

*An Investigation of The Role Of The Felt Sense In
Art Therapy*

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*“When inward tenderness finds the secret hurt,
Pain itself will crack the rock,
And ah! Let the soul emerge”*
(Rumi)

Abstract

This thesis takes the form of an extended literature review in which the reader can journey with the researcher in what hopes to be an interesting and subjective exploration. The aim of this investigation is to place an understanding of the ‘felt sense’ in the context of art therapy and to make connections between the theoretical frameworks of depth psychology and their place in the application of art therapy. The ‘felt sense’ in art therapy does not have a long tradition of empirical research within art therapy. Therefore this research is viewed in a broader general context, which involves a description of the researchers exploration of the literature. In each chapter the researcher will explore a theme, summarizing, synthesizing and at times critiquing the relevant literature. The concern of this exploration is to view the attributes of the felt sense and in doing so to explore relevant connections to its role in art therapy.

Table Of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	<i>page numbers</i>
Developing My Research Question.....	4-6
The Images.....	6
 <i>Methodology</i>	
Literature Review.....	7-8
Limitations Of The Methodology.....	8
 <i>Chapter One</i>	
<i>The Felt Sense</i>	
	9
Why Focus On The Felt Sense In Therapy.....	10-11
Defining The Felt Sense	12-15
Psychological And Physiological Elements Of The Felt Sense	16-20
The Felt Sense And Creativity	21-25
 <i>Chapter Two</i>	
<i>Individuation</i>	
	26
Jung's Theory Of Individuation.....	26-27
Typology Of The Personality	28-32
Active Imagination	33-34
Process work.....	35
The dream body	36-38
Body wisdom	39-40
Medusa	40-41
 <i>Chapter Three</i>	
<i>The Felt Sense In Art Therapy</i>	
	42
Deep listening	43-46
Focus Orientated Art Therapy.....	47-49
The Implicit nature of the felt sense and art therapy.....	50-52
 <i>Findings And Recommendations</i>	
	53
Hypothesis of Chapters.....	54-55
Conclusion	56-58
Word Count.....	58
Bibliography	59-66
Appendices	67-83

Introduction

“So I began to have an idea of my life, not as the slow shaping of achievement to fit my preconceived purposes but as the gradual discovery and growth of a purpose which I did not know”

(Marion Milner, A life of Ones Own 1986, 87)

Developing My Research Question

This research has developed and metamorphosed quite organically however its beginnings are rooted in my background in the social sciences and my initial interest of wanting to contribute to the lack of evidence based research within the art therapy literature. The original idea was to take a quantitative approach to explore the effects of single session art therapy sessions on symptoms common to palliative care patients. I was working two days a week in a hospice for my final year of clinical placement experience. In my exploration of the research on single session art therapy in palliative care I found that there was interesting results in relation to patient symptom reductions and that more research was needed. I also wanted to explore the idea of using a directive theme based approach that could potentially increase the validity of the study. Therefore one of the aims of the study was to identify a method for brief therapy interventions for art therapists working in palliative care settings.

On further exploration of the literature I came across the work of Laury Rappaport who had developed a method called FOAT, focus orientated art therapy. I contacted the author and she agreed to mentor me through this process. I submitted a research proposal to the board of directors at the hospice. However, two months later I received a letter saying that the timing of the proposed research was not suitable as they had just moved to new premises and that I could not proceed with the research.

I was back to the drawing board and found myself reflecting on where both my personal experience as a trainee art therapist and the literature had taken me to this point. I was brought back to the idea of working with the felt sense in art therapy. However it appeared that there was a limited number of specific art therapy sources dealing with the felt sense.

In reviewing the literature I found that while there had been explorations of the focusing method in relation to the creative therapies the only research that had been conducted by an art therapist was by Laury Rappaport (2008). Previous to this there had been some research conducted by focusing therapists in relation to experiential focusing through drawing (Leijssen 1992) and collage work (Ikemi et al, 2007). Other authors have also explored the applications of focusing in relation to play therapy (Marder, 1997, Murayama et al, 1988,) and inter modals of expressive therapy (Knill, 2004, Klagsburg et Al.) which all demonstrated positive therapeutic outcomes.

Through investigating the work of Laury Rappaport I had begun to touch upon the theoretical frameworks of Joseph Gendlin and the idea of the 'felt sense'. This became a signpost on a journey that led me deeper into the question of the role of the bodily experience of the 'felt sense' as experienced in art therapy and the connection between mind and body. Through exploring definitions of the psychological and physiological elements of the felt sense I came across the writings of Peter Levine who made reference to the metaphorical relationship of the felt sense to the myth of Medusa. This anchored my search into the world of imagery and I then began to explore Jungian Archetypal psychology. The myth of Medusa explored relevant themes including the relationship/ polarity between mind & body, heart & head, emotion and action.

This myth lead me from Jungian Archetypal psychology sources to the theoretical frameworks of Carl Jung's theories of individuation, typology of the personality and active imagination. I then began to explore the work of Arnold Mindells process orientated psychology and the idea of working with the proprioceptive channel. These theoretical models became the backdrop to this investigation into the role of the

felt sense in art therapy.

Finally then, in my investigation of the literature around the felt sense and art therapy I came across an interesting link between a deep listening training and the felt sense in the Ma training for art therapists in Ireland. This grounded my investigation of the ‘the felt sense’ into art therapy. I returned to the work of Laury Rappaports, Focus Orientated Art Therapy as a method to access the felt sense and the innate experience of the felt sense that she identified as being an integral part of art therapy. I further investigated this argument by looking at an article by James Hillman on the image sense and the work of Art therapist Shaun Mc Niff. This is the final link that is made in this exploration of the literature on the felt sense as experienced in art therapy.

This thesis takes the form of an extended literature review in which the reader can journey with the researcher in what hopes to be an interesting and subjective exploration. The aim of this investigation is to place an understanding of the felt sense in the context of art therapy and to make connections between the theoretical frameworks of depth psychology and their place in the application of art therapy. In each section the researcher will explore a theme, summarizing, synthesizing and at times critiquing the relevant literature.

As Gendlin himself said “one reason why research is so important is precisely that it can surprise you and tell you that your subjective convictions are wrong. If research always found what we expected, there wouldn’t be much point in doing research” (Gendlin, 2003, 5). With this in mind and the benefit of the knowledge of previous research I endeavoured to embark upon my investigation of the literature with a curious, open and accepting mind as to what could arise.

The Images

Throughout this thesis at the beginning of various sections the researcher has included images from personal art work that are representative in some way of the topic being discussed. See Appendix 5 for visual bibliography of quotations used and See Appendix 6 for Artists Reflexivity on all images within this thesis.

Methodology

"I began to wonder whether eyes and ears might not have a wisdom of their own"

(Marion Milner, 1986, 80)

The chosen methodology for this thesis is an extended literature review. This is a hermeneutic approach to research, which is inherently subjective. It is a means of understanding how we make sense of the world, a dialectical process that moves back and forth between the interpreters presumptions and what the data actually reveal. This thesis is a description of the researchers exploration of the felt sense in art therapy, which includes references to both implicit and explicit theoretical approaches.

"Implicit theories are constructions by people that reside in the minds of these people. They thus constitute peoples folk psychology. Such theories need to be discovered rather than invented because they already exist, in some forms in people's heads. Discovering such theories can be useful in helping to formulate the common cultural views that dominate thinking about a given psychological construct, for example, whatever it is that renders descriptions of Solomon as wise, Einstein as intelligent and Milton as creative. Understanding implicit theories can also help us understand or provide bases for explicit theories. The latter generally provide a deeper understanding of psychological phenomena, although sometimes a less broad one" (Sternberg, 1990, 142).

Explicit theories are constructions of psychologists or other scientists that are based on or at least tested on data collected from people performing tasks presumed to measure psychological functioning. These are theories that form the basis for countless articles in the various journals of psychology. Explicit theories derive in a large part, from implicit theories of scientists formulating explicit theories. To understand current explicit theories fully, one would want to understand the implicit theories from which they derive" (Sternberg, 1990, 143).

One of the main reasons for choosing this methodology is because the felt sense in art therapy does not have a long tradition of empirical research. Therefore this research of exploring the felt sense in art therapy is viewed in a broader general context, which involves a description of the researchers exploration of the literature. The concern of this exploration is to view the attributes of the felt sense and in doing so to explore relevant connections to its role in art therapy.

Methodological Limitations

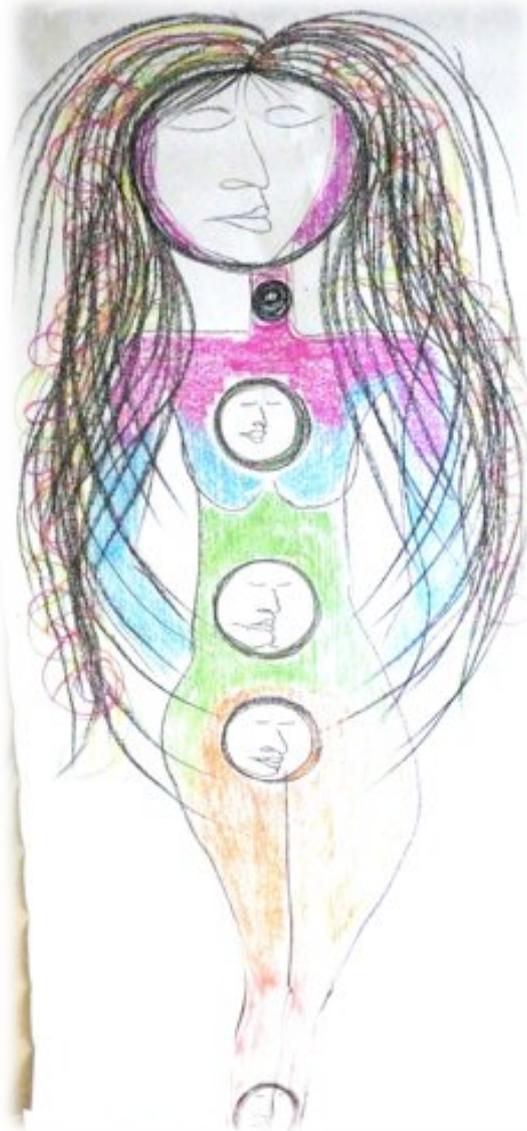
This thesis is taking a hermeneutic approach to the research, which acknowledges and works with particular perspectives of an interpretation. However, according to Gilroy (2006) “hermeneutic research enables discoveries that can shift a disciplines discourse but their inherently subjective nature renders them suspect within the orthodox evidence paradigm” (2006, 104). Based on a literature review, this topic begs further primary research to source the basis for the validity of the views of existing research. Furthermore in relation to art therapy the author comments, that “the paradigm at large has to become significantly more inclusive than it is at the moment and that art therapists have to adapt its principles and precepts to a discipline specific framework that supports the development of pluralistic research in art therapy” (Gilroy, 2006, 104).

Chapter One

The Felt Sense

“... As soon as I began to study my perception, to look at my own experience, I found that there were different ways of perceiving and that the different ways provided me with different facts. There was a narrow focus which meant seeing life as if from blinkers and with the centre of awareness in my head; and there was a wide focus which meant knowing with the whole of my body, a way of looking which quite altered my perception of whatever I saw.”

(Marion Milner, 1987)



Why Focus On The Felt Sense In Therapy?

*“By a simple self chosen act of keeping my thoughts on one thing instead of dozens,
I had found a window opening out across a new country of wide horizons and
unexplored delights”*

(Marion Milner, 1986, 94)

An investigation into the literature around the ‘felt sense’ provided the researcher with an evidence-based understanding of how this method can be beneficial within therapeutic interventions and a deeper understanding of theoretical frameworks influencing this approach. The felt sense was coined by philosopher, Eugene Gendlin (1981) emerging from research with Carl Rogers (1961) (creator of person/client centred psychotherapy) on what led to success in psychotherapy. Coming from the philosophical tradition of Dilthey, Dewey, Merleau-Ponty and McKeon, Gendlin developed a Philosophy of the "Implicit" and applied it to the work Rogers was doing (Hendricks, 2001). From this interaction came a further theory of personality change (Gendlin, 1964) and psychotherapy (Gendlin, 1996). This involved a fundamental shift from looking at what the client discusses (content) to the how the client is relating to experience (process).

The hypothesis was that clients who are more successful in therapy demonstrate an increasing ability to refer directly to bodily felt experience. The research conducted at this time found that Clients who began therapy already able to speak from their inner experience had better outcomes than those that started without this same experience (Hendricks, 2001). Gendlin developed a series of six instructions called Focusing as a specific way to teach people how to access what he calls ‘the felt sense’. See Appendix 1.

Gendlin describes this method as a mind/body tool that involves inviting the patient to listen in a gentle way to the body’s sense of an issue, situation or experience (Gendlin, 1981). Over 60 research studies since the 1960’s have suggested that focusing improves measures of individual psychotherapeutic outcomes (Hendricks, 2001) demonstrating that subjects achieved an improved ability to process and resolve emotional and psychological issues in their lives (Gendlin, 1981, Grindler, 1991;

Shiraiwa, 1999, Pettinati, 2002, Klagsbrun, et al., 1999, 2001, 2005, 2010). Gendlin found that clients who naturally accessed their inner experience beyond the cognitive mind were the ones who demonstrated successful changes (Rapport, 2009, 16). Such findings have been influential in the researchers current aims to investigate further how the felt sense is experienced in art therapy.

Another article written by Gendlin (1970) that was influential in the researchers decision to work with the felt sense discusses how researchers face problems in the relationship between psychological and physiological variables. According to Gendlin depending on our theoretical orientation we may approach the field feeling that psychological factors always involve somatic ones or in the case of physical illness that it is psychological factors that are affecting the body. However, he says, “we must recognize that both are true” (1970,8). Gendlin argues that by changing the concept of "body," "soma," or "organism" to include more than physio-chemical structures and the concepts of “psychotherapy,” “psyche” or “subject” to include more than psychic contents “psychology will cease to be ghostly and physiology will cease to be mechanical” (1970,12). Gendlin concludes that if we deny the split between physiology and psychology then we continue to “go our separate ways” (1970,8) and offers the suggestion of asking the question of “what is an operational way of pursuing this unity of mind and body?” (1970,8).

This current research is not undertaking an investigation of the causal effects of somatic and psychological problems. However it is examining the role of the felt sense in art therapy and it could be argued that this is one operational way of pursuing the unity of mind and body. The researcher also makes links between the felt sense and the theoretical frameworks of Carl Jung’s (1969) personality type theory and the Jungian based process orientated therapy developed by Arnold Mindell (1984) which are discussed in later chapters.

Defining The Felt Sense

“It will mean walking in a fog for a bit, but it is the only way which is not a presumption, forcing the self into theory”

(Marion Milner, 1986, 87)

There is a large volume of published studies that make reference to the ‘felt sense’ since it was first coined by Eugene Gendlin (1981). Gendlin described ‘the felt sense’ (1981, 32) as a physical experience and not as a mental one. The author describes this as “a bodily awareness of a situation or person or event” (1981, 32). According to Gendlin “the felt sense doesn’t come to you in the form of thoughts or words or other separate units, but as a single bodily experience” (1981, 33). Gendlin describes an inner aura that encompasses everything you know and feel about a given subject at a particular moment that is communicated all at once rather than detail by detail. In an attempt to explain this further the author invites the reader to imagine two people that they may know in their lives and notice the difference as they think of each one. Gendlin makes the point that if you are to think of someone that you know millions of bits of data “aren’t delivered to you one by one but that they are given to you all at once as bodily felt” (1981, 33). The idea of the felt sense challenges the idea that the unconscious lies in the realm of the mind.

According to Gendlin “Any situation, any problem or task or decision – anything, has a great many facets. It is not merely what we say of it. In the example you could say various ways of handling the situation, with their pros and cons. You could describe the situation and its background, what led up to it. You could say some of your aims with it. You could write a fairly long analysis. There would be much more than you can think at once. Even so you would omit thousands and thousands of facets of the situation, which you have never separated and named, and never will. The felt sense includes all of these together” (1981, 14).

Gendlin goes on to clarify that “the felt sense is not an emotion” (1981, 34) saying that it is more complex, bigger and less easy to describe. Furthermore the author argues that because the felt sense doesn’t communicate itself in words, it isn’t easy to describe in words” (1981, 33). However, having said that, Gendlin does elucidate the felt sense further incorporating the use of words and imagery into the focusing method. For example in the third step of focusing there is an invitation to find a quality, a word, a phrase or an image to describe the felt sense. In this method of focusing “when a word or picture is right” (1981, 57) it is called a handle. According to Gendlin “we will know that this handle is right as the whole felt sense stirs just slightly and eases a little” (1981, 57). The exact instructions for focusing are beyond the scope of the current discussion but are referenced and briefly outlined in appendix 1.

In a later article Gendlin discusses terms for approaching the interface between natural understanding (the felt sense) and logical formulation (words and language). Gendlin refers to the many essential functions in language, which are performed by the subjective side. This article goes into detail on three interface terms, which Gendlin uses to describe the individual and unique experience of metaphor and all word use. In relation to this individuality and uniqueness of use and interpretation Gendlin argues, “although seeming commonalities can be taken as just patterns, they can function in other ways and often do” (1995, 1). It could be argued that this explains further the difficulties that Gendlin originally wrote about when describing the felt sense through words.

However it can also be argued that language can gage something of this experience. According to Donned Stern (1997) “If we pay close attention, there is often a sensation of something coming before language. Whatever this is, it cannot be worded, though sometimes, after the fact, we feel that it was there. We often have the sense that the words we use “fit” the shape of what we wanted to say, or do not fit. There is always a vague meaning-shape, a proto-meaning - that precedes what we say, and by which we gage our success in expressing ourselves” (1997, 37).

David Abram in his review of the work of the phenomenologist (study of the structure of experience) Maurice Merleau Ponty comments on the author’s writings on the phenomenology of perception. As mentioned earlier Merleau-Ponty was part of the

philosophical tradition that influenced Gendlin's work. In a chapter entitled "the body as expression and speech" Merleau-Ponty argues that we firstly learn new words and phrases through their expressive texture and tonality, through how they roll off the tongue or feel in our mouths and that therefore communicative meaning is first incarnate in the gestures by which the body spontaneously expresses feelings and responds to changes in its affective environment. Merleau-Ponty argues that this is not an arbitrary sign that we mentally attach to feeling and emotion but rather that the gesture itself is the bodying forth of that emotion into the world. Abram describes this as "a direct, felt significance" (1996, 75) which even in its wording is similar to what Gendlin calls the felt sense.

Therefore it could be viewed that this is similar to what Gendlin describes as the felt sense, which forms inside the body prior to language. Furthermore the theories of Merleau-Ponty on the nature of experience are congruent with Gendlin's view that the use of language to elucidate the felt sense is limiting. Abram summarises Merleau-Ponty's theories of linguistic meaning as being "rooted in the felt experience induced by specific sounds-shapes as they echo and contrast with one another, each language a kind of song, a particular way of "singing the world" (1996, 76). There is an on-going discourse within art therapy as to the significance of the verbal and non-verbal aspects of the therapeutic encounter. Perhaps there is room within this discussion to return to the philosophical theories of Merleau-Ponty and the nature of experience.

Furthermore, Gendlin refers to his original writings on the felt sense and clarifies that "the felt sense is a direct referent, that its implicit meaning is not copied by, or equal to its explication, but rather carried forward by explication" (1995, 1). This could be linked to the art therapy process where it is also viewed that the image has the potential to bring to consciousness and move forward something of the client's inner experience. The idea has been put forward in the art therapy literature that the image itself is a sensation of something coming before language making up what is called the non-verbal communication of art therapy (Schaverian 1992, Case and Dalley 2006, Mc Niff 1992).

When describing the felt sense Gendlin states that at times it is so vague it almost disappears and at other times it “bursts to the surface” (1981, 38). It is this change in the felt sense that Gendlin describes as a body shift and it is this shift, which according to the research on focusing is what brings about improved therapeutic outcomes. According to Gendlin this shift feels good and “it always has that easing and sometimes very beautiful sensations of bodily release” (1981, 39). The author gives the example of it feeling like an exhalation after holding the breath. Gendlin goes on to explain that this shift takes place from two sources. The first of which is “knowledge that is now made available to the conscious mind” (1981, 39) which could result in some form of solution to a problem. The second according to Gendlin is more important which is when “the body shift makes your whole body different”(1981, 40).

Psychological And Physiological Elements Of The Felt Sense

*“Why had no one told me that the function of ‘will’ might be to stand back, to wait,
not to push”*

(Marion Milner, 1986, 102)

In an attempt to further explore and define the felt sense the researcher will review a section of Peter Levine’s book “Waking the Tiger, Healing trauma” which offers the reader an explanation of both psychological and physiological elements of the felt sense. Levine as both a biological physicist and a psychologist examines why animals in the wild are rarely traumatized and relates this to the human experience of trauma and trauma recovery. In relation to the latter Levine offers the reader a series of exercises to help focus on bodily sensations, which he describes as the felt sense. While this review makes a brief reference to one of these exercises the main objective in this research is to further define the felt sense. At the researchers discretion there is also a hypothesis as to how this could be linked to art therapy. Furthermore, the researcher also makes comparisons between Gendlin’s work and Levine’s explanations of the felt sense as described in the previous section.

For example Levine parallels Gendlin’s view that the felt sense is “a difficult concept to define with words” (Levine, 1997, 67). However Levine offers the explanation that this is because “language is a linear process and the felt sense is a non-linear experience” (Levine, 1997, 67). Furthermore according to the author this explains how dimensions of meaning are lost when an attempt is made through language to articulate an experience of the felt sense. However having said this Levine does attempt to articulate the felt sense further through what he defined as the ‘linear experience’ of language.

Levine puts forward the argument that experiences can be experienced as individual parts, in duality or as a whole and describes the felt sense as a “medium through which we experience the totality of experience” (Levine, 1997 68). Once again Levine echoes the words of Gendlin when he describes the felt sense as “relaying the overall experience of the organism, rather than interpreting what is happening from the standpoint of the individual parts” (1997, 69). Levine defines the organism “as a complex structure of interdependent and subordinate elements whose relation and

properties are largely determined by their functions to the whole” (1997, 67). The author argues that just as the organism is greater than the sum of its individual parts the felt sense is also greater than the sum of its individual parts therefore unifying scattered information and giving it meaning. Levine (1997) goes on to give everyday examples of the felt sense as telling you where you are and how you feel at any given moment even when you are not consciously aware of it. The author invites the reader to imagine their sensed response as they look at a mountain peak bathed in an alpine glow, watch a group of brightly dressed children singing ethnic folk songs or listening to Brahms concerto.

Levine continues in his description of the felt sense by re-inviting the reader into the imagination through the use of metaphor. According to Levine “In many ways the felt sense is like a stream moving through an ever changing landscape. It alters its character in resonance with its surroundings. When the land is rugged and steep, the stream moves with vigour and energy, swirling and bubbling as it crashes over rocks and debris. Out on the plains the stream meanders so slowly that one might wonder whether it is moving at all. Rains and spring that thaw can rapidly increase its volume, possibly even flood nearby land. In the same way, once the setting has been interpreted and defined by the felt sense, we will blend into whatever conditions we find ourselves. This amazing sense encompasses both the content and climate of our internal and external environments. Like the stream it shapes itself to fit those environments” (1997, 69). Such a description could be comparable to Gendlin’s (1981) method of focusing where the client is invited to describe the felt sense through the use of metaphor.

It could also be argued that through the use of metaphor there is a connection made between what the author previously described as the ‘linear process’ of language and the ‘non-linear process’ of the felt sense. Following the discourse on metaphor in psychoanalysis James Hillman argues that metaphor represents intensification and deepening of the world in which we customarily think we live. David Punter (2007) in his books on metaphor makes reference to the writings of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and concludes that metaphor comes to be seen as an essential factor in the psychic apprehension of outer and inner worlds” (2007, 75). Following this view the researcher will return to the use of metaphor in a later chapter when reviewing the

mythology of Medusa and its connection to art therapy and the felt sense.

As the researcher previously stated the writings of Levine offers the reader not only psychological but also physiological explanations in his attempt to define the felt sense. Levine's description includes the physical senses of sight, smell, touch, sound and taste. However, the author also states that it is more than the five physical senses and can include other physical information such as the position the body takes, its temperature and its tensions" (1997, 71). Levine describes how this information can vary in clarity and intensity and as a result our perceptions can shift. According to Levine it is these variations that are needed in order for psychological change to happen. Furthermore, the author describes this change as the ability to acquire new information, to interrelate to one another, to move and ultimately to know who we are.

In discussing the physiology of the felt sense Levine describes not only how it consists of sensation and variety but he also explains how it is made up of awareness, subtly, and rhythm (1997, 83). According to the author "a sensation will transform into something else (another sensation, image or feeling) as you notice all its characteristics and will do so at its own pace" (1997, 83). Levine's view is that being present to this, without trying to change it, is the awareness of the felt sense. He argues that it is this awareness that brings about instinctual healing.

It is this instinctual healing that Levine refers to as being fundamental to trauma recovery. According to the author "in order to harness the instincts necessary to heal trauma, we must be able to identify and employ the indicators of trauma that are made available to us through the felt sense" (1997, 68). Levine explains the role of the felt sense in relation to how the organism responds to its environment. The author refers to his observations of fight, flight and freezes responses of animals when they are in life threatening situations. A connection is made between these responses and the part of the brain (reptilian brain) that is activated in the human experience of survival responses. According to Levine "perhaps the best way to describe the felt sense is to say that it is the experience of being in a living body that understands the nuances of its environment by way of its responses to that environment" (1997, 69).

Finally then having outlined the physiological and psychological elements of the felt sense the author warns the reader that “those of us that are traumatised should be aware that learning to work with the felt sense may be challenging. Part of the dynamic of trauma is that it cuts us off from our internal experience as a way of protecting our organisms from sensations and emotions that could be overwhelming” (1997, 73). However one method traditionally used to heal trauma is catharsis, which involves directly working with the traumatic event. Esta Powell (2012) in her review of the literature writes that existing scientific evidence resulting in a positive therapeutic change from catharsis is controversial concluding that this is mostly to do with the difficulties there is in defining catharsis.

One of the earliest definitions of catharsis is by Aristotle who defined it as "purging of the spirit of morbid and base ideas or emotions by witnessing the playing out of such emotions or ideas on stage" (Aristotle, 2001, 1458). Freud and Breuer officially brought cathartic therapy into modern psychology (Brill, 1995) and catharsis has to date kept its place within psychodynamic theory. The American Psychological Association (2007) defines it as "the discharge of affects connected to traumatic events that had previously been repressed by bringing these events back into consciousness and re-experiencing them" (2007, 153). Having said that the literature demonstrates that there is an on-going discourse in relation to the role of catharsis in therapy (Bushman, 2002, Janov, 1991, Rachman 2001, Scheff 2001, Watson et al 2006, Greenberg 2002, Kipper, 1997).

However, in relation to art therapy Rappaport (2009) puts forward the view that art therapy “provides materials and creative expression that serve as a container to hold traumatic memories and feelings offering cathartic release and infusing the client with life-affirming energy” (2009, 188). However the author also warns that “it is essential that art therapists and students in training be mindful of whether it will be productive for a client to release emotion through a cathartic visual art expression or if doing so is more likely to lead to regression and destabilization” (2009, 70). Therefore the author states “catharsis always needs to be handled with skill, knowledge and clinical judgment” (2009, 70).

Within the literature on art therapy there is some evidence that art therapy has positive therapeutic outcomes in the treatment of trauma (Johnson 1987, Malchiodi 1999). In relation to PTSD where fight or flight responses were not fully expressed at the time of the trauma, resulting in the 'freeze response' and lack of affect, the proposition is that the art therapy process can support a reframing and resolution of past trauma. This is evidenced by early art therapist Edward Adamson (1963, 1965, 1970, 1984) and has most recently been documented by the work of Janice Lobban of Combat Stress which was featured recently in BBC's Culture Show Special documentary 'Art for Heroes' (2011).

The Felt Sense And Creativity

*“At that time I could not understand that my real purpose might be to learn to
have no purposes”*

(Marion Milner, 1986, 90)

According to Levine “to live without the felt sense violates the most basic experience of being alive” (1997, 70). Furthermore the author states that although “the felt sense is sometimes vague, always complex, and ever changing” (1997, 71) it “is so integral to our experience of being human that we take it for granted, sometimes to the point of not even realizing that it exists until we deliberately attend to it” (1997, 71). The literature suggests that one way in which this felt sense could be deliberately attended to is through creativity. For the purposes of this exploration of the felt sense and creativity the researcher will focus on two articles written by Gendlin. The first is called “Focusing and the development of creativity” (1981) and the second is called “focusing is more powerful with imagery” (1980).

Gendlin begins this article commenting that creativity depends on its “willingness to tolerate ambiguity” (1981, 13) Furthermore he acknowledges that this link has “long been known” (1981, 13) but comments that “such a view of creativity is only negative” (1981, 13). Gendlin continues on with this line of thinking stating that for most people ambiguity means not clear and not thinking in the usual way and therefore “having nothing at all” (1981, 13). However it is worth noting that Sternberg in his exploration of wisdom and its relationship to intelligence and creativity concludes "the wise person is comfortable with ambiguity and indeed sees its inherency in virtually all interactions that people have with the world" (1990, 155). Furthermore in this exploration of the nature, origins and development of wisdom the author goes on to say that "ambiguity is something to be understood, appreciated and treated as fundamental to the nature of things. Hence the wise person can be serene in the face of challenges that would distress the less wise" (1990, 155). According to Sternberg “the wise person views him or herself and others as engaged in an unending dialectic with each other and with the world, with the result that truly non ambiguous

situations never exist" (1990, 155).

Sternberg goes on to specifically look at the creative persons tolerance towards ambiguity. The author states that ambiguity must be tolerated with discomfort in the hope that it will eventually lead to a creative formulation of the kind being sought" (1990, 155). However, Sternberg concludes that, "a more broadly intelligent person may understand and appreciate ambiguity (the person who is wise as well as intelligent) or tolerate it (the person who is creative as well as intelligent) (1990, 155)". It is also worth noting that the author stated that his goal was to express an explicit and implicit theoretical account of wisdom. The former according to Sternberg is "based on peoples conceptions of wisdom" (1990, 155) and the latter is based on the author's own view of wisdom which is based on the implicit.

In reviewing the literature on creativity it could also be argued that Gendlin in his view was also expressing both an explicit and implicit account of ambiguity. So although this comparison shows that there is a difference in opinion as to the negative nature of ambiguity there is recognition by both authors that creative people have always used ambiguity. In fact Gendlin goes so far as to say that "Looking back to the usual way of describing creativity, we can see that what might always have been meant by "ambiguity" is the felt sense" (1981, 16). This appears to be the closest that Gendlin comes to naming the felt sense in relation to an existing term. Furthermore, the author notes that "until now we haven't been told where to go with our attention, and exactly what to do, in order to be creative" (Gendlin, 1981, 16) offering the method of focusing as a way to achieve this.

Gendlin goes on to ask the questions of where do creative ideas come from? And where do thoughts arise? In an attempt to answer these questions the author offers the suggestion of not only words and images but of a "bodily way" (Gendlin, 1981, 16) of receiving creative ideas. According to Gendlin, "Only from this richer underlying complexity which you do have, can relevant new ideas arise" (1981, 16). So although Gendlin offers an answer to the question of where do these ideas come from, such questions throughout history have been viewed and answered from many other perspectives. For example one can turn to the writings of Plato in his myth of Er,

which argues that each individual comes into the world with something to do and to be. Plato called this our *paradeigma*, meaning a basic form that encompasses our entire destinies.

Carl Rogers (1961) was the first to develop a theory within psychotherapy about how every person has within an “acorn” able to grow into a certain kind of tree, a “blueprint” for a unique life. James Hillman (1997) in his writings also discusses what is called the ‘acorn theory’ and what he calls the ‘souls code’. According to Hillman the acorn theory expresses that unique something that we carry into the world, that is a little bit different, that expresses something that you are, that you have and that is not the same as the personality you think you are. Hillman makes reference to the Greek word ‘*daimon*’, the Roman word ‘*genius*’, and the Christian word ‘*guardian angel*’ in his attempts to answer the questions of where do creative ideas come from and where do thoughts arise. This is just one example from the literature of the answer to what could be called a psychological, philosophical and spiritual question. However it could also be argued that from the perspective of the felt bodily sense Gendlin is closer to answering the question of how we receive and formulate creative ideas.

In the second article on the power of the image in focusing, Gendlin puts forward the argument that “imagery is a special kind of bodily living in an environment with other humans” (1980,1). The author says that how we think about an image changes if one can think of the body as an interactional process. Gendlin describes this as inherently a single system of body, emotion, situation, action and other people. According to Gendlin this implies that instead of asking about the image itself one can ask what “bodily change was involved in the bodily living which made this image?” (1980, 1). Furthermore Gendlin asks, “What further bodily living is now implied, now that the image-event has occurred?” (1980, 1) reflecting that “it will not be the same as before” (1980, 1).

Gendlin uses the analogy of food and hunger in an attempt to further explain this idea saying that if the food is eaten the hunger is changed by that very food. Gendlin proposes that an image “is like the act of eating, it stems from the living body implying of a certain next process. And if it occurs, it also changes the body so that now it implies something different as its next process” (1980, 1). The author goes on

to consider imagery in relation to the bodily way it forms and also asks about the changed body as a result of this formation. According to Gendlin “this leads to a different way of practice with imagery, a constant return to the body between each image and the next” (1980, 1).

Gendlin also states that it is his opinion that it is necessary to work with the bodily change that image formation makes and that if this is ignored the most important effect of imagery is ignored. However, in relation to art therapy working specifically with the bodily change is not considered to be the most important part of the image. However, this poses the possibility of an interesting discourse within the art therapy literature and indeed within the discourse on the felt sense. This might also include looking at Jung’s typology of the personality, which would imply that working with the bodily change might be more important or less important depending on the individual client. For example an introverted ‘intuitive type’ might need to discover and express bodily sensation (inferior function) for example through dance or authentic movement. On the other hand a ‘sensate type’ might normally be more in touch with and comfortable with their embodied experience of life. The researcher will explore this point further in the following chapter.

Gendlin also states “it is much more powerful if one not only works with the body and imagery, but devotes specific attention to the formation of the body’s holistic sense of the issue” (1980, 1). This is also arguably an interesting consideration in viewing a more holistic approach to the possibilities of art therapy. This will be explored further in chapter three in relation to Mindell’s theory of the channel changing.

Gendlin goes on to say that “When imagery stems from such a felt sense, and when the impact of an image is used to engender a felt shift, that is when working with imagery is most powerful”. Gendlin is speaking specifically about the use of imagery in relation to the formation of the felt sense. For example the author describes how in the method of focusing one may not find words to describe the felt sense and so an image may come. According to Gendlin “it is the formation of something directly sensed in the body, yet implicitly meaningful” (1980, 1). The author continues by describing how the felt sense is “not just there waiting to be noticed, that it must first form” (1980, 1) and it is this formation that he has described as the felt shift.

Furthermore, Gendlin states that “when imagery stems from such a felt sense, and when the impact of an image is used to engender a felt shift, that is when working with imagery is most powerful” (1980, 1). Returning once again to David Abram’s commentary on the work of Merleau Ponty he summarizes that “all of creativity and free ranging mobility that we have come to associate with the human intellect is, in truth, an elaboration, or recapitulation, of a profound creativity already underway at the most immediate level of sensory perception” (Abram, 1996,49). Furthermore, Merleau himself stated, “ It is the body which points out, and speaks... This disclosure (of the body’s imminent expressiveness) ...extends as we shall see to the whole sensible world, and our gaze, prompted by the experience of our own body, will discover in all other objects the miracle of expression” (1962, 197).

In this article Gendlin acknowledges that the method of focusing to come into contact with the felt sense has been taught to different people and in relation to different topics including psychotherapy, stress-reduction, education and creativity. The author also comments that working with the felt sense can be complimentary to meditation practices. However, according to Gendlin the formation of the felt sense requires a relaxed state but not to the same extent as meditation practices. For example, the author states “Focusing can let one free the body of the cramp, the stoppage, the physical effects of the problems one carries in the body; then meditation is much easier and better” (1980, 1). This is also possibly of interest to the discourse on the use of meditation practices and guided imagery that are incorporated into the practice of art therapy.

Chapter Two

Individuation

“When my sorrow was born I nursed it with care, and watched over it with loving tenderness. And my Sorrow grew like all living things, strong and beautiful and full of wondrous delights. And we loved one another, my Sorrow and I, and we loved the world about us; for Sorrow had a kindly heart and mine was kindly with Sorrow....”

(Kahlil Gibran, The madman his Parables and Poems)



In order to explicate further the relevance of the felt sense in art therapy the researcher will briefly return to one of the psychoanalytic roots of art therapy and the work of Carl Jung (Case and Daley, 2006). Jung introduced the concept of individuation “to denote the process by which a person becomes a psychological “in-dividual” that is, a separate indivisible unity or whole” (C.W, 11, par 490). This is what Jung describes as the implicit goal of the unconscious dynamic. According to Jung this unconscious dynamic is presented to consciousness in various images of the self. This includes impersonal and natural processes, which he called instinct as well as an intelligible order, which he called ‘logos’ (Humbert, 1984). According to Jung this process of individuation or becoming whole does not mean being or having everything but rather living within a structure where opposites are at play (Marie-Louise von Franz, 1964).

Jung used imagery and symbolism in his investigations of how the process of individuation takes place. It is the use of imagery as a way to access the subconscious is one aspect that roots the work of art therapy into Jungian theory (Case and Dalley, 2006). Furthermore in relation to the felt sense and art therapy the researcher found that there is the possibility of an interesting link when one looks at the archetypal image of the quaternity. Jung used this image to describe the structures that underlie apparently unrelated psychic phenomena, which according to Jung must be united in order for individuation to take place.

Typology Of The Personality

*“Say not that I have found the truth but rather that I have found a truth”
(Kahlil Gibran, the Prophet)*



Through the investigation of various historical and clinical documents Jung concluded that this archetypal image of the quaternity had two forms. He called the first, the “dual couple” which coordinates and explicates related factors present within a given situation. The example of the transference that takes place between the analyst and analysand is used to explain this further. However it is the second, typology, which is of most significance to the present discussion.

Jung relates typology where three functions are attached to the ego and one remains unconscious. From this typology Jung developed a theory of personality types, which included introversion and extroversion as attitudes. He classified these attitudes as feeling, thinking, sensation and intuition as functions of the personality. Furthermore, Jung categorized feeling and thinking as rational functions and sensation and intuition as irrational functions. According to Sharp (1987) when they are well utilized, these formulae can generate hypotheses. Taking this into consideration with further research one could hypothesize the significance of working directly with the felt sense in therapy as dependant upon the personality type of the person with whom you are working.

For example, according to Jung’s theory of typology of the personality each person has a primary attitude, followed by a weaker secondary attitude, a more irregular third function and a weakened inferior fourth function. In order for the personality to become whole or individuate Jung argued that one must work to assimilate the fourth inferior function. In the case where the primary function is well developed in general either the second or third function will help it along. However a rational function cannot work on its own and therefore the second or third function must be irrational and vice versa.

Relating back to the image of the quaternity a rational function will always be opposite a rational function and the irrational function will always be opposite the irrational function (See Appendix 2). Therefore, one must work to try to integrate the function, which is opposite. So, for example if one is an intuitive type which is irrational, one must have the rational function of thinking or feeling to help it along. Taking this example further if one combines intuition with thinking then there is an

intuitive tone to the thinking. In this case feeling will be the third function and sensation will be the inferior fourth function. In the case of the third function, it is more damaging to the psyche as it operates irregularly and so one does not always have access to it. In this case it requires a certain amount of effort to benefit from the third function.

Returning to the previous example one could say that intuition and thinking are getting along fine but the third function of feeling may be in conflict with them. Therefore although the ego is identified with the two main functions and is in possible conflict with the third it still has the capacity to make the switch and work with the third function. However in the case of the fourth function such a switch cannot be made and therefore a complete change in the personality is needed in order to hold the opposites together. In this example it would mean that the irrational function of sensation, which is opposite the irrational function of intuition, must be integrated in order for the psyche to individuate. Marie-Louise Von Franz describes this as “a death experience, because the inferior function is deeply incompatible with the main functions” (2002, 96). In this example one could hypothesise that in the case of an intuitive, thinking personality with a less developed feeling function, the work of the therapist would potentially be to facilitate the client to integrate the inferior function of sensation.

At this point the researcher will define what each of these functions refers to as the question arises as to how and where the felt sense may fit into Jung’s theory of the personality. According to Jung thinking refers to the faculty of rational analysis, of understanding and responding to life through the intellect. According to Jung this occurs most frequently in men. Feeling then is the interpretation of life at a value level, a heart rather than a head level. This function would reject or accept an idea based on whether it is pleasant or unpleasant. This he considers the emotional type personality, which occurs more frequently in women. These functions are both called rational, as they both require an act of judgement (Sharp, 1987).

On the other hand, intuition and sensation are both irrational as they result from either internal or external stimuli, which are acting upon the individual. Both these functions involve no reason. For example intuition is an experience, which does not

involve mental activity but rather is immediately given to consciousness. It happens at what is called a gut level and is considered the source of inspiration, creativity and novel ideas. Sensation types then work in the same manner in that there is an immediate experience given to consciousness. However this experience is stimulated by physical stimuli. Furthermore there is a difference according to whether the person is an introvert or an extrovert. For example an extroverted sensation type is interested in physical or pragmatic things. According to Jung this type tends to be realistic, practical, at worst crudely sensual and more often occurring in men. However an introverted sensation type experiences the physical world (sensation) from the perspective of the psychic or inner consciousness, which is what is called introversion (Hillman, Van Franz 1971).

There is no mention of the felt sense within Jung's typology. However returning to definitions in the previous chapter that acknowledge the bodily felt aspect to the felt sense one could speculate that it can be found to lie somewhere in the area of the introverted sensation type. However having said that, according to David Rome, "the felt sense is a way of cultivating intuition" (2010, 4). Furthermore, Rome puts forward the view that although Intuition is normally something that just happens (irrational), you can also set the stage for it. According to Rome "you can invite intuitive knowing. You have to be very patient and friendly to yourself and to what is going on in you. That is a kind of love. I've heard it called "caring feel- in presence." (Rome, 2010, 4).

Rome also comments that since his discovery of focusing and the philosophy that goes with it, he sees things less in Jungian and archetypal terms because there is such an emphasis on unique and fresh experience, on the individual in the moment" (Rome, 2010, 5). Furthermore, Rome is of the opinion that this is "also because it's a way of getting in touch with the source of symbols and the source of myths" (Rome, 2010). The researcher will return to the work of David Rome who developed a method of deep listening training, which will be discussed in a later chapter. However for now returning to Jungian terms it seems that what is clear is that it is a matter of speculation as to whether or how the felt sense fits into the typology theories.

Finally then the researcher would like to make reference to Daryl Sharps (1987) introduction to Jung's typology theory. According to the author "Jung's model of typology is not a system of character analysis, nor is it a way of labelling oneself or others. Much as one might use a compass to determine where one is in the physical world, Jung's typology is a tool for psychological orientation. It is a way of understanding both oneself and the interpersonal difficulties that arise between people" (1987, 9).

Active Imagination

"No one can reveal to you nothing but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge"
(Kahlil Gibran, The prophet)



Jung also developed a theory of active imagination to work with the process of individuation. This is an introverted method that actively participates with visual phenomena such as dreams or auditory phenomena such as internal dialogue whereby the client interacts and even conflicts with his perceptions. This method mainly follows the internal dialogue by either writing it down, using inner visualizations or voicing it out loud. In relation to the felt sense this is similar to Gendlin's Focusing method. Furthermore, in some cases Jung also worked with people through painting and image making which is similar to the approach taken in FOAT (2008) which will be explored further in a later chapter.

According to Jung "active imagination, as the term denotes, means that the images have a life of their own and that symbolic events develop according to their own logic- that is, of course if our conscious reason does not interfere" (Chodorow, 2004, 172). However Joan Chodorow (2004) in her review of Jung on Active Imagination comments on Jung's claim that he 'never goes beyond the bounds of the picture before him' (153). According to Chodorow while Jung insisted throughout his career that pictures cannot be reduced to psychological concepts he did in fact replace "the specifics of imagery with symbolic, mythic and alchemical associations" (2004, 174). However, according to Chodorow "the fact that Jung is constantly checking with himself on the misuse of analytic reason when interpreting pictures suggests that he was aware of his inclination to stray from the bounds of images when reflecting upon them (2004, 174)." Chodorow (2004) concludes that perhaps Jung's personal contradictions helped him to appreciate the complementary function of the psyche as a self-regulating system as is the view that is appreciated in relation to the body.

Arnold Mindell took Jung's philosophy of individuation and active imagination and broadened them to include a more complete way of linking this connection of psyche and soma. He introduced the idea of working kinaesthetically and proprioceptively (1985, 86). This will be briefly discussed in the following chapter in order to give further depth and understanding to the possibilities of the role of the felt sense in art therapy.

Process Work

“Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars.”

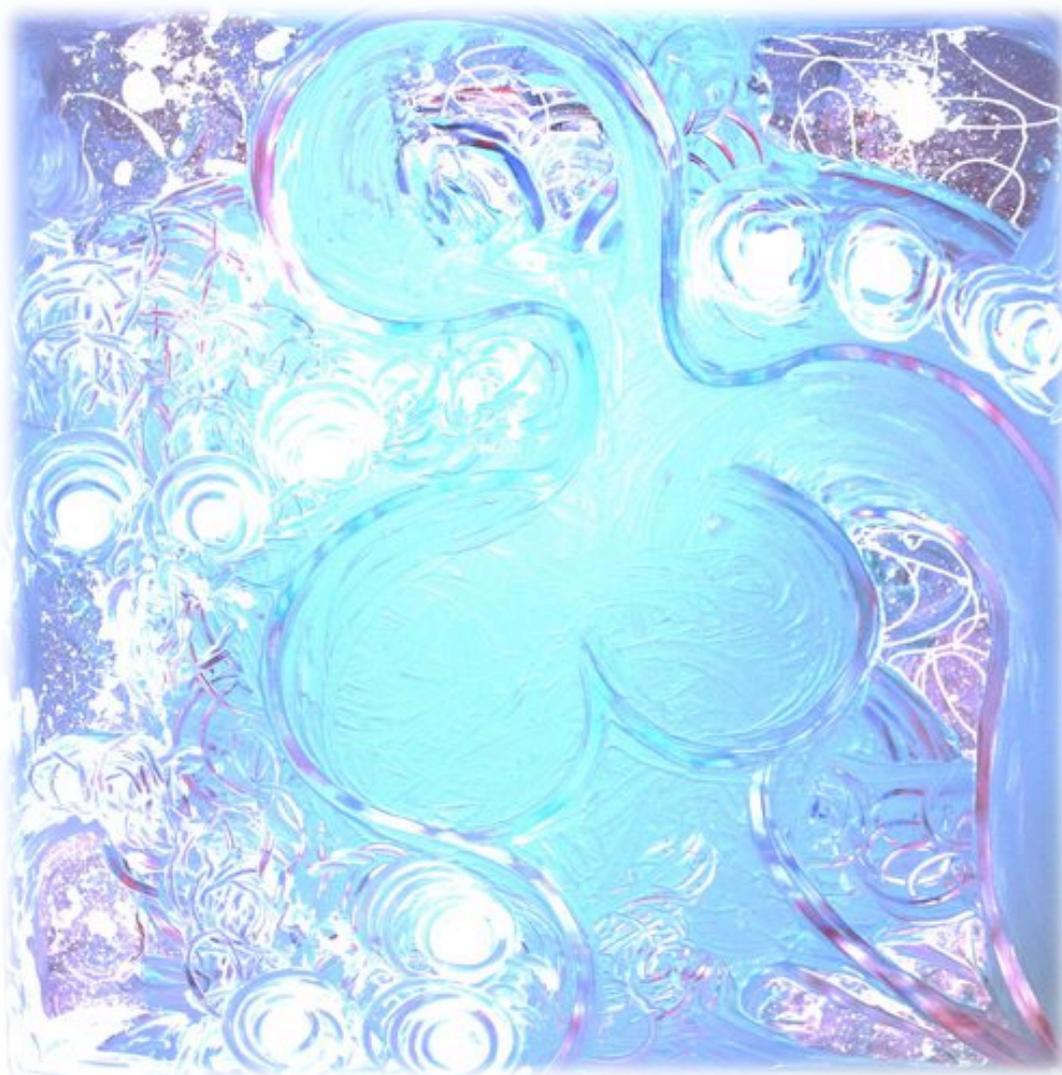
(Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet)

“If you do process work you are interested in the total life process and this means you are not interested in just one train station. You want to go the whole line. Your process can bring you everything you need in time. If you learn to follow your process without aiming at one station, or goal, then you become an individuated person. Your life becomes richer and you learn to reduce your projections and integrate your pain” (Mindell, 1985, 32).

Arnold Mindell has written extensively on what he has coined process-orientated psychology (1984), which is based on the concept of working with a dreaming body. Mindell's theories are derived from both a Jungian perspective and his own research with various ancient traditions across the world. Mindell uses the term process to refer “to changes in perception to the variation of signals experienced by the observer” (1985, 11). Mindell explains this by describing how the observer's personality determines which signals he picks up, which he is aware of and which he identifies himself with and therefore reacts to” (1985, 11). Mindell describes process as, “information, which comes to you in specific ways or channels such as seeing, hearing, moving, feeling, relationships and the world” (1990, 17). The author names the most common channels as auditory, the world, relationship, visual, and kinaesthesia and proprioceptive or inner body sensation (See Appendix 3). It is the latter, which is arguably of most significance in relation to the felt sense.

The Dream body

*“And your body is the harp of your soul,
And it is yours to bring forth sweet music from it or confused sounds.”
(Kahlil Gibran)*



According to Mindell these channels are working with what is called the dreambody. Mindell describes this dreambody as an “empirical name for a mystery which appears in practice as dreams and body life” (1985, 39). The author defines the “real body as the result of objective physiological measurements and the dreambody as the individual experience of the body” (1984,11). Mindell writes about the hidden significance of physical symptoms and body experiences in relation to psychological processes. He describes these processes in terms of modern physics and communication theories and as having ancient mythological roots in alchemy and Taoism.

According to Mindell “this universal dreambody theory, reflected in Jung’s discovery of the collective unconscious and the eastern concept of Atman, has important implications for all human beings” (1985, 76). Mindell explains that the doctrine of atman, is what Hindus understand as the higher self, while anatman which Buddha speaks of, is the concept of non-self. It can be viewed that examining such theories highlights that depending on ones cultural conditioning there maybe more or less of a tendency to work in one channel over another. Therefore one could hypothesis that the culture of the society in which one is living may be a determinant factor in which channels are more activated by the collective and therefore influence what channels may need to be focused on in therapy.

According to Mindell “you have to know yourself as a personal dreambody and also know yourself as part of the collective dreambody” (1985, 76). Mindell states that the dreambody message “ is nonpathological. From this inner viewpoint, your body is potentially wise; it perceives the world directly and has a will or intent. This intent attaches itself to events according to the significance they have for your overall growth and for the world at a given moment. The same energy that seems to oppose you in the form of an illness can unveil itself as an intent, a power with a purpose different from your consciousness” (1993, 110).

Mindell (1985) puts forward the argument that the existence of the universal dream body means that we are a reflection of the greater world and that therefore our body’s problems are also problems of the world around us. According to Mindell “our illness is a dream, it’s a symptom of the incongruity of the world we live in” (1985, 79). Mindell acknowledges that research in psychosomatic medicine from different parts

of the world indicates that having body problems is normal however the author comments that “there is also an increasing body of evidence that many problems are orientated by the culture in which one lives” (1985, 79).

According to Mindell, “the most common sensory channels appearing in one to one work with clients appear to be visualization, audition, body feeling or proprioception and body movement or kinesthesia” (1985, 14). However Mindell (1985) clearly states that in process work one does not fasten oneself to one particular channel system but is “theoretically able to observe himself and a given situation and discover what channels his client or family is operating with” (1985, 14). Mindell (1985) gives the example of how channels are described differently depending on the culture. For example modern western psychologists speak about personality in terms of mind, matter and psyche. However the ancient Chinese speak of the Tao and the channels of heaven, earth and man. Buddhists speak about senses, which perceive specific signals in terms of smelling, touching, tasting, hearing and seeing.

However speaking in western terms Mindell (1984, 1985, 1993) argues that the body channels of kinaesthesia and proprioception tend to be more developed in the East while visualization and audition tend to be more developed in the West. Therefore one could hypothesis that working with the felt sense is not only effected by personality type according to Jung’s typology theory but that it is also affected by the culture and geographical context in which the therapy is taking place or from which the client is from.

Mindells theories are also derived from his own research with shamanic traditions across the world. According to Mindell “a shamanic view of dreambody work is that following your body is like following the lost parts of your soul” (Mindell, 1993, 106). This is in contrast to what Mindell describes as a modern culture, which is “against feeling too much pain” (1985, 33). The author states “people have still not learned to love themselves” (1985, 33). Furthermore, Mindell argues that they must do so in order to have a different relationship towards their own bodies and ultimately with themselves. According to Mindell, “there is no way around it. It’s important to feel pain, to sit with it and feel it. He then goes on to say that “many negative projections stem from channel blocks, from an unconsciousness of feeling and proprioceptive life” (1985, 33).

Body Wisdom

“Without the body, soul is nothing but empty wind, without the soul the body is but a senseless frame”

(Kahlil Gibran)

Mindell offers a method of channel changing as way to find and follow the body's wisdom. “You can switch back and forth between the feeling of the dreaming body and a visualization of this feeling to find and to follow the body's wisdom. Instead of doing something in movement, you can express somatic information visually or verbally” (1993, 111). Mindell gives the following instructions as a way to access the proprioceptive channel, which is similar in nature to focusing techniques. Return to Appendix 10 for brief outline of Focusing Steps.

“Ask yourself what part of your body feels wisest. Try doing this right now. Scan your body and feel the answer. What does your body wisdom feel like? Feel it and try to make an image that corresponds to the feeling. What does this picture look like? See this picture located in that part of your body. If you have a question, ask it of this part of your body, this ally. Ask it lovingly, and wait, feel or listen for an answer. Or let this part move you just now” (1993, 104).

According to Mindell “normally you occupy or use only two or three sensory channels consciously: seeing, hearing, and perhaps smelling. But you can develop the capacity to feel aswell. Then you may develop authentic movement awareness and connect to others directly through your bodys intent. I have met people who can sense the world through their back, their neck or the centre of their forehead as well as through their stomach” (1993, 110). It could be argued that such a description is similar to Gendlins definition of the felt sense as outlined in the first chapter. The researcher will restate this definition to illustrate this point. According to Gendlin “the felt sense doesn't come to you in the form of thoughts or words or other separate units, but as a single bodily experience” (1981, 33). Gendlin (1981) describes an inner aura that encompasses everything you know and feel about a given subject at a particular moment that is communicated all at once rather than detail by detail. This could be likened to the experience of people “who can sense the world through their shoulders”(1993, 110) which Mindell describes.

Medusa

“The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek.”

— Joseph Campbell



In Greek myth, it seems a relief when the hero Perseus valiantly cuts off Medusa's head, liberating her defenceless victims from being turned to stone. However, Medusa was a victim herself, a beautiful queen cursed by Athena to become the monster we know. Legend has it that Medusa was a Libyan queen serving the goddess Athena who caught her lying with Poseidon in Athena's sacred temple. Angered, Athena abruptly cursed Medusa with the hideous face and head of snakes (Shearer, 1996). However according to Hillman “nothing is myth all is metaphor” (1975:175). Peter Levine in his exploration of the felt sense in trauma, makes reference to the myth of Medusa as a possible metaphor for the felt sense.

Jungian archetypal psychology suggests that the gaze of Medusa evoked such fear as to petrify, literally turning to stone and so shutting down the affect and life itself. Monaghan (1994) suggests that Medusa is one form of initiation on the path to individuation. By staring fear in the face, the experience of being turned to stone is said to accomplish two feats. Firstly it encourages surrender, allowing stillness and silence to create space in which to regard oneself. Secondly, with interpretation of the myth, the liberation comes when the positive masculine energies that for a long time remained undeveloped within the woman's psyche grow enough to stop flying, descend to Earth and be able to recognize and to honour what has been disregarded for years. This has been symbolically described as leaving the head and coming down to the body.

The myth suggests that with time, the woman will be conscious about the inner strength she has developed to be her own positive mother and father. She will experience herself as a more complete and mature woman and will realize the chance she has to remain deeply related with her own Perseus. According to Baring and Cashford (1991) it becomes clear that Medusa is more than merely mortal beneath the horrifying mask. By all evidence, she is an ancient icon of the sacred feminine, connected with the original Great Goddess.

With the final capitulation to the will of the Self, Medusa was freed from the paralysis of her own state. She was reborn into her true calling as a goddess and a shaman, no longer the monster of myth. In death, it was said that her blood brought new life with the power to heal. From her severed neck sprang beautiful Pegasus, new life in another form as "poetry" (Downing, 1999). Even Athena who had originally banished Medusa placed the image of Medusa's head on her breastplate, next to her heart.

This myth explores relevant themes including the relationship/ polarity between mind & body, heart & head, emotion and action, which can be related to the felt sense. In the myth Perseus was the hero who was able to escape the gaze of Medusa with his shield, freeing Medusa of her own state of paralysis. According to Peter Levine just "as Perseus uses his shield to confront medusa, so may traumatised people use their shield-equivalent of sensation, or the felt sense to master trauma. According to Levine "the felt sense encompasses the clarity, instinctual power and fluidity necessary to transform trauma" (1997, 67).

Chapter Three
The felt Sense in Art Therapy

*"I remember when you were still a white cloud floating freely wherever you wanted
to go"*

Thich Nhat Hahn (A Free White Cloud)



Deep Listening

*“Loving your eyes,
I learn to love them deeply”
(Thích Nhất Hạnh, Love Poem)*

In reviewing the literature on the felt sense in Art therapy. The researcher also found connections between ‘Deep Listening’ and the felt sense. As part of the Ma in art therapy in the Crawford College of Art and Design/ Cit Ireland, trainee art therapists are given an introductory training in deep listening. Since 2004 deep listening has been delivered as training in the Dzogchen Beara Buddhist Spiritual Care Centre in Ireland and has been approved and accredited by the Irish nursing board as part of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). This training incorporates Buddhist psychology and understandings, introducing the embodiment of the “inherent qualities of loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity” (Oliver, 2004).

In this method of deep listening the therapist empathically relates to the client. This is not just reflective listening but rather it means that the therapist must drop their awareness into their own body and listen from their own felt sense as opposed to the intellect. According to the focusing method and deep listening this is what enables the therapist to be with the client, for the client to feel companioned and for the therapists responses to be genuine (Summerville, 2003). This is what is known as a person centred approach to therapeutic work, which brings us back to the work of Carl Rogers and the collaborative work of Gendlin in coining the felt sense. According to Rogers (1961) there are three qualities needed by the listener, which include empathy, genuine (congruence) and non-possessive warmth.

Building on this idea deep listening invites the listener to incorporate meditation and body or sensory awareness to the listening experience. To further elucidate this point the researcher has included the following quote from Schillings (1999) in an article entitled ‘focusing a path between east and west’.

“Both meditation and focusing work by pushing us up against the limits imposed by our identification using friendly presence as a tool. Our awareness is directed toward the stream of direct experiencing ('focusing on the on-going experiencing'), Gendlin speaks of focusing. The meaning lies in the experiencing, not in the concepts, and the concepts and symbolisations help to carry experiencing forward. Here precisely is the meditative/contemplative quality of the person-centred approach. The key is to accompany what is, to be present, without judging. This intentionless but friendly presence opens up space, space for change, whether it be in focusing, meditation or elsewhere (1999, 1).”

However, in reviewing the literature the researcher found that the roots of this Deep listening training have evolved and developed over several years and can be sourced back to David Rome who developed a deep listening training workshop in 2000 “with the aim of leaving behind the great ideas, symbols, and myths of an earlier age— although he affirms that these can inspire us” (2010, 27). For the purposes of this discussion the researcher will refer to some of the comments by David Rome in an interview entitled Deep Listening is Love. In relation to the deep listening Rome (2010) defines the training as a combination of the Alexander technique; mindfulness based meditation and focusing. The deep listening technique uses transpersonal therapeutic understandings of contemporary psychology; drawing on person centred humanistic psychology and combines this with understandings from Buddhist traditions. This combination has been discussed by several authors demonstrating the mutuality that Western psychology and mindfulness have both in practice and in theory (Watts, 1961, Suzuki, Fromm and De Marinto 1963 ,Kornfield, 1993, Epsteing, 1995).

However Rome makes a clear distinction between the two approaches of Eastern Buddhist psychology and Western Focusing psychology. Rome describes how in Buddhist philosophy, there is an ultimate reality that is unchanging and within that, there is what we experience as conditioned reality. This is regarded as unavoidable but of lesser significance. However in focusing there is a real emphasis on the experience of the unfolding of life, which again and again brings into being novelty that has never existed before. Focusing therefore isn't interested in the emptiness aspect but in the manifestation itself, in the relatedness and the relationship.

However having said that Rome states that deep listening “can definitely go beyond ideology, beyond any fixed conceptual system” (2010, 31).

For example while the training in its delivery methods are specific to contemporary culture one could argue that these trainings ultimately go back to the teachings of Buddha some 2500 years BC prior to the idea of modern psychology. In Buddhism presence is often used to refer to a deep listening to the self. Rome (2010) also makes the suggestion that what is called ‘first thought’ in Buddhism is essentially what Gendlin was describing when he coined the ‘felt sense.’ Furthermore, in making this comment Rome also points out that what is being described, “is characteristic of artists, good artists, and what an artist is really doing is training that capability” (2010, 31). Once again it could be said that this is affirming of the belief that the felt sense is implicit in the creative process and therefore the art therapy process (Rappaport, 2009). While it is not discussed in the interview the researcher would like to make the point that one could also hypothesis that deep listening goes back even further to what are considered to be the first primitive peoples of the earth. While it is beyond the scope of this discussion it is interesting that the Australian aboriginal spiritual belief system is built around what is called *dadirri* and which has been translated into English as “deep Listening” or “contemplation” (Farrelly, 2003).

Returning to the interview Rome describes the purposes of deep listening “as a way of reconnecting with our inner life and of becoming more available to others at a deeper level” (2010, 31). Furthermore Rome states that it “is a way to get to the essence of how I might respond and also of developing empathy and of becoming gentle in oneself” (2010, 31). According to Rome, in Western culture, there tends to be a very strong critical voice judging and labelling us as stupid or ugly or incompetent. It’s a basic impulse in most people. Rome makes the point that “traditional Buddhist meditation wasn’t equipped to deal with the Western psyche, the critical voice, and the tremendous sense of individualism that we have. On the other side, focusing is not designed to work with the problem of ego attachment at the level that Buddhism can” (2010, 31).

This could be linked back into the hypothesis of the previous chapter where it was argued that the cultural background of the client is considered crucial to successful therapy. Furthermore, it points to an interesting discourse within the art therapy

literature that could perhaps begin to look at the significance of bringing such training into the practice of art therapy. For example, is art therapy part of a western model that is facilitating the bridging of ideologies from both east and west? This is particularly significant given that the practice of art therapy is mainly taking place in the western world.

Finally then in relation to the deep listening method the researcher has found that the central importance of the therapists ability to listen to her own inner arising's has been written about by many, with different emphases and different terms. (Bucci, 2001; Aron, 2000). Included in the literature is, a qualitative study (Geller, 2001) which identifies that therapists who actively developed their presence through a continued practice of mindfulness reported that 'extrasensory level' communication increased between themselves and their clients (Ardekanai, 2008). The benefits of meditation practices on emotional, psychological and physical health are also being widely researched within the scientific world (Goleman, 1996, Mc Carthy, V.J.C et al (2010). Shaun McNiff comments on his incorporation and practice of mindfulness as an art therapist stating that when "I relate the practice of mindful breathing to what I do in the art studio, I see a common emphasis on simplicity, repetition, and rhythmic flow (2004, 235)."

Focus Orientated Art Therapy

*“A lotus just bloomed on the ocean
A baby was born amidst the waves”
(Thích Nhất Hạnh)*



Laury Rappaport Ph.D., ATR-BC, RE coined the phrase, Focusing-Oriented Art Therapy (FOAT) (2008), and it is now a recognized approach within the field of art therapy. According to Rappaport, although Focusing and Art Therapy are both intrinsically compatible and even though they are different psychotherapeutic practices, each model very naturally accesses the felt sense. Furthermore, according to Rappaport “the “crossing” of the felt sense in Focusing and Art Therapy contribute to a natural creative synthesis, resulting in a comprehensive approach — Focusing-Oriented Art Therapy (FOAT)” (2008, 150). As already mentioned, the application of the combination of focusing with art therapy has been explored by both Focusing therapists (Ikemi, Yano, Miyake, and Matsuoka, 2007; Leijssen, 1992; Marder, 1997; Murayama, 1988; Neagu, 1988; and Tsuchie, 2003), as well as expressive arts therapists (Merkur, 1997; Rappaport, 1988, 1992, 1998, 2006, 2008, and Knill, 2004).

The benefits of the FOAT method as outlined by Rappaport include three basic steps. The first is ‘Clearing a space’ with art which according to Rappaport “is beneficial for centring, stress reduction clarifying and dis-identifying with issues, and helping clients to have an experiential knowing of their intrinsic wholeness” (2008, 91). The second is focusing orientated art psychotherapy which “is primarily applied to individuals and couples where the orientation is toward authenticity, congruence, empathy, depth orientated insight, communication skills and change” (2008, 92). The third then is a theme directed approach, which is “most often used in groups, incorporating focusing with art therapy to address topics related to the groups needs” (2008, 92).

Rappaport describes how “a basic step to integrate art therapy into focusing is to express the felt sense in visual art” (2008, 94). According to Rappaport “this process of listening to the felt sense and seeing if there is an image that matches it is the source and inspiration of art making” (2008, 94). However, Rappaport also describes how rather than beginning with focusing as a preliminary step it is possible to begin with art. In this case the author suggests that after creating the art the therapist “guides the client to bring a friendly welcoming attitude toward the art and inner experience, access a felt sense of the art and then to see if there’s a word, phrase, image or sound that matches it” (2008, 101). According to Rappaport this is “a helpful approach for clients who are inclined towards a more spontaneous artistic

expression first” (2008,101). Furthermore according to the author this helps to ground the artistic expression into the body and “helps to access meaning, integrate the experience and enhance mind body connection” (2008, 101). See Appendix 4 for reference of where to find FOAT exercises and how art is incorporated into Gendlin’s ‘clearing a space’ from his six step focusing method. One could also hypothesize that this (FOAT) method would also be a helpful addition to Art therapy training.

The Implicit Nature Of The Felt Sense and Art Therapy

“As soon as earth and sky brought me to life, I was offered music by the birds and fragrance by the trees”

(Thich Nhat Hahn, April)

Rappaport also speaks about the implicit nature of the felt sense in relation to the art making process “given the experiential nature and role of the body in art making” (2008, 87). The author describes how in an Art Therapy session, the felt sense is essentially engaged through the use of the body in art making. For example, the hand, arm, and torso are engaged while drawing, painting, or sculpting. Rappaport also states that the felt sense implicitly informs material choice and colour, the development of an image, and knowing when the art is completed.

The implicit nature of the felt sense is something which is discussed by Lynn Preston in her review of Gendlin’s *Contribution to Explorations of the Implicit*. Preston describes Gendlins method as going to the edge of awareness and fishing “for the very specific words and images that have the power to “hook” the unknown thought, lifting it out of the vast open sea of the implicit” (2012, 10). Donnel Stern speaks of the implicit as “unformulated experience- the uninterpreted form of those raw materials of consciousness, reflective experience that may eventually be assigned verbal interpretations and thereby brought into articulate form” (Stern 1997, 37). According to Preston the implicit “is ‘already’ and ‘not yet’. We feel it and are impacted by it and yet its nature and message is ambiguous. It is like the wind. We ‘feel’ it but we don’t ‘see it.’ We are in it, it is not simply a content, and it is a palpable feeling sense of ourselves and the inter-subjective field of which we are a part” (2012, 3).

The relevance of the implicit to the art therapy process can be looked at from the point of view of the psychoanalytical influences of Jung in the development of art therapy. For example, according to Chodorow, “Jung de- emphasizes explanation when working with an image in therapy and encourages active observation (2004,

173).” Jung offers the suggestion that “often the hands know how to solve a riddle with which the intellect has wrestled in vain” (Chodorow, 2004, 175).

One can also go back to the ‘artists’ roots of art therapy and the work of Edith Kramer (1958, 1971) who put forward the view that art making is in itself inherently healing. Art therapist Joy Schaverien (1992) also puts forward the view that meaning carried by the object cannot be accessed linguistically. As has been discussed in the first chapter this is very clearly the same view held by Gendlin in his attempts to describe and define the felt sense.

The idea of the implicit can also be found in the work of Art therapist Shaun McNiff (1992, 2004) who put forward the view that there is an implicit sensing in the art making process. According to McNiff in his book ‘Art as medicine’ art is inherently healing (1992). According to the author “if you are able to watch and respond to thresholds that emerge in their time, the process offers unending depth, surprises and challenges” (1992, 13). Furthermore McNiff writes theoretically about the creative experience claiming that “creation is a sentient and instinctual flow that determines where to go and what to change or omit” (1994, 13) concluding that there is an implicit sensing within the art. This is similar in its description to the dreaming process that Arnold Mindell speaks about in process-orientated psychology.

This appreciation for implicit sensing within art has also been discussed by James Hillman’s discussion on what he calls the image sense. Hillman speaks about the interpretations that are made after the image is made. According to Hillman (1979), “by appearing together in a single psychological act of studying an image, seeing and hearing re vitalize each other. We see through our hearing and listen through our seeing” (1979, 130). Hillman puts forward the view that “as long as we go at our training in terms of knowing about images (symbolizing) rather than sensing images (imagining) we may never let the image derange us enough to retrain us” (1979, 131). According to Hillman, “we can sense images and make some sense of them without having to sense them in the simple perceptual meaning of sensation” (1979, 131). Perhaps one could hypothesize that the felt sense is one way to achieve this.

Finally then, it is worth noting that within the art therapy discourse Shaun McNiff is making a clear call for a return to the innate and implicitly healing aspects of art. In particular Mc Niff puts forward the view that art therapy “has concentrated too much of its resources on conceptual analysis and not enough attention on the potential of passionate expression to renew and reconstitute psychic life through spontaneous events (2004, 84).”

Findings and Recommendations

*“And if the earthly no longer knows your name, whisper to the silent earth: I’m
flowing. To the flashing water say: I am.”*

(Rainer Maria Rilke)



Hypothesis Chapter One

The Felt Sense

In summary, following the view that the felt sense is necessary for trauma recovery (Levine, 1997) that the felt sense is an implicit part of the art therapy process (Rapport 2008) one could potentially explore the possibility that art therapy, the felt sense and trauma recovery are intrinsically linked.

Hypothesis Second Chapter

Individuation

In summary, it is viewed that it is unclear as to where exactly the felt sense fits into Jung's theory of typology of personality. However, from the literature one could hypothesize the significance of working directly with the felt sense in therapy as dependant upon the personality type of the person with whom you are working.

Following Mindell's theory of channel changing one could hypothesize that the culture of the society in which one is living as a determinant factor in which channels are more activated by the collective and therefore influential in what channels need to be focused on in therapy.

Hypothesis Chapter Three

The Felt Sense in Art Therapy

In summary, having discussed the incorporation of deep listening practices into the art therapy training it could be viewed that there is the possibility for a discourse within the art therapy literature to explore the significance of bringing such training into the practice of art therapy. For example, is art therapy part of a western model that is facilitating the bridging of ideologies from both east and west?

One could also hypothesize that the (FOAT) method is a helpful addition to Art therapy training as a way to introduce the trainee art therapists to the idea of working

with the felt sense. It could also be used as a skill that art therapists can utilise as a way to work with clients who are more inclined towards a more spontaneous artistic expression as a way to facilitate mind, body connection.

If one is to follow the line of thinking that the felt sense is implicit in the art making process then it could be hypothesized that the inherent healing in the art making process is directly linked to felt sense.

Conclusion

*“Keep wanting that connection With all your pulsing energy.
The throbbing vein Will take you further
Than any thinking”.*

Rumi (Body intelligence)



So in conclusion the researcher has found that the felt sense challenges the idea that the unconscious lies only in the realm of the mind. The theoretical frameworks of Jung, Mindell, and Gendlin all support the idea that the endeavour to make the unconscious conscious is not about entities lurking in dark hidden corners but rather about the experiences of the client in therapy.

In relation to the felt sense the researcher would conclude that while the existing literature is limited on the role of the felt sense in art therapy there appears to be evidence to demonstrate that the felt sense is perhaps implicitly part of the art therapy process. However, returning to the words of Gendlin as stated in the introduction to this thesis “one reason why research is so important is precisely that it can surprise you and tell you that your subjective convictions are wrong. If research always found what we expected, there wouldn’t be much point in doing research” (Gendlin, 2003, 5).

It is the researcher’s opinion that while the exploration of the felt sense is valid within the art therapy discourse what is possibly of more importance is the conviction to take into account the individuality of the client with whom one is working. For example Mindell (1984) suspected that Jung was hinting at dreambody work when he wrote in his autobiography that it is important for a therapist to put his or her own training aside and to develop psychology anew with each new patient (1984, 2). However it is worth noting that he also comments on the difficulty in realizing this given the unpredictability of individual clients.

However, having said that through investigating the felt sense in art therapy this thesis has touched upon the crucial importance of taking into account the cultural background of the client with whom one is working and the individuality of the client. According to Shaun McNiff there is a call within the creative therapies to work with everything we have, creating a more holistic use of the arts in therapy asking us to use “all of our personal and environmental resources while relating to the whole of the person with whom we are engaged” (2004, 168). This view, was also expressed by Gendlin, who stated that he is “far from asserting that focusing is the deepest level, or the only kind of important process, or the only method of working with oneself, or anything like that” (1980, 1).

However, having said that it is the researchers opinion that work in any given situation with a client involves a natural crossing over of the boundaries among psychological, philosophical and expressive modalities and that an awareness of the felt sense can only enhance the art therapists ability to work with a client and with themselves.

By concentrating on the felt sense, the researcher has demonstrated not only a particular thesis on the role of the felt sense in art therapy that depends upon the client but also a way to question and think about the interconnectedness of kinaesthetic as an integral part of the art therapy process. This thesis has proposed a style of thinking that questions the truth of the outcomes of empirical research that claims more positive therapeutic outcomes when working with the felt sense. This way of thinking associates the truth of empirical research with the quality of individual relationships as opposed to static facts.

“People say that what we’re all seeking is a meaning for life. I don’t think that’s what we’re really seeking. I think that what we’re seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances with our own innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive.”

*— Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth**

Word Count 14,475

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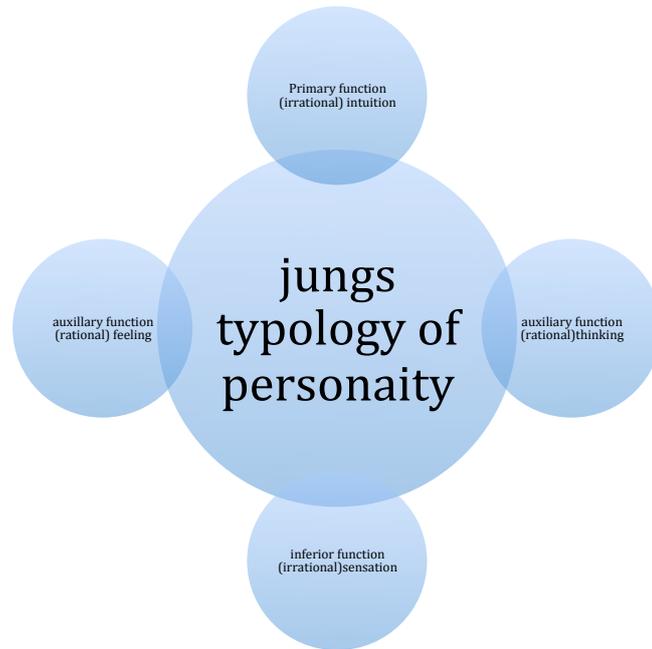
APPENDIX 1

Steps In Focusing By Eugene Gendlin

For a more detailed description of these steps see:
(Focusing, E.T. Gendlin, Ph.D., Everest House, 1978, Bantam 1981).

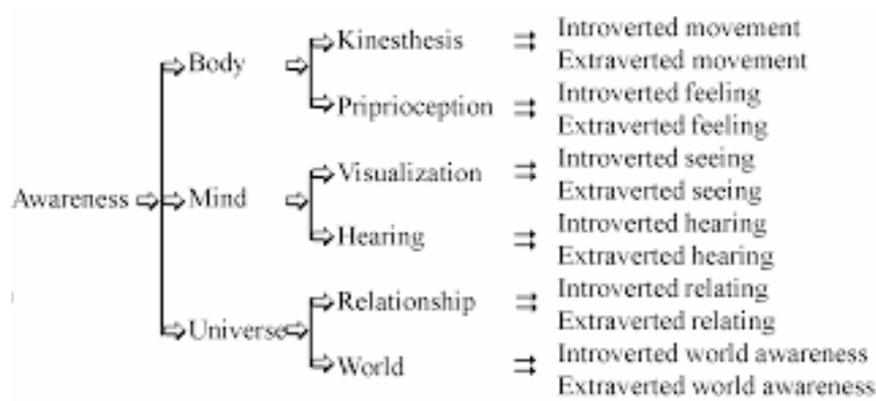
- 1 Clearing a space
- 2 Choosing an issue and felt sense
- 3 Handle/ Symbol
- 4 Resonating
- 5 Asking
- 6 Receiving

APPENDIX 2



APPENDIX 3

Mindell Diagram of Channels



Mindell A. (1985). *Rivers Way The Process Science of the Dreambody*. London, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

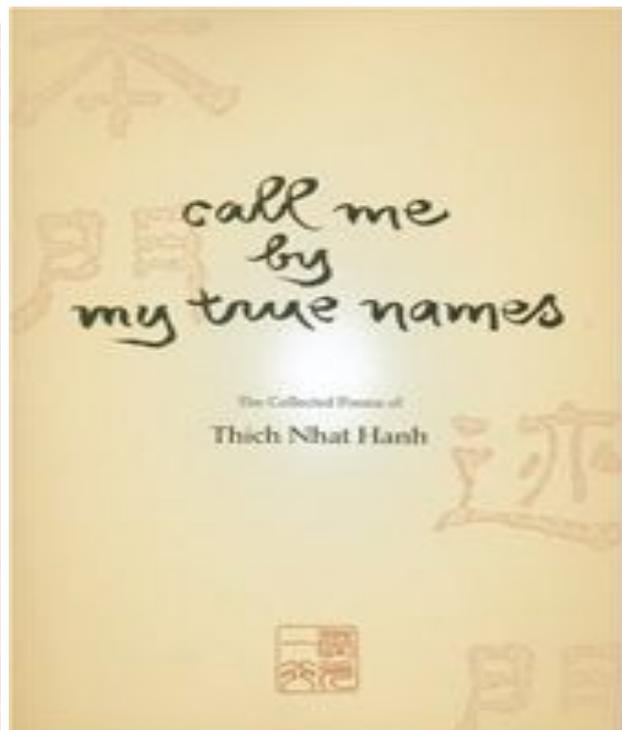
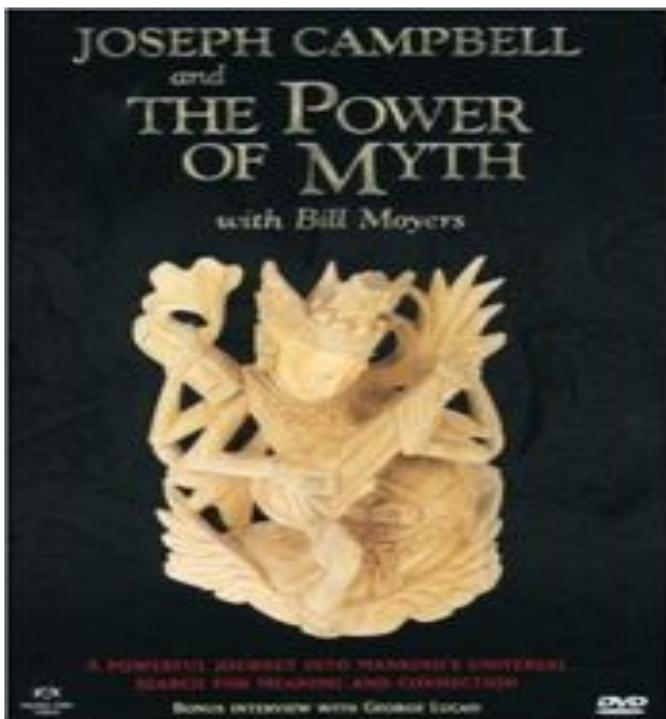
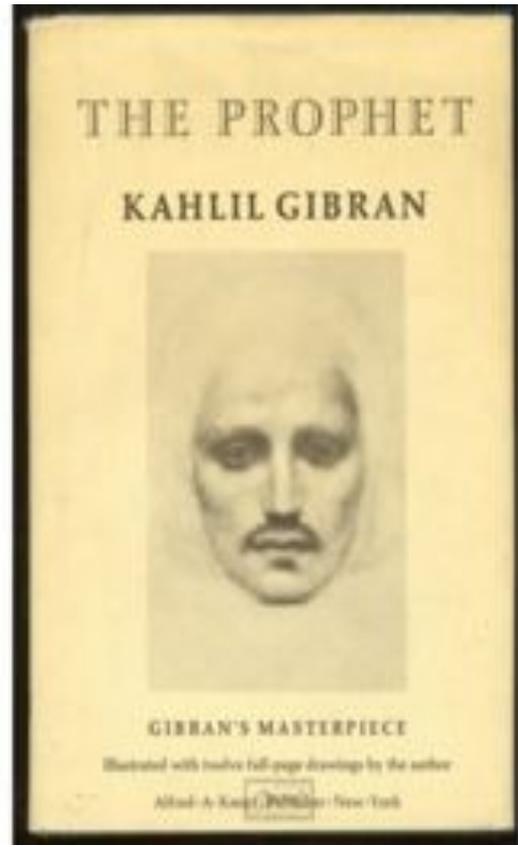
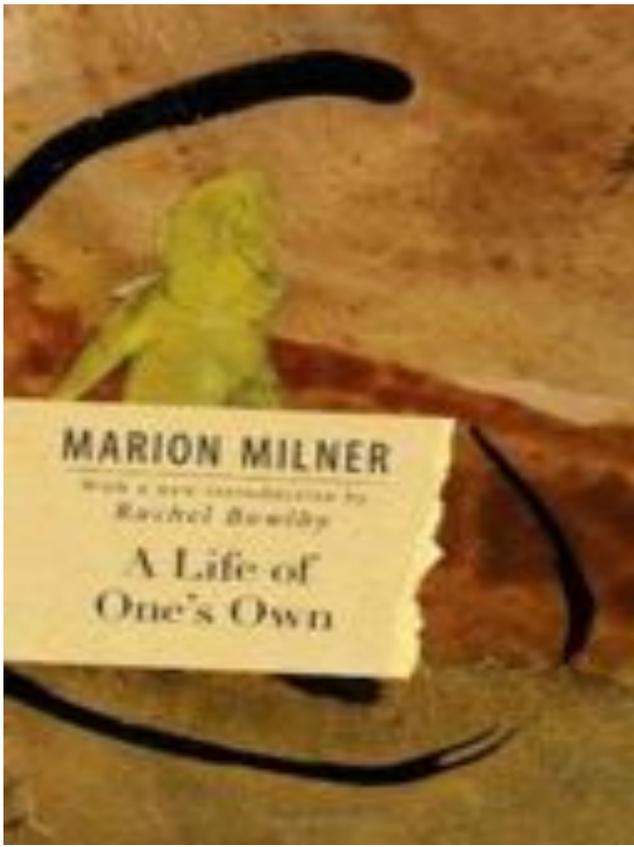
APPENDIX 4

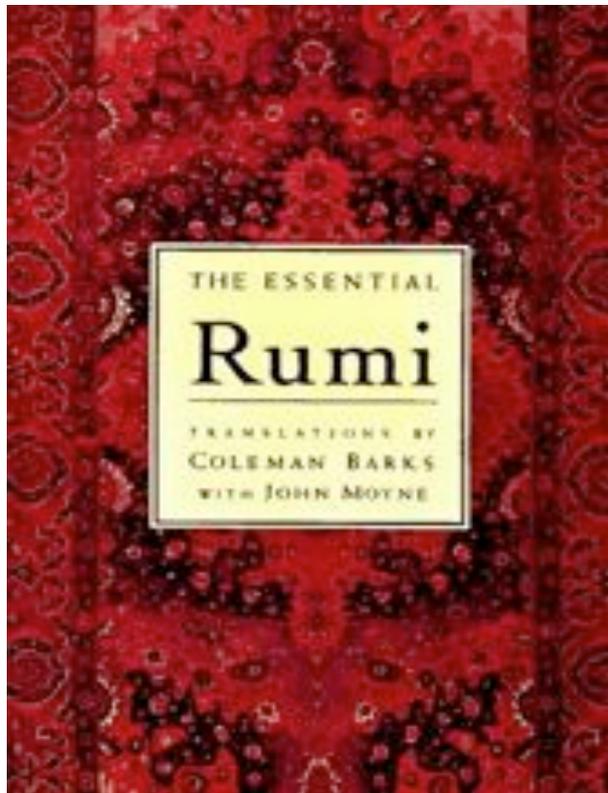
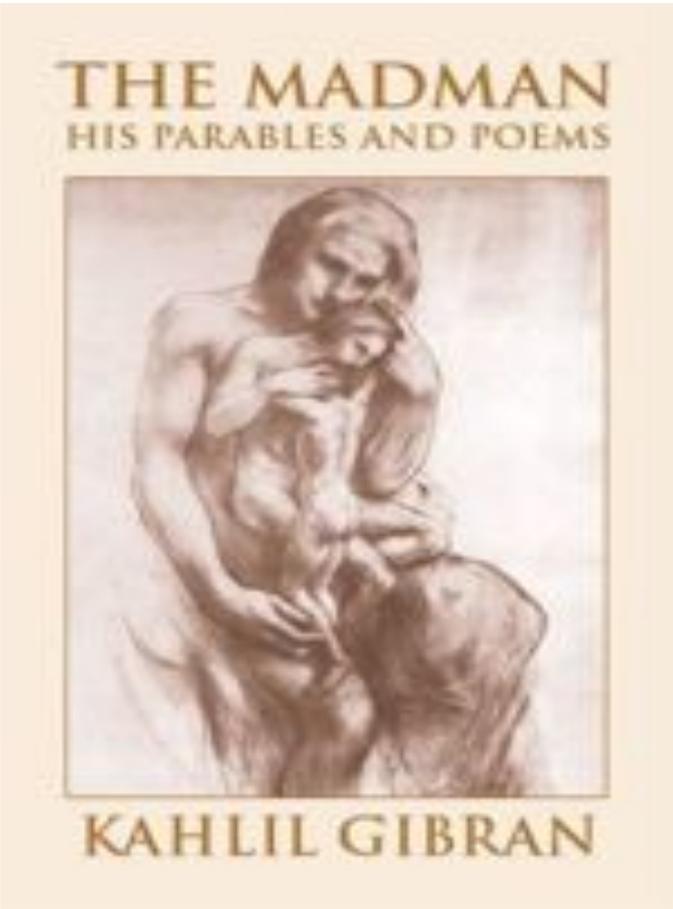
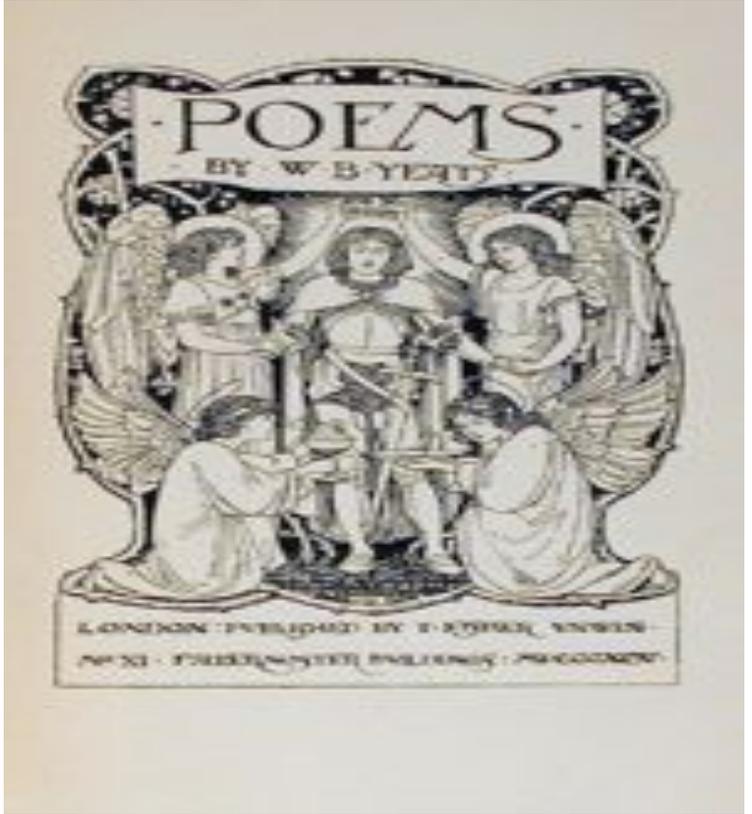
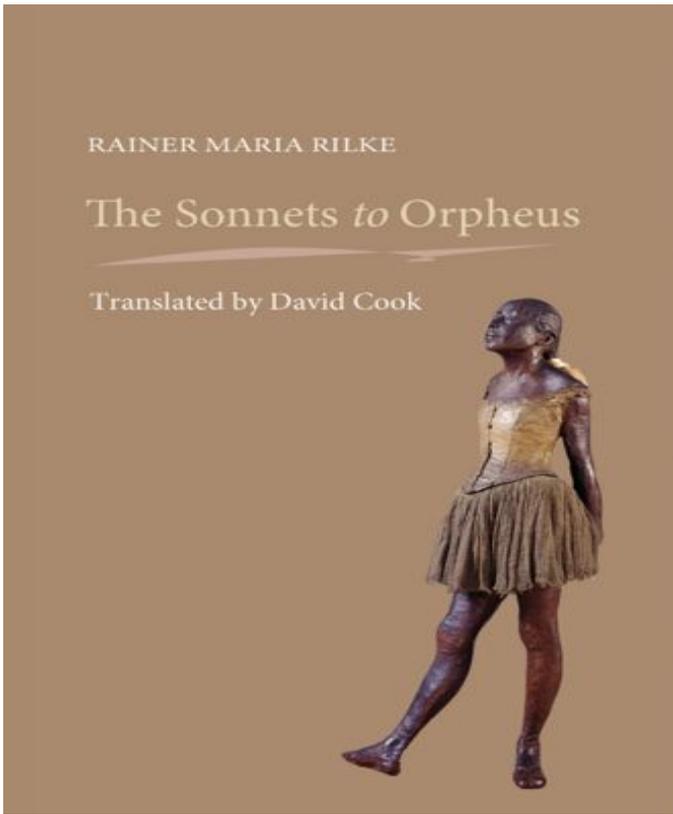
FOAT Exercises

Clearing a space with Art Chapter 7

Rappaport, L. (2008). *Focusing-oriented art therapy: accessing the body's wisdom and creative intelligence*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

APPENDIX 5 A visual bibliography of quotes from the beginning of each section





APPENDIX 6

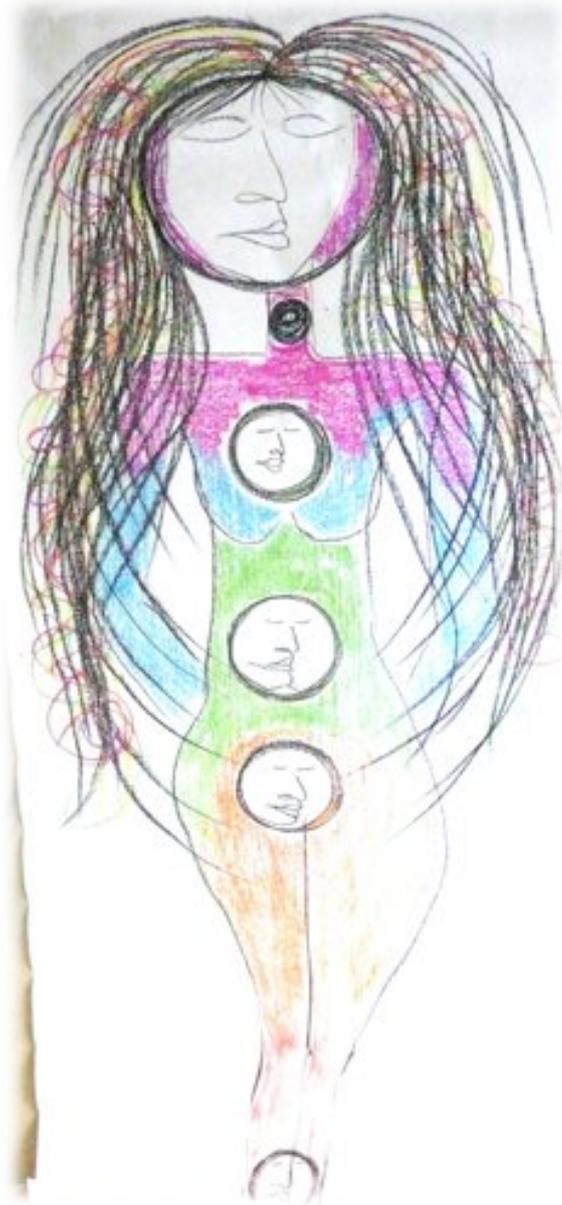
All images are by researcher, Aídeen Cooney and were included in this thesis as the researchers visual representation of the thesis content.

Researchers Reflexivity On The Images

“Had I the heavens’ embroidered cloths, Enwrought with golden and silver light, The blue and the dim and the dark cloths Of night and light and the half-light, I would spread the cloths under your feet: But I, being poor, have only my dreams; I have spread my dreams under your feet; Tread softly because you tread on my dreams”

(W.B. Yeats)





The felt sense

*Spontaneous body Mapping
Dialoging with the image
Dialoging with the image sense
Dialoging with the felt sense*



Medusa

Jung regarded shamanic imagery as an indication that shamans themselves go through a process of individuation. This image for me was about expressing the close relationship between the innocence of the victim and the potential within the victim to become the perpetrator. The image has evolved in its meaning over time and has taken on new significance given the associations made between the mind and body split associated with the myth of medusa.



Individuation 1

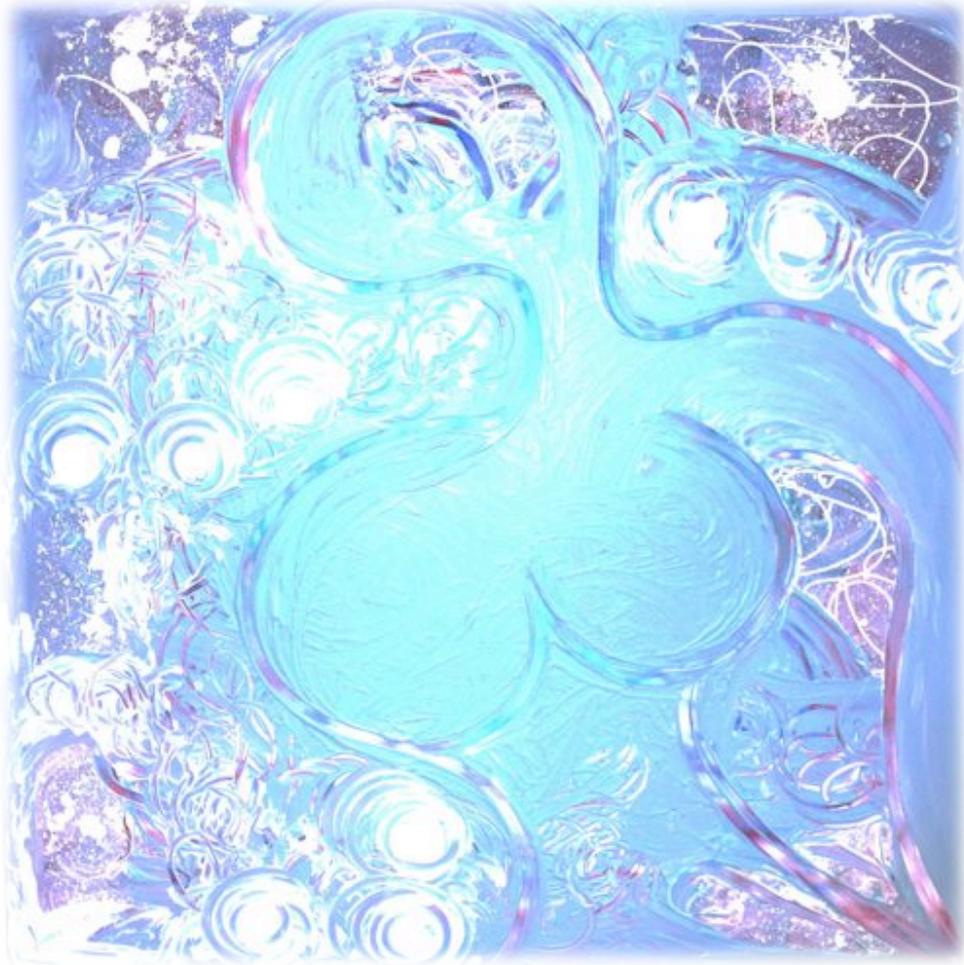
*First Catharsis
The anger,
The anxiety,
The frustration,
The messy feelings inside,
The split,
The fragmentation,
The releasing was healing
The circle was holding.*



Individuation 2



Individuation 3



The Dream Body

*Dreaming body
Finally from the head to the body
Feeling from all parts of the being
Inside and out*



Deep Listening

According to Mindell (1984) “the harmony implicit in the buddhas ordered snakes, contrasting with the ungoverned quality of medusas snakes is another symbol of mastery over the first snake and the resulting peace in the autonomic nervous system” (140)



Blooming

This image became a visual map of the journey of my thesis and my training as an art therapist. It includes inspirational quotes, cathartic release with the paint and the pin wholes, reparation with the threads around the circle, containment within the circle, the blooming of a lotus flower, the gift of light and new life.



Alive

Energy pulsing through my veins

I am alive

I am happy



Soul Roots

*Mindful awareness is helpful
It grounds artistic expression into the body
It Enhances mind body connection
It brings me home*