get an idea started, then it’s refining that’ [BC,1:7]. She says ‘I’m attracted to things that look like they’ve had someone who cared about it, cared about the making and what they were trying to say, and it’s more personal rather than global issues’ [BC,1:10].

Exhibit- 26: Barbara Cotter, Ring, 2012, enamel, fine silver, copper, 9ct, 18ct, 2.5cm x 3cm x 0.4cm. Photographed by the artist
B.8 Kevin Draper

Kevin Draper is an artist working mainly in metal sculptural forms and living with his partner, also an artist, on a property near Torbay, in the Great Southern Region of Western Australia. He was born in 1958 in Donnybrook, in the South West Region of Western Australia, and grew up on a mixed farm at Narrikup near Mount Barker, not far from where is now living. His mother was a teacher and his father a farmer. Kevin begin his formal art training, with an early focus on painting, with part-time studies at Albany TAFE (1979-85), and moved to sculptural work whilst doing his BA at Curtin University of Technology (1988). Kevin has primarily earned a living from public art commissions, and a little teaching earlier in his career in TAFEs and universities. At the time of interviewing Kevin was not represented by a commercial gallery.

Kevin describes himself as having, ‘just stepped off the planet for a while,’ and being, ‘very much at a cross-roads’ [KD,1:40]. He says that the public art projects had ‘started to run into each other, [...]and [...]the cash flow would be going into another project when I haven’t quite finished this one, and that was good, that was a treadmill, as a business’ [KD,1:30]. But he says that this work has meant that he hasn’t, ‘had the time for a long time to just let something evolve’ [KD,1:15], and also ‘I was burnt out, [...] not just physically, ‘cause of your age and your body and working like that, but also, I think I was on a pathway that wasn’t necessarily where I should go’ [KD,1:26]. He says, ‘I’m happy to go back to the country to an area I came from. [...] To go back has given me now that opportunity of, financially to some extent, just being able to do my own work, because I don’t have the overheads of a really large studio to lease [in Perth]’ [KD,1:21]. This he hopes will enable him, ‘to make some work, I promised myself that for a long time. I’m going to make some work, mediocre or not and just have it there, see what happens, see what I can still find, [...] because I’m not sure what I’ve got to say, really at the moment’ [KD,1:26].

Kevin says about his work that ‘it’s not a direct political statement, even though there’s an environmental element, there’s this and that, there’s also the craft of the blacksmith and the tussle with that, things about space, things about light’ [KD,1:26]. He uses blacksmithing and forging process that are expensive, intensive, hot and noisy,
physically, you can’t do this all day, […] if you’re hand forging you might only do two hours. If you’re using the big hammer you might go till lunch time, but you’ll be shaking the fillings out of […] every teeth’ [KD,1:28]. But, he stresses that ‘the metal work responds to the landscape and […] I’m living at the moment with the forge in an open shed, […], it really is, literally, almost no cross-over between the swampland, the landscape and I might be making some linear tree shape thing’ [KD,1:10]. He says that he decides whether his works are successful and complete, ‘from the point of view of someone drawing, not someone who’s a metal worker, not someone who’s worried about structure, […] that idea of lightness and permeability is essential’ [KD,1:10].

Exhibit- 27: Kevin Draper, Threshold, 2012, forged, welded and painted steel.230cm x 250cm x 140cm, Accepted for 2012 Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi, NSW. Photographed at Shelley Beach, Torbay, 2012, by the artist.
B.9 Pippin Drysdale

Pippin Drysdale was born in 1943, in Toorak, Melbourne, but grew up in Perth in what she describes as ‘a pretty privileged environment [...] and coming from the establishment of Western Australia’ [PD,1:16]. Her father was an entrepreneur and developer and her mother had some inherited wealth. After a number of difficulties at school and in various jobs, Pippin had some success in establishing small businesses, firstly with paper flowers, and then selling potted herbs. Introduced to pottery in this latter venture she completed an Advanced Diploma in Ceramics at Perth Tech (1981), followed by a period studying with master potters at the Anderson Ranch in Colorado, USA. She then completed a BA in Fine Art (1986) at Curtin University of Technology. Pippin is divorced and has a son and grandchildren living in the USA. She lives and works from her home studio in Fremantle. She has been the recipient of a number of grants and this income, along with sales of her work and a few investments, have enabled Pippin to dedicate her time more or less exclusively to her art practice since completing her studies. Pippin has been represented in Western Australia by Perth Galleries and has representation both interstate and internationally.

For Pippin key opportunities have led to new developments in her practice, such as ‘the opportunity to work for that big show in a museum in Frankfurt, because I really thought about it, [...] “this is a time I have to develop something really beautiful, timeless, restrained,” [...] I remember it just took me so long to stay restrained and then finally I nailed it and I suddenly appreciated it, the minimal and the simplicity of it’ [PD,1:13]. Also her retrospective exhibition at the John Curtin Gallery in 2007, ‘was very much the catalyst for me developing the closed forms [...] to have had a show of that nature with so much work and space and atmosphere, that [...] the vessels lost their own individual entity, because they were all displayed as installations and in groups’ [PD,2:9]. From this she started ‘to integrate small groups of vessels and closed forms, [...] I still have quite a lot of lovely single works too, but the ones that come together [...] make a really interesting sense of topography and colour and group and mood’ [PD,2:9].
Pippin says ‘I’m not one of these people that takes lots of photographs and draw, I just absorb things visually and emotionally and therefore, whenever I’ve had a journey, and I’ve come back here into this place and space, it takes time for that to gel and come out’ [PD,1:9]. She describes: ‘when you are working[...] every now and then you get a gem, [...] and I feel that’s passed me a little bit, which is sad, but you can’t make it happen. [...] They looked an absolute mess going into the kiln, but there was something that intuitively said to you that this could be a really stunning, special piece’ [PD,1:9]. Pippin goes on to talk about ‘this technique that I have now, which I’ve refined and refined, because there’s an art to it, you can’t even teach it [...] there are whole lots of little subtleties and issues. But I still feel frustrated because I see this beautiful quality of line but [...] also you have your limitations because you can’t have the spontaneity with the blade that [...] you can with mark making’ [PD,1:15].

Exhibit- 28: Pippin Drysdale, Spear Grass Burning: Tanami Mapping Series, 2011 Installation of 8 porcelain works, dimensions variable 13.5cm to 41.5cm (h). Photographed by Robert Frith, Acorn Photography
B.10 Stuart Elliott

Stuart Elliott was born in 1953 in the Perth suburb of Midland. His father worked as a post office clerk, and was a moulder by trade, and his mother was a shop assistant. Leaving school at 15, Stuart initially undertook an apprenticeship as an electrical fitter and subsequently worked in his trade on mines and drilling rigs in the Pilbara. Stuart attended Claremont School of Art, graduating in 1978 with a Diploma, followed by a BFA (1980) at the Western Australian Institute of Technology. In addition to his art practice, Stuart has been a teacher, curator, consultant, advisor, advocate and a writer and has ‘had the good fortune [...] for a long time now, to not actually have to work outside of an arts context.’ He goes on to say that part time ‘lecturing has provided a good background’ [SE,1:20], providing a steady income and allowing for ‘space to live’ and time in the studio. At the time of interviewing, Stuart was living with his partner, also an artist and academic, and working from a studio on their property in Parkerville in the hills to the North East of Perth. Stuart was represented by Turner Galleries in Perth, and was also a part time lecturer at Midland TAFE.

Stuart describes his creative process: ‘you kind of have a premise and then you try and manifest that in material, and then the material itself, the way that that becomes manifest will often, in a feedback loop, go back and critique your premise, so there’s a bit of a dialogue thing going on between here [head] and here [hands] and the eye’ [SE,1:10]. Similarly, he says that the important works in an exhibition are those that ‘give some kind of a voice or a form to what you intended. [...] Shows are curious, if you knew exactly what you were going to do and it was just a case of engineering, I mean, again it’d be just like a job’ [SE,1:6]. He goes on to explain the concept of Fakeology, which underpins his approach to making art, by describing one of his works, ‘it was based on a West Australian reality, it was that stuff I had been riding past.’ This was, he says, ‘translated into an installation, which [...] was consistent with the way we are living currently, it’s not literally how we live, but maybe at some point there’s a resonance with it and that’s where the heartland of that fakeology is, [...] it’s an allegorical reality, rather than an illustrative reality’ [SE,2:12].
Stuart maintains that whilst ‘luck’s got a lot to do with it’ [SE,1:7], in career success, ‘you actually have a responsibility to engineer some of those breaks’ [SE,1:9]. But he says that, ‘if one of your principal objectives for making stuff is to [...] discuss [...] “I think this is important, what do you think?” If that’s what the show ultimately is [...] about, well then I think you have to pursue that with as much enthusiasm and [...] integrity as you can’ [SE,1:15-16]. As he relates, ‘you put stuff out and you just really don’t know where it’s going to go, it might go nowhere’ [SE,1:15]. But he describes a 2002 exhibition, where ‘I sort of covered costs,’ by selling one work out of six, but then ‘two years later I got a call to say “do you want to show that work at the MCA in Sydney?” [...] because those people had seen it [...] then it went to Sydney [...] and] got a really very good review in the Sydney Morning Herald with the critic there’ [SE,1:15].
B.11 Tom Gibbons

Tom Gibbons was born in 1928, in Salford, Lancashire, UK, the only son of railway clerks. Tom initially studied for a BA with Honours in English Language and Literature at the University College of Hull (1950). After completing his national service with the RAF as an education officer, and a time spent teaching in Derbyshire, he immigrated to Western Australia in 1955 with his wife and eldest son to take up a teaching post at Scotch College. The progressive art program at Scotch College was a significant influence on Tom’s growing visual art practice, and whilst there he also completed an MA at the University of Western Australia (1957). In 1957 Tom was invited by Guy Grey-Smith and Robert Juniper to exhibit with the Perth Group of artists, and has subsequently been involved in Western Australian visual art as an artist, critic, advocate and mentor. Tom also held a fulltime post teaching in the English Department at the University of Western Australia from 1957 until his retirement in 1993, briefly returning to the UK in 1964-1965 to complete a PhD in English Literature at the University of Cambridge. He remained active in the fields of visual art and literature, painting and exhibiting, writing and publishing, until he passed away on 16 February 2012, just three months after my second interview with him. It is a testament to his enthusiasm for WA art and generosity, that Tom was willing to participate in this project despite being very ill. He lived with his second wife, also a Western Australian artist, in the suburb of Joondanna, where he had his studio.

Tom says that he ‘would jib and the notion of calling myself an artist with a capital A’ [TG,2:18]. Further he says that, ‘I’ve been a kind of populariser, […] it’s a matter of regret to me that people like, Dickens and Tennyson were best-selling authors in their time and now they’re regarded as high-brow […] so, whether it’s as a teacher or whether I’ve been on the art gallery board and so forth I’ve always been interested in getting people interested […] at a popular level’ [TG,1:9]. He goes on to say that, ‘the opposite is I think is summed up in the two words “cultural precinct”, culture is something apart from everyday life, […] somewhere special you go to get your dose of culture. So in another Victorian sense it’s got to be edifying or uplifting in some way, you can’t go there just for a good laugh’ [TG,2:22]. He maintains ‘I’d much rather it was somehow an integrated part of everyday life’ [TG,2:22]. He describes himself as a
classicist, engaged in a process of ‘demolishing the inheritance’ of the romantic aspects of modernism, ‘now fossilised into dogmas’ [TG,2:14] He states, ‘the great defect of Romanticism is there’s no humour in it all, […] it’s all got to be deadly serious’ [TG,2:19].

Tom has described his own work as ‘evocative, rather than immediately referential.’ He says, ‘it’s a way of expressing my interest, but also my great affection, I’m not without an element of irony, […] you can have a great deal of affection […] and elements of detachment as well, you can see the fun in it and so forth’ [TG,2:19]. Tom describes his creative process in the following way; ‘one does have an idea about something which might be done, and then […] sets about trying to do it and then it turns out not to be possible, but something possible turns up in its place. […] So it’s in the process of trial and error, you find out what part of your idea or concept can be put down in some […] visual form, and physical form, using particular media, and that can be anything as far as I’m concerned’ [TG,1:6].

Exhibit- 30: Tom Gibbons, Fromage- Hommage-Collage, 2011, cheese wrapper on postcard (postcard image by Miriam Stannage), [dimensions not supplied]. Photographed by the artist
B.12 Nigel Hewitt

Nigel Hewitt was born in Ulverstone, Tasmania in 1952. His father left the family when Nigel was three and his mother ran a guest house in order to support herself and her three children. Nigel initially pursued a diploma in motor engineering in line with his mother’s desire that her boys contribute to the household financially, though he discovered that he hated working as a mechanic. Nigel moved to Western Australia in 1971 with his partner, and in 1977 completed a Diploma in Fine Arts at Claremont School of Art. Since that time, and with the support of his partner, who is a teacher, Nigel has pursued art practice as a profession. Their three adult children are now living independently, and Nigel and his partner live in Darlington in the Perth hills where he works from a purpose built studio.

Nigel recalls the beginnings of his career: ‘I entered into a prize in my third year at art school, it was the Parmelia Portrait Prize and [...] I thought it’d be worth having a go and, lo and behold, I won it. [...] It was important for me, because it acknowledged to me that [...] I must be OK. But it was also that other people acknowledged that “Oh, he’s an up and coming, he’s worth looking at”, and so immediately I got an artist in residence in the Pilbara and that was for six months, and I had a few galleries chasing me to have shows, so it was a really tremendous kick-start’ [NH,1:3]. Further, he says that after working for, ‘30 years or something, [...] a lot of people know my work and [...] through my career, and [...] big changes in my work and people still seem to stay with it and follow my work, [...] I really think I’m not trapped into having to make work of a particular kind’ [NH,1:9].

Of his work Nigel says that the foundations were laid in ten years of painting the landscape at the beginning of his career, which ‘was very much the time when I really learnt a lot about painting, a lot about tone and about light, about so many things’ [NH,1:8]. He says that he likes ‘the play of figurative elements within a subject and the way they react with each other,’ and he goes on, ‘you put in one element it says one thing, you put in two it’s start saying about five different things, you put in three and it starts saying hundreds of different things. [...] I love creating these new realities, [...] because I’ve worked so much in nature [...] I think I have a really good understanding
of how nature works in the sense of its tonal relationships and I can play with those’ [NH,2:11]. He also observes that ‘there’s an element of disguise about really interesting work where […] there are things that are hidden, it’s not all given away, […] it tantalises you, it doesn’t treat you like a fool, it offers you an open-endedness’ [NH,2:14]. Despite living in WA, Nigel says that, ‘Tasmania, the landscape is like the stage for where all these other events take place, […] there’s something within that particular landscape that influences the way that I think, that’s very much a driving force’ [NH,1:7]. He also says ‘I get frustrated about the devastation of the landscape which is driven by greed, […] this plays a big part in what my subject matter says. I reference early invasion of land and culture in my work […]’, and I point at Tassie because it’s a place that I know and love’ [NH,2:8].

B.13 Peter Hill

Peter Hill lives with his wife, a community artist, and their three young children, in the town of Northcliffe in the Southern Forests Area of the South West Region of Western Australia. In this secluded location Peter divides his time between building the family home and making art works for awards and group exhibitions in Western Australia and solo shows in Melbourne, where he is represented by Brigitte Braun Gallery. He was born in 1971 in Manjimup, not far from where he now lives, his father was a salesman in a local Ford dealership and his mother a secretary. Against his parents’ wishes, Peter abandoned a Multidisciplinary Science degree at Curtin University of Technology after first year (1989) to later complete a Diploma of Art and Design at Claremont School of Art (1993). Returning from an extended period of international travel after graduating, Peter gradually worked towards a point he reached in 2006 where ‘art has been my [...] sole income, on paper’ [PH,1:11].

Peter describes the beginnings of his business relationship with gallery director Brigitte Braun, then running Artplace in Perth, ‘she had a cancellation, so I got an exhibition with her, about the time I had my interview to go to Curtin, so I suppose that [...] moment, has defined the financial career, because, as much as [...] I annoy her, she annoys me, [...] like all good business relationships, but mostly [...] it works well and she is good at the things I’m really crap at [...] dealing with her has been good, ‘cause she sells my work’ [PH,1:5]. But he also says that, ‘it can be difficult, running a business, as an artist, in the house with all the kids and family, but it has its positives as well, [...] it means it can’t be as sterile and detached, because it’s inside the whirlwind of the family that things are being made’ [PH,1:6].

About his work Peter says ‘I don’t want it to be a one-liner, that once you’ve read the statement, that’s it, and it’s finished, [...] they’re a visual representation of me thinking about something, a concept or ideas, experience or sensations, [...] but I still want them to be in a form [...] it will evoke a meaning in the viewer [...] it doesn’t have one destination’ [PH,1:4]. He says that ‘everything’s an influence, [...] it’s pretty much just everything that’s going on in my life, [...] but I suppose the decision that I am here is probably the main influence, because I do reflect where I live and my family’ [PH,1:10].
Despite the personal nature of these experiences, Peter recognises that ‘if I was doing it purely for myself, there’d be times where I’m interested in the development of ideas and sometimes I just want to keep going, and faster and faster, so I wouldn’t necessarily [...] finish everything to the same degree, because [...] I don’t need to for myself.’ So, he goes on, ‘I’m not doing it in a way that I’m totally caught up just in my own emotion or thought, there is the sense that it’s to communicate with other people’ [PH,1:8].

Exhibit- 32: Peter Hill, *Inheritance House*, 2010, 50cm x 40cm x 40cm, books salvaged from my grandparents’ abandoned farmhouse, uncle’s shed, father’s shed. Collection of City of Swan. Photographed by the artist.
B.14 Michael Iwanoff

Michael Iwanoff was born in Perth in 1954 to immigrant parents, his mother was German and his father Bulgarian and an Architect. Michael says that ‘money was never an important part of our family, my father never earned much money, so I don’t miss it’ [MI,1:7]. But he also says that ‘I’m fortunate enough to have learnt from my father and family situation, that you can live an incredibly rich life […] by doing what you love to do’ [MI,2:8]. What Michael loves to do is paint and engage in creative practice, and his sensibilities were recognised early and encouraged, leading him through a special art program at Applecross Senior High School (1968-72), on through to an Associateship at Western Australian Institute of Technology (1975). He continued with post-graduate studies and was awarded a Meisterschueler from the Staatliche Kunstakademie Duesseldorf, Germany (1980). Michael has worked part time at Curtin University, teaching art for the past 30 years, and lives with his partner, a midwife, and their daughter in the Perth suburb of Mount Lawley. At the time of interviewing Michael was not formally represented by any commercial galleries.

Michael maintains that, ‘the only time I call myself an artist is when I need to comply with the taxation system’ [MI,1:2]. Michael doesn’t conceive of his practice as a ‘career’ in a conventional sense, but is focused instead on ‘how do I honestly respond as fully as I can without getting caught up in clichés or role playing’ [MI,1:2]. In contrast to playing the role of the artist, Michael says that immersion in the creative process, is a ‘naked state, a raw, open state […] where you enter this intimate dialogue with the process. […] As soon as I connect with a work and enter it, it starts to draw me in, and I draw it in and it draws me in and then […] you’re together […] it’s not about, “I am separate from this, I am the artist and the creator.” The analogy of dance, I have found to be quite useful, […] that mutual respect, that mutual bringing the most out of each other […] it’s that incredibly enriching and inspiring interaction’ [MI,2:3]. He says, ‘that’s why I feel so passionate about the work that I do with people, […] whether that’s at university or in private, or in workshops or wherever, it’s about giving people permission to give themselves permission […] to be more whole’ [MI,2:14].
For Michael says: ‘Within the creative practice what is important is to be mindful of not repeating or not becoming complacent and not becoming mannered, to make sure that I’m honouring the evolution of the work. That’s [...] the way to make sure that I’m embodying a sense of care or authentic involvement with what I’m doing. That for me is what’s more important than achieving any form of social status’[MI,1:4]. Michael feels ‘really strongly that work has energy. You can’t ever photograph or remember it’ [MI,2:9]. The voice of a painting ‘is that which takes place in the presence of it, and cannot be accessed through reproductions. This voice is not static, it is different with each new interaction’ [MI email 01/03/2013]. For these reasons, as he puts it, the paintings are not his in a possessive sense, he is not the ‘artist or the creator,’ but a collaborator serving the dance of a creative practice [MI email 01/03/2013]. Therefore he does not feel that it is appropriate to present photographic reproductions of paintings for this thesis.

B.15 Larry Mitchell

Larry Mitchell was born in 1953 in the small town of Northampton, approximately 30 miles north of Geraldton in the Mid-West Region of Western Australia, the son of a shearer. He painted at home from an early age, but Larry has had no formal art education, though he himself has taught school and TAFE students and community art classes. Having struggled to support his art practice and his wife and three children, Larry has been working his whole life towards being able to paint full time, a goal which he finally achieved in 1997. Larry has been represented by a number of Western Australian, interstate and international commercial galleries and art dealers, including Linton & Kay Gallery in Perth, and Jahroc Gallery in Margaret River, and his work has also recently attracted interest from various local and international institutions.

Larry says: ‘I’m fiscally very successful, but that means nothing really in terms of the way I judge art. [...] I wanted to be part of the mainstream art world, I wanted to be part of that big tradition and I used to measure myself against what was going on now in Germany or England [...] But all that changed 15 or 20 years ago and I just decided to become another sort of artist. And so I don’t think about success anymore, I’m not in
that kind of game, into trying to attract attention’ [LM,1:3-4]. He describes, ‘I was fascinated by the Pilbara, [...] just learning about the Pilbara and then, painting it and drawing it, writing about it and thinking about it, fascinated me a hell of a lot me than the end result in painting [...] and I get very excited about exploring an area and [painting]’s just my medium of exploration’ [LM,2:14]. But, he recognises that he has established ‘a fairly privileged position and I can afford to do that now. But it was a choice I always wanted to make, to be that free, it’s not, unfortunately, possible unless you’re making enough money or people will buy the stuff’ [LM,2:15].

Larry states, ‘I’m a topographical landscape painter, that’s who I am, I’ve never tried to be influenced by indigenous art, but I was influenced by the knowledge of and the satisfaction with who you are’ [LM,2:12]. His work is stimulated by both environmental and visual factors, leading him to study and paint both landscapes and cityscapes. He says that his works around island environments stem from, ‘that idea of globalisation and global warming, [...] I’m just trying to record those places that are probably under threat’ [LM,2:3]. The city paintings he says came from travelling ‘to see a dealer or to collect material for the bigger project, but in the meantime I was spending a lot of time in these places and visually they started to interest me’ [LM,2:3]. The emphasis in his work is that ‘there’s no style, [...] I want the rock to be a rock, I want the water to be water, I want the sky to be sky, I don’t want it to be Larry Mitchell’s version of water or sky or both’ [LM,2:9]. Importantly, he maintains his approach, ‘doesn’t take the form of an anti-contemporary art, [...] it’s just been a personal journey to try and see things more clearly’ [LM,2:10].
Exhibit- 33: Larry Mitchell, *Davis Island – Abrolhos*, 2011, oil on canvas, 370cm x 90cm. Collection of Bagwan Marine. Photographed by Víctor France
B.16 Regina Noakes

Regina Noakes was born in Singapore in 1958. Her father was Portuguese and a superintendent with the Ministry of Health, her mother was an Indian concert pianist. Regina moved to Perth in 1977, but has lived in a number of different places including Hong Kong, Singapore, the UK, Italy, the USA and travelled to still more. She has a Diploma in School Music and Art from the Institute of Education in Singapore (1972), assisted/studied painting under Professor Antonio Napoli who was restoring frescos in Capri (1973-4) and undertook further studies in Art at the Art Students’ League in Boston, MA, USA (1980). In addition to her visual art studies, Regina is an accomplished musician and has both studied and taught Piano. Regina lives with her husband, a professor in Mathematics, and works from her studio in their family home in the Perth suburb of Subiaco. Regina has been painting on a fulltime basis since 1998, and also teaches at the Fremantle Art Centre and presents workshops locally and in other places. She is represented in Perth by Gadfly Gallery, and also has representation with interstate and overseas commercial galleries and art dealers.

Regina relates that, ‘I have to have hundreds of canvases empty in my house [...] because [...] if that doesn’t work, I go to another one, I don’t try and make them work. It will not [work], forcing something’ [RN,1:6]. She also says that ‘I’m not really born to be a writer’ [RN,2:5], but ‘I’ve got a lot of stories in me’ [RN,1:9], and that in her work she also draws on stories from other sources, such as religious themes and, ‘if I go to a play [...] I tie something in. I like the Greek myths, I’m really looking into Indian myths’ [RN,2:8]. But she says that these works are not always well received in Perth, ‘I would not be able to sell any religious work in Perth, [...] like Jonah and the whale, nobody would ever know what it was’ [RN,1:6]. But she says that this doesn’t stop her, ‘I’ve just got to paint what I want, [...] if it doesn’t sell I send it somewhere else’ [RN,2:8].

Regina says that many of her opportunities with galleries in Australia and overseas have come from entering ‘competitions, you will see where you stand and then, go from there, people pick you up’ [RN,2:7], but she says that, ‘usually people find me now’ [RN,2:6]. As well as working with several galleries in Australian cities, Regina exhibits her work in Europe with, ‘a dealer, [...] he will get a place and have an
exhibition, set it all up and invite his clientele. [...] But he sometimes buys the whole thing and gives it to me, which is fantastic, if he buys 20 paintings from me, I’m all paid, [...] he was a banker and then he did, fine arts, history and now he looks after six artists’ [RN,2:16]. Regina says, ‘I have met a lot of people along the way, who are proper artists and friends I’ve done art with, historians or, we still meet up and paint together, so I’ve got that body of people behind’ [RN,1:5]. This, she says is her community and an important source of opportunities and support, ‘I’ve got three [artist friends] in Sydney [...], I’ve got a bunch in Norway, and Italy and Boston, [...] but in Perth, not really, [...] there is such a lot of rivalry’ [RN,2:12].

Exhibit- 34: Regina Noakes, *In Time of Need (The Good Samaritan)*, 2011, oil on canvas, [dimensions not provided]. Selected for 2012 Mandorla Exhibition. Photographed by the artist
B.17 Anna Sabadini

Anna Sabadini is an artist living and working in Albany in the Great Southern Region of Western Australia. She paints from a studio at the front of her house, overlooking a front garden that produces an abundance of vegetable produce. She was born in 1967 into an Italian migrant family and initially pursued studies in Veterinary Science, Horticulture and Landscape Design before deciding to pursue ‘what I really wanted to do’ [AS,1:1]. She completed all of her art studies as a mature student at Curtin University, BA (1996), Hons. (2000) and DCA (2007). At the time of interviewing she was represented by two commercial galleries, Emerge ARTSPACE in Perth and another in Sydney. She also maintained some sessional academic work teaching online Open University courses in Art.

Anna said, ‘I don’t know if I’m going through a period where I don’t really know who I am as an artist, and I’m just trying to discover. Maybe all this gets left behind, all this ends up being something I just keep coming back to, I don’t know’ [AS,1:12]. Part of this process of discovery, she says, is about working through ‘Art history and maybe my history, my own personal history, to come to some sort of a placement or something’ [AS,1:11]. As she states, ‘I look at the art magazines and more and more there’s a conviction that I’m not that, that’s not where I’m going. I don’t know, it just feels like I’m not so interested in that maybe?’ [AS,1:3]. Anna also wonders about the way her subject matter contributes to this sense; ‘dealing with issues of home, and domesticity and still life, which I think really still is the lowest of the genres, I still think there is a hierarchy’ [131011-24].

About her work Anna says: ‘I like working from something, in real life, whether it’s a room or a landscape or a still life’ [AS,1:7]. Furthermore she says ‘I like things that are representational and abstract at the same time, I keep feeling like I want to pull everything in together’ [AS,1:7]. In terms of pulling things together, Anna describes different creative processes not as mutually exclusive but as delivering different things. She describes the ‘instant gratification of just like being a kid and getting in and playing with the stuff,’ and the ‘delayed gratification’ of ‘setting up something carefully and rendering it carefully and taking the time, it’s hard work but there is a pleasure at the
end of it.’ [AS,1:10] Anna emphasises, ‘I believe you can say something well, or communicate, if you understand the medium, I mean it’s through the medium that you communicate, […] and the whole history of it is just amazing’ [AS,1:9]. In addition to her visual art practice, Anna has been developing a creative writing practice, which she says, ‘is becoming as important as the painting’ [AS,1:15]. But, she said, ‘I’m seen professionally as an artist as opposed to a writer. Those kind of things don’t come into it for the writing, it’s just a pure indulgence at the moment’ [AS,1:16].

B.18 Monique Tippett

Monique Tippett is an artist living with her husband and two children, and working from her workshop/studio, in the forestry town of Dwellingup in the Peel Region of Western Australia. She was born in Perth in 1971, her father (born in Burma to English parents) was an agricultural chemist, and her seamstress mother was the daughter of Hungarian immigrants. After a period studying at Business College and then doing secretarial work in insurance, Monique found that motherhood gave her the opportunity to really focus some attention on her art ‘[my husband] would help me on the weekend to get my timber bits ready and then during the week looking after the babies I’d just do my artwork on it, and it just kept me sane I think’ [MT,1:2]. She relocated the family to Dwellingup so that she could pursue her passion for timber at the Australian School of Fine Wood where she completed a Diploma of Art (Furniture Designer/Maker) (2002). In 2009 Monique completed the first year of a BA at Curtin University. At the time of interviewing, Monique had recently begun to earn a good income from public art commissions, though prior to this ‘whatever extra money I’ve made from my art has just been a bonus’ [MT,1:6]. Monique’s work was also represented by Jahroc Gallery in Margaret River.

Monique says that there are real advantages on a number of levels for her working in wood and living in Dwellingup, ‘just moving up here, the forest just took over,’ [MT,1:11] from earlier influences such as Art Deco and Art Nouveau. In relation to public art commissions, she says that ‘I get the comment a lot actually, that the reason why I have gotten some of these jobs is because there’s not many wood artists out there’ [MT,1:32]. Also, she says, ‘I’m in a very lucky position, I love wood and I live in Dwellingup and I’ve got the means to get these things out of the forest, but I would never chop down a tree, so I’m conscious about that’ [MT,1:33]. On the other hand, she says, ‘there’s […] not many artists [in Dwellingup], not ones that actually are serious and making a living out of their art, […] no one who wants to put in any work in the arts community here’ [MT,1:24].
About her practice Monique says, ‘I joke that I should do watercolours or something because it would be much easier on my neck and my back, [...] but I just love my wood, even if I’m two days out the workshop, I’m just ready to get straight back in there’ [MT,1:31-32]. However, for many woodworkers and the course at the School of Wood, the emphasis is on spotting, ‘a fault from across the room, making boxes, doing dove-tailed joints; it’s just so limiting’ [MT,1:25]. Going on she says, ‘you can get other people to chop up bits of wood for you, but [...] you’re missing that creative process which makes artwork different’ [MT,1:32]. This creative process for her often involves, ‘making [...] maquettes because they’re quick, so [...] a lot of times, instead of sketching and stuff like that, [...] I prefer to make a model and [...] then it goes up on my wall and that’s when I can stare at it and I can morph it into other things,[...] so I just make it as I feel’ [MT,1:7]. For Monique, such intuitive creative processes result in art works that reward her with ‘twice the amount of money and satisfaction’ [MT,1:25], than can be achieved through ‘nice joinery’ executed in more craft-based products, such as furniture.
B.19 Cecile Williams

Cecile Williams is an artist based in an eco-village community near the town of Denmark in the Great Southern Region of Western Australia, where she lives with her partner who is creatively involved in audio visual work. She was born in 1966 in South Perth to artistic parents and understood from an early age that creative practice was a worthy pursuit and a viable source of income. She has Diplomas in Graphic Design (1984) and Fine Art (1988) from Perth Tech and Claremont School of Art respectively. Her creative practice ranges across many art forms and she occupies many different roles in the different projects in which she is involved, including community art facilitator, theatre designer, puppet maker, environmental artist and so on. Whilst much of her time and energy is devoted to creative projects that earn her a living in collaborative and community situations, Cecile is also a sculptor and installation artist exhibiting a solo show roughly ‘every ten years […] but in between that I’m doing lots of other little things’ [CW,1:2].

Cecile says that, during an exchange to Basel in Switzerland, ‘I had a big changing point in my way of looking at art and wanted to be more involved in the community and saying more with my art’ [CW,1:2]. She could see, ‘what was behind it all, what was behind those names, and how to get into this and that, […] it didn’t feel right, didn’t sit right with me, and I didn’t really want to be part of it’ [CW,1:2]. Cecile says that ‘as I’ve been doing more and more over the years, I’ve been lucky to start doing things that I really want to do, rather than just taking on everything. So I’m actually focusing more in the way my art practice is going, to things that relate to it’ [CW,1:12]. But she also says whilst she has access to opportunities, ‘it’s not in the gallery circuit, because that’s another ball-game that I’m not really interested in. But I know […] if I wanted to go that way, that’s probably where I’d get more recognition, as in my own arts practice, but […] I’m having too much fun in all these other directions’ [CW,1:13].

Many of the short-term projects and funded residencies in which Cecile is involved require her to travel within Western Australia and often outside of the state, but she says, ‘I love going to new places and just getting inspired by these places and with that comes all these ideas […] I feel more inspired when I go away and do stuff over there,
than coming back’ [CW,1:3]. In particular these travels often provide her with new experiential and material resources for artworks. As she says, ‘I’m a bit of a scrounger for materials, I like the search, I like finding things and it’s definitely an area I’m interested [in], the process of getting to this endpoint. It’s more interesting for me, that process, and who I meet and where that leads me’ [CW,1:5]. She also says ‘I do want to talk more about the story, the journey, the finding material, than just a product to exhibit, I still want to somehow tell a story and it might involve other materials as well’ [CW,1:6].

B.20 Caitlin Yardley

Caitlin Yardley is a Western Australian artist working with painting and installation. She was born in 1984 in Ballarat, Victoria, but grew up in Perth, daughter of a former Church of Christ pastor and primary school principal. She completed studies at Edith Cowan University and has a BA (2004), a Grad. Dip. (2005) and a Masters (2007), all in visual arts. At the time of interviewing, Caitlin was soon to depart for the UK as she had been accepted and awarded funding to undertake further post-graduate studies in art practice at Goldsmith’s College in London. While she had had some successes selling work, and also in applying for funding from various sources, Caitlin’s primary source of reliable income was through teaching online courses in Art through the Open University. She did not have commercial gallery representation, though she had had access to subsidised studio spaces, and exhibited her work in artist-run galleries and contemporary arts institutions.

Despite the apparent single-mindedness of Caitlin’s pursuit of art school education, she suggests that in fact she hadn’t set out to become an artist, but rather, ‘across my six years of study, I turned into, or I changed my commitments and plans and… I seem to be an artist? It wasn’t conscious’ [CY,1:1]. She says, ‘I’ve always been so driven to apply for grants and things, […] because I want to be able to achieve it on my own and I think it’s a bit of flaw but, I also feel much […] prouder of the things I’ve achieved’ [CY,1:4]. She has a very strategic approach to the development of her career on many levels; ‘I made a decision when I went over east that if I’m going to move somewhere I want to study so that I am setting up relationships with peers and tutors and the things that worked for me here’ [CY,1:11].

Caitlin says that she is not ‘really interested in making paintings that are paintings’ [CY,1:7], as she relates, ‘I want one skin on the paintings and I don’t want the process and brush marks and all that crap to be part of what you look at […] I had a curator come into the studio the other day […] and she’d thought for years that my work was fabric and not paintings so, I kinda liked that I had removed a bit of standard painting’ [CY,1:8]. To create these works Caitlin works with liquid paints and her canvas on the floor, ‘I used to pour bands and now I’m working much more closely with pipettes and
dropping’ [CY,1:7], ‘making this one movement continuously for 8-12 hours but the other ones used to take longer, probably just because they were bigger’ [CY,1:8]. Whilst her work is process driven, it is also self-consciously dealing critically with art history and the history of the medium, in some cases by appropriating the dimensions of ‘men’s paintings that I’m not particularly impressed with how they represent women […] So, that’s my de Kooning works - I just took the scale of his works - and in a way that takes away one of the decisions in my work’ [CY,1:7].

Exhibit- 38: Caitlin Yardley, *Chromatic Titration*, 2010, oil in pipettes in mouth blown flasks, dimensions variable. Photographed by the artist
Appendix C: Contexts and Situations: Geographical Note

The purpose of this appendix is to provide readers unfamiliar with Western Australia with some basic information about the state to help in contextualising the situations of artists that have been described in the main body of the thesis.

C.1 History

The first recorded European sightings of the northern coast of what was then Terra Australis Incognita occurred around 1606, with the first European colony being established at Botany Bay (Sydney) on the east coast in 1788. Prior to this time, indigenous peoples had been the sole claimants and human occupants for around 40,000 years of what is now the Australian continent. The first recorded European contact with Western Australia occurred in 1616 when Dutch explorer Dirk Hartog landed at Shark Bay. The Swan River Colony, established by Admiral Sir James Stirling on the indigenous Nyoongar people’s traditional lands at the present day port of Fremantle in 1829, was the first European settlement in Western Australia.

C.2 Geography and Demography

Western Australia (WA) is the largest state in Australia and makes up approximately one-third of the Australian continent. With a total land area of 2,529,875 square kilometres (Landgate, n.d.), WA is roughly the same size as Western Europe (About Australia, n.d.) and approximately three and a half times the size of the state of Texas, USA (Virtual Australia, n.d.-b). Despite this huge land area, WA has a total population of just 2,451,400 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013) of whom more than 70% live in the metropolitan area of the state capital, Perth (Department of State Development, 2013, p. 5). (Approximately 64% of all Australians live in capital cities) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012a).

Throughout the period of this study WA has been in the grip of a so-called resources boom, with 270 operating mines in the state and the exploitation of large reserves of natural gas (About Australia, n.d.). In 2011-2012 mining accounted for 35% of the
state’s Gross Domestic Product, and the State accounted for 16% of the Australian Economy, above its 11% share of the national population (Department of State Development, 2013, p. 1). Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries are also key industries.

It has been claimed that Perth is the most isolated capital city in the world (Albanese, 2011). Whilst this distinction in fact belongs to Honolulu, Hawaii, it is true that Perth is a geographically isolated city, the nearest capital city, Adelaide, South Australia, being 2104km away (Virtual Australia, n.d.-a). Within WA, other large urban centres are significantly smaller than Perth, though Mandurah, just 70km to the south of Perth in the Peel region, has a rapidly growing population. WA’s overall population growth is the highest in the nation at 3.4% over the previous year in Sep 2012. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). Figure A-8 shows the nine regions of WA and the locations and populations of the key urban centres and towns.
Figure A-8: Map of nine regions of Western Australia showing major towns (Source: Department of Regional Development and Lands, n.d.)
Art galleries in Perth are not, for the most part, centrally located nor are they clustered close together around one or two streets in a discernible gallery district as is the case in some other cities. There is, however, a metropolitan corridor (marked in Figure A-9 with a red rectangle) along which many WA art galleries are located, stretching between Fremantle and Perth, within close proximity to Stirling Highway and passing through a number of Perth’s most affluent western suburbs. As an indication of this trend, of the 15 metropolitan commercial galleries from whose websites I collected CVs, only two were not located in this corridor: Emerge ARTSPACE being located just north of Perth’s central business district in another affluent suburb, Mount Lawley; and Gomboc Gallery being situated in Middle Swan, near the foothills, 20km north east of Perth. Amongst the first art galleries in Perth were Newspaper House Gallery (operating 1933-1950) and The Claude Hotchin Art Gallery (1947-1952) and the first commercial gallery was the Skinner Gallery (1958-1976) (City of Perth, 2009, p. 4). Outside of Perth, commercial art galleries tend to be associated with the tourist trade, and situated in key tourist centres, such as Margaret River in the South West Region of WA, and Broome in the Kimberley region.

In Western Australia, there are few museums and institutions dedicated to collecting art. Aside from the Art Gallery of Western Australia, major institutional collections include those of the five universities in WA, hospitals and the corporate collections of key Western Australian entrepreneurs, such as Janet Holmes á Court and Kerry Packer. Other key art institutions focused on exhibiting contemporary visual art, such as The Fremantle Arts Centre (FAC) and Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (PICA) are not collecting institutions. Another important source of patronage for Western Australian artists has been the Percent for Art Scheme, initiated by the Department of Culture and the Arts in 1989. Under this scheme, State Government capital works projects with an estimated total cost exceeding $2 million may be required to allocate up to %1 of the total cost to commission public artworks from Western Australian artists (Department of Culture and the Arts and Department of Housing and Works, 2003, p. 3).
C.4 Higher Education in WA

The number of creative arts graduates from Universities in Australia increased from 9337 in 1999 to 20884 in 2011 (Department of Industry, 2012). While this is only around 5% of University graduates Australia-wide, formal art education has increased significantly over the past decade. In Western Australia there are five Universities. All are situated in Perth although several have regional centres. The University of Western Australia (1913) is the oldest and most prestigious institution. Murdoch University (1974) was the second University established in Western Australia and has remained relatively small. Curtin University (1987) was previously the Western Australian Institute of Technology, formed in 1966. Edith Cowan University was formed in 1991 from the amalgamation of three teachers training colleges, the oldest dating to 1902.
Notre Dame University (1989) is the newest University in WA and, although a private institution, obtains some government funding.

Over the period 1999-2011 the number of award completions from Curtin University increased from 6 020 to 12 652 and it is currently the largest provider of University education in Western Australia ((Department of Industry, 2012)). In 2011, the last year for which complete statistics are available, Edith Cowan University had higher enrolments of creative arts students, however, similar numbers of students graduated from the two institutions (Table A- 17). These numbers only provide a snapshot of the current state of a dynamic tertiary education sector in Western Australia.

Table A- 17: Domestic student total enrolment, creative arts enrolments and completions in Western Australian Universities in 2011 (Source: Department of Industry, 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Total Enrolments</th>
<th>Creative Arts</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curtin University of Technology</td>
<td>27 456</td>
<td>1 103</td>
<td>446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith Cowan University</td>
<td>21 711</td>
<td>2 725</td>
<td>559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murdoch University</td>
<td>13 440</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of Notre Dame Australia</td>
<td>9 211</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>np</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of Western Australia</td>
<td>18 669</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other tertiary providers</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>np</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Documents Relating to the Interview Study

D.1 Information Letter Provided to Potential Participants

Dear ...........................................

Thank you very much for taking the time to consider participating in this PhD research project.

This letter is provided to you for the purposes of outlining the details of the PhD research project, *The Poet's Work: A study of Western Australian contemporary visual arts practices*, and inviting you to participate in this study. This letter will outline the background and aims of the study and make clear what the nature of your participation will entail in terms of procedures, time commitments, risks and benefits and so on.

Please read the following information carefully and don’t hesitate to contact me should you have further questions or require clarification of any aspects of the study and your potential involvement in it. If you are satisfied with the information provided and willing and able to participate in this research project in the manner described below, please sign the enclosed Informed Consent Form and I will be in touch regarding scheduling times for interviews.

The following is a student research project being undertaken as part of the requirements of a PhD at Edith Cowan University:

**The Poet’s Work: A study of Western Australian contemporary visual arts practices**

The key research personnel involved in the project are as follows:

**Principal Investigator (PhD Student)**
Duncan McKay  
Phone: 0422 100 055  
Email:  dmckay0@our.ecu.edu.au

**Principal Supervisor**
Dr Christopher Crouch  
Phone: 9370 6338

**Associate Supervisor**
Professor Lelia Green  
Phone: 9370 6204
Background

*The Poet’s Work* is a study that is seeking to add to our understanding of the work (the labour) of visual arts practice in a contemporary Western Australian context. Currently our governments and arts administrators consult research and reports that represent visual arts practices and the circumstances of artists in a very quantitative and economically motivated fashion. This research is seeking to collect a different kind of data, primarily qualitative, from individual artists. By obtaining and analysing this data this research will seek to compare and contrast the key values and understandings of artists’ work and circumstances as perceived by artists, with the key values and understandings that are represented in the research and reports consulted by those who administer policy and funding and monitor visual arts practices in WA.

Of particular importance to this study is to understand what it means to be a contemporary professional artist in WA? Does it mean that an artist is able to earn a living from their creative practice? Are there other important measures? It is hoped that the qualitative data collected by this study will enable the researcher to question some of the existing approaches to this problem and perhaps establish the groundwork for a better understanding of the nature of professional visual art practice in WA.

The final important aspect of this study is that it takes a sociological approach to the work (labour) of visual art practice. What this means is that the study is interested in seeking information from artists about how they create and present their work in a contemporary real-world context. The research wants to know how the material and social aspects of living and working as an artist in WA today interact with and affect the creative work that artists produce? Ultimately this research hopes to use some of this data to develop an understanding of some key features of the Western Australian context in which artists are working.

The Principal Investigator

Duncan McKay is an emerging Western Australian contemporary artist, with a background in studio practice and public exhibitions in WA. He has completed university studies and research in visual art at UWA (BFA (Hons.) 1995-1998)) and Curtin (MCA, 2001-2002) and now has been awarded a scholarship to undertake this significant research project towards a PhD at Edith Cowan University. Duncan has personal experience in creative visual arts practice, in the attempt to balance art and life, and the pursuit of opportunity as a young, early career artist in Perth. Through this research he seeks to question and develop existing understandings of what it is to work as an artist in WA today.

Why have you been approached to participate in this study?

One of the goals of this research is to collect data from a group of Western Australian artists that reflect the contemporary diversity of visual arts practices. In order to make
sure that this diversity is well represented in the group of artists interviewed, some simple criteria have been proposed in order to provide a preliminary map of the diversity of possible practices in WA. These criteria are stage of career, spaces of publication and media and processes and each of these criteria has a number of sub-criteria.

Very basically you have been approached to participate in this study because it is believed that you can offer a valuable perspective as an artist at a particular stage of career, working within a certain kind of media or conceptual approach, who exhibits/presents work in certain kinds of places in WA. You will be the only artist participating in this study who can offer perceptions and experiences from your professional vantage point, as it is anticipated that the other artists approached will be offering perspectives from different stages of career and/or media and processes and/or places of publications.

Please note that these proposed criteria are to a large degree speculative and, by practical necessity, applied prior to interviews. Once interviews have been completed and data analysed it may well be that the criteria, and/or the way that the research has classified your practice at the outset, on the basis of these criteria, may require revision.

**How did I find you?**

As a potential participant in this study you are a practicing Western Australian visual artist with at least some history of presenting your work to the public. It is primarily on the basis of this publicly accessible work that you have been selected as someone whose participation would be of great benefit to this research. In some cases I may also have received personal recommendations from peers and professional acquaintances who may have suggested that you would offer a valuable perspective for the project. In all cases I have worked backwards from this point of identifying you as a potential candidate to locate an appropriate means of making personal contact with you, either through your association with galleries or other organisations, or through personal and other professional contacts.

**What is involved in participating in interviews for this study?**

Time Commitment: Approximately 2 hours in total (2 x 1 hour interviews)

This study involves collecting data from participants through semi-structured in-depth interviews. I am seeking between 25 and 30 participants to take part in interviews for this study. These interviews are intended to draw upon the life-to-date experiences and perceptions of professional visual artists in relation to their work as artists.

Your involvement as a participant in interviews for this study will take the following form:

1. Prior to interviewing you, I will make an effort to view some of your exhibited artwork. As much as possible I am interested in seeing this work prior to being
exposed to any explanations or other information about the work and your intentions in creating it – I want to gain a first impression as a relatively uninformed observer and record this impression for later comparison and discussion in relation to the material gained through interviews etc. If it should prove difficult to access any of your work or images of your work via accessible published means (eg. exhibitions, publications, websites), I may approach you to assist me by providing access to some appropriate documentation of your creative work.

2. I would be grateful if you could provide me with a current professional CV (exactly as you would publish within an exhibition catalogue, or submit with an exhibition proposal or grant application etc), prior to commencing the interview process. This document will allow me to fill in some blanks about your background and activity as an artist without having to ask you about some of these details in the interviews. There is also a possibility that your CV may be looked at and analysed in the study as being one significant way that artists represent themselves publicly.

3. Following these preliminary steps I will then make contact with you in order to schedule the first interview. If you are agreeable and if possible I would like to interview you in your studio or creative workspace, for your comfort and convenience, and also to allow me (without being intrusive) to observe some aspects of the environment in which you do creative work. If you do not wish to be interviewed in your own studio space, or if this is not possible or inappropriate for other reasons, an alternative location can be decided upon for the interview. The interview can be scheduled for a time that suits you and is expected to take approximately one hour of your time.

4. Soon after the first interview has been done I will again contact you in order to schedule a time for a second interview. Once again, if you are agreeable and it is possible, I would like to conduct this interview in your studio or workspace at a time that suits you. I anticipate that this interview will also require approximately one hour of your time.

5. The last aspect of your involvement in the study is a consultation process in which I will communicate with you at various stages regarding the data collected from interviews with you etc, the findings of the data analysis as they relate to your data and the overall outcomes of the research. At all stages in this process you will have the opportunity to contact me about any concerns that you may have about the data and its presentation. In general this consultation will take the form of the researcher providing you with interview transcripts, summaries of findings and relevant excerpts from larger documents that you are able to read at your leisure and provide feedback on. As you will have signed a consent form for your participation in the study and the inclusion of your data prior to interviewing, unless I receive further communication from you I will understand that you are satisfied with the materials as presented for use in the final research. If you do have concerns or queries at any point in this
consultation process we can schedule a meeting to discuss these, and you always have the option of withdrawing your participation and data at any point.

What kinds of data will be collected from you? By what means?
For the most part the data sought from you will be about your own experiences, perceptions and attitudes in relation to the work that you do as an artist in Western Australia. Some questions may be asked in general terms concerning your financial, personal or family circumstances, the intention behind such questions is to compare these demographic circumstances with other artists and other workers in general, and all such personal data will be treated with great care and confidentiality. Because of the sociological approach taken by this research, some questions will be asked concerning your interpersonal and professional relationships and the ways that these affect your professional career and opportunities as an artist. As discussed in relation to confidentiality below, the opinions expressed and third parties identified in participants’ statements will be treated with great care and confidentiality for the protection of all parties. You are at liberty to choose not to answer any or all questions asked of you at any point in the interview or case study process.

Primarily the data collected throughout this research will be in the form of interviews and conversations recorded in a digital audio format. These voice recordings will then be transcribed myself and kept securely in an electronic text document form or a hard copy. In addition to this material the researcher may make notes during meetings or interviews, and may seek your permission to use other forms of documentation such as photographs taken in the studio and so on. Other documentation that is publicly available, such as exhibition catalogues, or that you have provided to me (such as your CV) may also be considered in the research.

What risks are involved in participating in this study?
There are very few risks in taking part in this study. These risks are related primarily to the disclosure of personal opinions and attitudes and the possible impact that such disclosure may have upon some professional and interpersonal relationships. In all instances you may decline to answer any or all of the questions asked of you and you may terminate your involvement at any time if you choose. In this project interviewed artists will not participate anonymously, but to reduce the risk of harm from disclosure, in instances where this is a concern, the data that artists provide will be included in the research so as to protect the identity of its source and other steps taken to minimise the possibility of harm to participants and third parties (see under Confidentiality below).

It is also possible that the kinds of qualitative data analysis (with a sociological intent) that the researcher will be engaging in may produce findings that artists had not previously envisaged emerging from the data that had been obtained from them. It is possible that such a situation could result in artists’ concerns about the misrepresentation of their professional practice and career. It is hoped that the transparent way in which this research project is to be conducted and the consultative
process that is integral to it will minimise the risk of any harm arising from such a situation.

**What are the benefits involved in participating in this study?**

There are few direct benefits to you for your participation in this study, with possible exception that you will be identified as an artist who has contributed important and significant data to this important study. Overall it is my hope that this study may provide the following benefits for WA artists and others:

1. It has the potential to highlight the inadequacy of the existing research and reports that are the principal means by which governments and arts administrators are currently informed about the circumstances and work practices of visual artists in WA.

2. It has the potential to identify particular aspects of the circumstances and work practices of WA visual artists that need to be captured in future research and reporting to better represent the visual arts before governments and arts administers.

3. As the first study of its kind, this study and the methods and approaches employed have the potential to serve as a trial run in collecting the kinds of data sought and may be a useful precursor to subsequent studies that will benefit greatly from the experiences of this study.

4. It has the potential to shed new light on the nature of visual art practice in contemporary WA and the context in which it occurs that could be useful in future research, cultural economics, art theory, policy and legislation and arts education as well as being of significant interest to artists themselves.

**Confidentiality**

Because you have been contacted to participate in this research as a visual artist working as a professional in the public realm, and because part of this research involves an engagement with your exhibited artwork, by which means you can be identified, your participation in this study will not generally be anonymous. Indeed it is considered beneficial to this study that your participation in this study be acknowledge by publishing your name in association with it so that subsequent researchers can assess the diversity and value of perspectives captured in the data addressed by this study.

Despite the fact that your name and identity as a participant in this research will not be concealed, it is nevertheless of utmost importance that your privacy, dignity and professional integrity, and that of others who may be named in the data that you provide, are maintained throughout your participation in this research project. For this reason the following steps will be taken with respect to confidentiality and privacy in this research project.
1. Artists who participate in this study will be identified in the research findings and in associated publications as having provided data for the study.

2. Artists who participate in this study will be identified in the research and its findings in instances where their creative work or specifically related creative practices are of significance to the research. This will be the case particularly when identification of the artist will add to the specificity and credibility of the data cited, without compromising personal privacy or professional integrity.

3. Where data obtained from artist-participants includes mention of third parties, or opinions and attitudes expressed in relation to third parties, the identities of those third parties will be protected by code names throughout the research documentation and the individual sources of cited comments will also be concealed for the protection of both participants and third parties.

4. Where general conclusions and patterns are drawn from across the breadth of data collected in this research it will often be unnecessary to cite the individual sources of specific data and the anonymity of participants in relation to their data will be maintained. In instances where it may be desirable to identify the sources of the data, specific consent for that identification will be sought from the artist.

5. Participants should take note that the identification of participant artists for parts of this research project but not others allows for the possibility that some informed readers may be in a position to deduce the origins of specific citations or data and the identities of third parties protected by code names. The minimal risks associated with the kinds of data disclosed and the imprecision of any such deductions means, however, that the privacy and well-being of participants and third parties will be well protected, by the proposed conduct of this research.

6. All interview recordings, transcripts and other non-public documentation obtained from interview participants will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the personal possession of the researcher, and/or in an electronic data storage device secured by a unique password.

7. When no longer required for this research all data and materials will be kept securely at ECU for at least the minimum period of 5 years to allow for the review the research by other researchers and interested parties, as per the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. At the end of such a period the collected data and material will be destroyed in keeping with university policies.

8. The principal investigator (Duncan McKay), the academic supervisors of the student research project (Dr Christopher Crouch and Prof. Lelia Green) and
other individuals within ECU who may be consulted or otherwise involved with regards to the oversight of the research project and its conduct will review the collected data.

9. Information from this research will be used solely for the purpose of this study and any publications that may result from this study.

How and where will the results of this research be published?

As a student research project, towards the completion of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Edith Cowan University, one of the forms in which the results of this research will be published will be as a doctoral thesis. There is also the potential that this research could also form the basis of conference papers, journal articles and subsequent publications of various kinds. In all instances the same care will be exercised, as discussed in relation to confidentiality above, with regards to identifying participants, and concealing the identities of third parties and the sources of potentially harmful comments and opinions.

Participants will receive copies of interview transcripts, summaries of findings and excerpts from the thesis, relating to the data that they have provided over the course of the project, and be invited to respond to these as a part of the consultative process that is designed to ensure that all parties are satisfied with the outcomes of their participation in the research. In addition, for participants who express an interest I can provide access to the final thesis, in electronic format, and am willing to provide a brief summary or overview of the findings and conclusions for those who do not wish to read the whole thesis.

On what basis will you be participating in this research?

You have been invited to participate in the research project as outlined above, on a voluntary basis. You are not required to provide any explanation or justification should you choose not to participate.

If you agree to participate in this research project as described above and are willing to sign an Informed Consent Form, you are free at any time to withdraw your consent to further involvement in the project. If your consent is withdrawn, no further data will be collected from you and all data previously collected will not be included in the research data, or contribute to the research findings and conclusions.

There will be no costs incurred by you or monetary rewards provided to you associated with your participation in this research project.

Questions and further information?

If you have any further questions or concerns about this research project please don’t hesitate to contact the researcher:
Duncan Mckay  
Phone: 0422 100 055  
Email: dmckay0@our.ecu.edu.au

**Independent Contact Person**

If you have any concerns or complaints about the research project and wish to talk to an independent person you may contact:

Research Ethics Officer  
Edith Cowan University  
270 Joondalup Drive  
JOONDALUP WA 6027  
Phone: (08) 6304 2170  
Email: research.ethics@ecu.edu.au
Dear ........................................,

Please find below a form seeking your informed consent for your participation in the following research project:

**The Poet’s Work: A study of Western Australian contemporary visual arts practices**

This is a student research project being undertaken as part of the requirements of a PhD at Edith Cowan University, Faculty of Education and Arts, School of Communication and Arts:

The key research personnel involved in the project are as follows:

**Principal Investigator (PhD Student)**
Duncan McKay  
Phone: 0422 100 055  
Email: dmckay0@our.ecu.edu.au

**Principal Supervisor**
Dr Christopher Crouch  
Phone: 9370 6338  
Email: c.crouch@ecu.edu.au

**Associate Supervisor**
Professor Lelia Green  
Phone: 9370 6204  
Email: l.green@ecu.edu.au

If you are satisfied with all of the below statements and willing and able to participate in research in the manner described, please sign and date the form and contact the Principal Researcher, Duncan McKay, on the contact details above and he will collect the completed form from you.

- I have been provided with a copy of the Information letter, explaining the research study and the nature of my involvement in the study as an Interview participant.
- I have read and understood the information provided.
• I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and all questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

• I am aware that if I have any additional questions I am able to contact the research team.

• I understand that participation in the Interviews associated with the research project will involve:
  
  o The researcher considering my published creative work as a part of the research data
  o My provision of a professional CV to the researcher to be included in the research data
  o Two interviews of one hour in length in my art studio, or another location agreed upon with the researcher.

• I understand that interviews and discussions with the researcher may be recorded using digital audio recording equipment

• I understand that I will be identified as an artist who has participated in this research project

• I understand that the information and materials that I have provided will be kept confidential and not disclosed without my consent

• I understand how the information that I have provided is to be used for the purposes of this research project and any publications that may arise from it, and I understand that this information will only be used for this research project and any publications that arise from it.

• I understand that I am free to withdraw from further participation in this research project at any time, without explanation or penalty.

• I freely agree to participate in the project as described.

____________________________________
Participant’s Signature

Artists’ Name
D.3 Interview Guide (First Interview) and Demographic Questions

The Poet’s Work: A study of Western Australian Contemporary Visual Art Practices

Duncan McKay
PhD Candidate, Edith Cowan University

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Name of Artist: ________________________________________________

Interview Conducted by: ________________________________________

Date of Interview: _____________________________________________

Location of Interview: __________________________________________

Additional Materials Accessed:

☐ CV

☐ Creative Work viewed__________________________________________

________________________________________________________________}

________________________________________________________________}

________________________________________________________________}

________________________________________________________________}

________________________________________________________________}

________________________________________________________________}
Demographic Questions for Interviews

1. Personal Details

1A. Artists’ Name ________________________________________________________

1B. Gender

☐ Male

☐ Female

1C. Year of Birth? ________________________________________________________

1D. Place of Birth? ________________________________________________________

1E. Year of arrival in WA (if applicable)? ________________________________

2. Cultural Background

2A. Indigenous Australian?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

2B. Non-English speaking cultural background?  ☐ No

☐ Yes ________________________________________________________

2C. Year of arrival in Australia (if applicable)? ______________________________

2D. Family’s arrival in Australia (if applicable)?  ☐ Came as an Adult (18+)

☐ Came as a Child

☐ Parents Immigrated  ☐ Grandparents Immigrated  ☐ Previous Generations Immigrated

3. Family Background

3A. Parents’ (or Guardians’) Main Occupations? Father ______________________________

Mother ______________________________

3B. Parents’ Highest Level of Education?

Father  ☐ Primary  ☐ Secondary  ☐ Post Secondary/Trade  ☐ Bachelors Degree

☐ Post Graduate Degree  ☐ Other ______________________________

Mother  ☐ Primary  ☐ Secondary  ☐ Post Secondary/Trade  ☐ Bachelors Degree

☐ Post Graduate Degree  ☐ Other ______________________________
### 4. Schooling – Non Art Related (as applicable)

#### 4A. Primary

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Years</th>
<th>Institution/Location</th>
<th>Level/Qualification</th>
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#### 4B. Secondary

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#### 4C. Post Secondary

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#### 4D. Bachelors Degree

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#### 4E. Post Graduate Degree

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#### 4F. Other

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<th>Institution/Location</th>
<th>Level/Qualification</th>
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5. Art Education and Qualifications

5A. Secondary

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5B. Post Secondary

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5C. Bachelors Degree

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5E. Other

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6. Work/Employment History

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<tr>
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<th>Industry</th>
<th>Significant Positions</th>
<th>Main source of Income or Supplementary Income?</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

403
7. Household Circumstances

7A. Relationships?
- Single
- Cohabiting Partner/Spouse
- Divorced/Separated
- Other __________________________

7B. Children and Dependents?
- No Children
- Independent Children

- Dependent Children
  - No. of Dependent Children? _______________________
  - Age of Youngest Dependent Child? ________________
  - Age of Eldest Dependent Child? ________________

- Other Dependents ______________________________________________________

7C. Residential Arrangements?
- Home Owner
- Renting
- Sharing
- Boarding
- Other __________________________

7D. Current Employment Status?
- Working Full-time
- Working Part-time
- Casual Work
- Retired
- Pension
- Unemployed
- Other __________________________

7E. Other Sources of Household Income?
- Rent or Board
- Earning
- Partner/Spouse
- Other __________________________

7F. Partner/Spouse’s Occupation (if applicable)? __________________________
Semi Structured Interview Questions

1. Could you tell me about how you came to identify yourself as an artist?
   - Natural abilities and inclinations
   - Education/training
   - Moments of confirmation, self-recognition
   - Recognition, acknowledgement of artistic identity in public sphere

2. How do you gauge the success (or otherwise) of your work as an artist?
   - Successful creative work
   - Successful exhibitions
   - Career/professional success

3. In your career as an artist to date, what personal and circumstantial conditions have had the most impact upon your achievements and levels of success?
   - Interpersonal and social relationships
   - Mentors, education and training
   - Material and economic circumstances
   - Mechanisms of acknowledgement and recognition, the distribution of opportunity
   - Personal, family circumstances
4. Could you tell me something about your process of developing a new body of work or a creative project?

- Acquisition of ideas, inspiration and impetus for the work
- Role of media, skill-base, technical knowledge
- Editorial and critical processes
- Practicalities, audiences, logistics; roles in shaping the work
- Processes of negotiation and compromise
- Assessment of outcomes

5. Are there any particular artistic or other influences that you consider especially significant for your creative work?

- Theoretical/conceptual
- Practice/technical
- Political/social
- Environmental/material
- Personal
6. Can you tell me how you earn a living and how this is related to your art practice?

- *Time allocation*

- *Income and material resources*

- *Arts/non-arts work*

- *Feelings about this*
D.4 Letter to Participants Seeking Final Approval of Interview Material

Dear ......................................................,

I am writing today to let you see how I would like to make use of the invaluable material that I collected during my interviews with you in late 2011 and early 2012. Thank you for your participation in this project and patience in waiting to see something tangible from your generous contribution.

From the 20 participants who took part in this project I recorded nearly 40 hours of dialogue, this worked out to be 343,000 transcribed words. It has been an enormous task to work out how to deal with all of this fascinating material, which is why it has taken me many months to get to this point, and what I have produced has only really scratched the surface of the valuable information that I have collected. I hope to do more with this after completing the PhD.

As promised at the outset of the project, I am sending you the drafted complete text of the thesis sections in which I have made use of quotations from the interviews. Please bear in mind that this is still a draft and may be subject to some editing and changes to make the document clearer and more concise. Originally I was also intending to send the full transcripts of your interviews, but this would mean sending you a total of around 70,000 words – so I will send the transcripts only if you request them. I recognise that the documents that I am sending are very large, and also written for academic purposes – so they may not be easy reading - but I have done this consciously for several reasons:

1. Because of the style of the writing and the way that quotations have been incorporated into the text, it is impractical to separate out just the material of relevance to each artist.

2. Because seeing the quotation in relation to the surrounding material and the interpretations that I have made will enable you to make better assessments of the way that I have used your material.

3. Because you may be interested in a preview of the overall picture of the labour of visual art in WA developed through this study. While I hope that the PhD thesis won’t be the only form in which findings from this study are presented, this draft document is really the first opportunity for me to show you what the study has produced.

However, because you are also a busy professional with many other things on
your plate, I have also tried to make it as easy as possible for you to quickly find just the material that is relevant to you.

1. Though participants in the study will be identified in the final thesis, I have de-identified all of the material in these documents that has been quoted from artists, other than you, who have participated in the study. This is to maintain confidentiality until all artists have approved the material in the document – your material has been de-identified in the versions of this document that other artists are looking at.

2. All of the quotations and references to you and your contributions to the study will be clearly identified and highlighted in the text, so if you wish, you will simply be able to scan through the documents and read the highlighted sections only and their immediate contexts. (I have not highlighted the profile at the end of the documents, as this is solely about you and contains only your material) (Quotes highlighted in pink, rather than yellow, have been drawn from your interviews, but because of their potentially sensitive nature I have presented them in a de-identified form, withholding their source)

As I am now going to be submitting the thesis for examination in July, could I please request that you do several very important things for me at this stage and in the next few weeks?

1. Could you please reply to this email promptly and acknowledge receipt of the attached documents, or let me know if you have any issues with accessing the documents? If I don’t receive a reply I may email again or call you in the near future.

2. In order to save a small forest I have attached the draft documents here in electronic form, but if you would prefer me to send you a hardcopy in the post, please don’t hesitate to let me know, along with the appropriate postal address and I will send you a printed copy.

3. Please read at least the highlighted sections of the document that relate to the quotations from your interviews, and also read the attached artist profile that I will be including as an appendix in the thesis, along with one of the images you have supplied me with?

4. If you have any concerns about these documents, the quotations I have selected and the way that they have been used in the text could you please contact me as soon as possible and let me know about your concerns (by either replying to this email or calling me on 0422 100 055). I have tried to be sensitive and exercise care in the way that I have dealt with the material, but there are several ways we can approach any
concerns that may arise:

- If you simply wish to clarify what you actually said in the context of the interview, I am very happy to send you the full interview transcript/s to look up the quotation.
- If you are concerned about being the identified source of the quoted material it is possible that certain quotes can be de-identified and your identity as the source can be withheld. (In a few cases I have already withheld the sources of quotations)
- If you are concerned that the quotation (identified or de-identified) may be damaging in any way to you or to others it is possible for particular quotations to be withdrawn from the document altogether.
- If you have concerns generally about the use of your material within this research, please let me know and I will make a time to meet with you to discuss this further.
- As stipulated from the outset, you also have the option to withdraw your participation from the project altogether, in which case all quotations and material collected from you will not be included in the study and will be destroyed.

5. If you are happy with the document as it stands, and the ways in which I have quoted you, please contact me as soon as possible and let me know that this is the case (by replying to this email or by phone: 0422 100 055).

6. If I do not have a response from you by the 17th of May indicating that you have concerns about my use of your interview material I will proceed on the assumption that you are happy with my use of your material.

7. I will send out a reminder two weeks prior to this deadline if you haven’t already responded by that stage.

8. If you have other prior commitments that will make it difficult to look at these documents at some time prior to the 17th of May, please contact me and we can discuss other viable alternatives (bearing in mind that my July deadline for thesis submission isn’t flexible).

It is my hope that you will be happy with my use of the quoted material and that the conceptual model that I have produced through my analysis of the interviews will resonate on some level with your own experiences as a professional creative practitioner in Western Australia. Of course, any failings in this conceptual model are a product of my own analysis of the material and are not a reflection upon any of the artists who have generously given their time and shared their experiences with me. I see this study as a first attempt to develop a different kind of understanding of the work that artists do. There is
always scope to build upon these beginnings, to refine and to collect more and different kinds of material from artists.

I look forward to hearing from you in the short term to confirm that you have received this email and the attached documents. I also look forward to hearing from you before the 17th of May so that I can proceed with confidence that all required changes have been made and that all participants are happy with the included material as of that date.

Many thanks again for your time and your generous participation in this project. Please don’t hesitate to contact me should you have any questions concerns about the information in this email, or about any other aspects of this study at this stage.

Kind regards,

Duncan McKay

PS. The thesis title has been changed from 'The Poet's Work' to:

"Drawing from artists’ lives: An empirical study of the situation and realisation of professional visual art practices in the Western Australian field of cultural production"
Appendix E: Documents Relating to the CV Study

E.1 Initial Inductive Coding Employed

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<tr>
<td>EXH</td>
<td>Galleries and Exhibition opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDU</td>
<td>Education and Training, Qualifications and Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWA</td>
<td>Prizes and Awards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM</td>
<td>Commissions and Successful Tenders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRA</td>
<td>Grants, Scholarships, Fellowships, Residencies etc</td>
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<td>PUB</td>
<td>Publications</td>
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<table>
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<th>Value</th>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<td>S = Solo</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>G = Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>PG = Other Postgrad</td>
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<td>Eo = Other Education/Qualifications</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>C = Commended</td>
<td>Name of Competition</td>
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<td>P1 = 1st Prize</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P2 = 2nd etc</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>N = Nomination</td>
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<td>PA = Public Art</td>
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<td></td>
<td>O () = Other (C= Catalogue, W = web, M = Media, J = Journal, B = Book, O = Other)</td>
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**E.2 Initial Inductive Coding Employed (Continued)**

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<td></td>
<td>PR = Private</td>
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<td>WRK</td>
<td>A(co) = Art, Community Work</td>
<td>Employer/organisation Status</td>
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<td>A(cu) = Art, Curatorial Work</td>
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<td>A(Ts) = Art, Teaching Schools</td>
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<td>A (tec) = Art, Technical Roles</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A (pr) = Art, projects and festivals</td>
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<td>M = Membership</td>
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E.3 Data Entry Worksheet Template for Transposition and Coding of CV Data

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<td>Video/Film</td>
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<td>New Media/Digital</td>
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