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"Song of the Self" Passion: The Lived Experience of Art Educators

by

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Abstract

This hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry seeks to describe the nature and essence of passion: the lived experience of art educators. It moves beyond the form of phenomenological writing, transforming the lived experience of “passion” into visual structures of meaning.

In this thesis I propose to: explore the phenomenon, “passion;” briefly review the themes of passion; explicate more fully the theme “Song of the Self,” discussing how passion and art are ways of knowing; explain how art is a language and text; and finally to entertain how art is qualitative inquiry. Only the visual image of the “Song of the Self” will be presented because I intend to proceed with the remaining themes of the inquiry in my doctoral dissertation which will explore the full interpretive sense of my total human experience as an artist and educator.

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Dedication

To

Gurumayi Chidvilasananda

who has opened my heart

to passion as

“I honor the Self within me”

Om Namah Shivaya

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PART ONE: THE FLAMES OF PASSION

Chapter 1

The Light of the Flame

I find myself excited about teaching, even after nineteen years, rushing to school in the morning, eager to see students, rolling my sleeves up, and ready to make art. I just could not wait for today because we are Raku firing. It is a very physically intense means of glazing pots. Primitive, dirty, fiery, smoky and so much fun. The results cannot be predetermined. The kids love it as much as I do.

The whole process is inviting. There is a hap-hazardness about it, yet it entails technical detail in the construction of the pots. The pots need to be uniform in depth, while shapes can vary. The glaze chemicals are measured with electronic scales to insure precision, but these same glazes may be applied randomly. The duration of the firing is not exact. Raku firing is very ambiguous in nature.

We load the pots, and start the firing. The sound of the torches stirs excitement. The roar of the torch creates a unique thunder as it blasts out the heat. There is a hole in the top of the kiln from which we watch the glazes melt, bubble, and shine as they turn from cherry red to white hot. We are so enthralled with the work, or should I say the play,

that we lose track of time. We talk, laugh, and sit in lawn chairs in the sun waiting for the glazes to mature.

True to the raku process is that particular flair of intuitive, sensing, and knowing that this batch is ready, now. The glaze readiness is a dialogue of intrigue, persuasion, and instinct. Connoisseurship is required. We work as a team. While one student shuts off the torches, another removes the lid exposing the pots and releasing intense heat. Emerging from an inferno the pots are placed into sooty metal cans on layers of newspaper that burst into flames that rage, flare up and billow black smoke. Sometimes the flames drive out the sides, licking in the wind. We count out thirty seconds, lift the lid for one last blast of fire until a yellow smoke gushes out. The results of the glazes are metallic surfaces rich in color, texture and strong in contrast to the blackened raw surfaces of the clay. The pots cool for twenty minutes, are removed and scrubbed until their luster is revealed. It is like magic (Journal, June 5, 1996).

The Kindling

My burning passion inscribes this day and so many more like it. A blazing fire of passion and desire ignites me as an artist and art educator. Fire is the touchstone of human creativity and passion where the source of that fire and the hearth where it burns is

the heart and the soul of the individual (Whyte, 1994). I speak from and live with the flame of burning passion as I question how it guides me, instructs me, and informs my practice. Like others before me who gathered around fires, sharing stories and songs, I call to the flame that lights the path to impart the “Song of the Self” Passion: The Lived Experience of an Art Educator.

It is with great love and respect as an art educator and artist that I embark on this journey. The phenomenon “passion” intrigues, inspires and drives me as an art educator and artist.

From a very early age I knew I would be a teacher. I never wavered from this except to ask “what kind of teacher?”. There was a determined knowing that teaching is to be my profession. I had very acutely observed teachers throughout my education and knew what I did not want to become. I was also blessed with passionate mentors who guided me. Passion is the special connection, an emotion, a relationship of deep caring that exists between student and teacher that makes learning fun. If teachers love their careers and are passionate, it carries over to how we teach and the lifeworld we provide for students. Our moods, emotions, and desires shape the experience the students receive. How teachers instruct, conduct and orchestrate their philosophies about students’ abilities to learn can determine the outcome of the students’ experiences. It is a powerful role we play.

I am passionate and I think energy transfers between my students and me. Passion lives in the interaction. The relationship that is built becomes a bond of common interest. I believe in their abilities and potentials, see the exceptional in them, and assist them in discovering their passion. I try to pass on the love of art. Passion demands of me this sharing, it steers my course, how I respond and view events as they unfold. It is my vision, and rhythm of life. The human connection, the love we give, the openness to give of oneself is where passion lies sleeping, knowing, understanding and giving as it connects us spiritually (Journal, June 2, July 20, 22, 23, 27, October 9 & 17, 1996)

I recognized that it was the “passion” with which teachers taught that made the difference in how I, as a student, experienced exceedingly productive learning. A mentor, a teacher who is highly motivated, exhilarated and passionate about teaching provides one of the essential components of learning (Secretan, 1996). I am now a seasoned veteran who has experienced many changes in the classroom, teaching environment, and in myself. I identify passion as an essential element to teaching and learning.

The relationship that I have formed with my discipline and my students frames itself in passion. I am excited to share this experience with Ellie Klippenstein, a third year art education student, a former high school student, and graduate of my art program. She is now my teaching assistant. Ellie and I explore teaching together in the classroom (with our students) as we delve into this inquiry of passion. The reflective process is one similar

to an archaeological dig as we sift through the sedimented layers of passion producing journals and artworks that trace our findings and discoveries. Reflection on the passions is a search for our own past creations...self-directed anthropology, an investigation of our living mythologies, our ongoing activities of conceptualizing and configuring our surreality, the same activities that are only rendered explicit and articulate in reflection (Solomon, 1977). Passages from our journals provide descriptions of internal thoughts, insights, and reflections of passion during the teaching process as the inquiry enters our world at the Alberta High School of Fine Arts. The hearth of the fire is an art classroom, a studio, and a variety of additional locations such as libraries, galleries, professional artists' studios, and vocational shops that meet specific needs. It is from lived experiences, a lifeworld that Ellie and I create and share with students that the phenomenon "passion" ignites.

There is a powerful fiery force that tacitly propels me to create and teach in a particular way. It pushes, pulls and tugs, stretching my abilities, talents and skills. Eager to push me into the empty studio that will be filled with bright and intelligent minds. Artistic, curious, meaning makers looking to me, a teacher, artist, mentor, guide, curriculum interpreter, facilitator, and resource person to provide an adventure of learning experiences in an environment where they can grow and succeed.

What is passion? How do I, as an art educator, live passion?

What is it like? Passion is a force that silently drives me as an artist and art educator. To be an art educator, I must also be an artist; both are

integrated. Passion fills my being to the core. It is powerful, a source of creation, where I put my whole self into something, like making my own paper for my journal. It is a process and art consumed with love, much the way my teaching is. Each paper is unique like students, and the accumulation of many sheets will tell a story, like many years of teaching (Journal, June 1, 1996).

What is it that motivates, stirs and invites me to show up everyday, to go beyond, to live, breathe, and submerge myself in teaching art? What are its qualities, states of being and vision? I seek to paint a linguistic description of how passion influences and translates into teaching experiences expressing what it is like to be passionate about teaching art, and examining what it means to teach with passion. Ellie's fresh and youthful perspectives provide a symmetry and uniqueness to our lifeworld. The idea of a lifeworld, a construct in which organism and environment share an existence, describes everyday circumstances in reflective ways where the identity of art teachers and their state of knowing is something emergent and fluid unlike any other (MacGregor, 1995).

Gazing into the Lifeworld of the Fire

Pedagogy requires a phenomenological sensitivity to lived experience (children's realities and lifeworlds) and a hermeneutic ability to make interpretive sense of the situations and relations of living with children (Van Manen, 1990). Hermeneutic phenomenology is human science research that studies the uniqueness of each human

being edifying personal insight (Rorty, 1979; Van Manen, 1990). Van Manen (1990) states that to do hermeneutic phenomenology is to construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the lifeworld. This construction begins in the lifeworld reflecting on lived experience to uncover and describe the internal structures of meaning. Phenomenological inquiry is not unlike an artistic endeavor, a creative attempt to express our experience of the world through art, science, architecture, and especially language. Phenomenological inquiry parallels art in that it is unique, holistic, analytical, evocative, precise, universal, powerful and sensitive.

It is my intent that this thesis will read in an interesting way, and reflect how I live teaching as an artistic endeavor, an art form fueled with an intense desire. While endeavoring to be attentive to both descriptions (phenomenological) and interpretation (hermeneutic) this inquiry seeks to describe the nature and essence of the experience of passion captured through imagery. It moves beyond the form of phenomenological writing, transforming the lived experience of “passion” into visual structures of meaning. The production of the artwork gives shape to the lived experience, telling us more about the world. Artistic expression transforms the artist’s lived experience into aesthetic objects that give rise to a new countenance, transcended configurations (Dufrenne, 1973; Van Manen, 1990). Gadamer (1986) wrote about and interpreted the “play of art”. He uses phenomenological descriptions to convey the existential meaning of this experience. I propose to exhibit a true show creating works of art that communicate “passion”.

.....this manifest show [art] belongs in the dimension of communication ...Communication takes place when the other person takes part in what is imparted to him -- and in such a way that he does not, as it were, only receive in part what is communicated, but shares in this knowledge of the whole matter that is fully possessed by both of them.....An artistic creation is therefore a true show. So much is it common to all that even the artist enjoys no privilege status over those who experience his work. Precisely because he has expressed what he has to say, he keeps back nothing for himself, but communicates himself without reserve. His work speaks for him (Gadamer, 1986, p. 128).

This six month inquiry demanded that I had to pay careful attention to the experience of "passion" in the creation of artworks and the daily activities in the classroom. I attempted to stay close to the experience of passion as I lived it out. I reflected on the essential themes that characterize passion: Song of the Self, Realizing Dreams; Engagement in Excellence; Dialectic Dynamics; Suffering; and Professional Nudity. Passion emanates from a voice of the self that is expressive, interpretative and diverse.

The passion in teaching art is about dreaming and seeing dreams become alive and visible. This defines my degree of interaction in a search for meaning that moves on a continuum of opposing feelings and structures of knowing. Passion is the physical and

mental process of enduring pain that cannot be hidden by denial. Finally, passion is the relationship that connects me in this world.

In the process of this inquiry I stumbled upon the notions of how passion and art are ways of knowing: art is a language and text and art is qualitative inquiry. Art is the construction of signs, symbols and emotion that create knowledge. To my amazement, in my readings I encountered the concept that art holds characteristics and features that are similar to hermeneutic phenomenology and qualitative research. Art describes, interprets and creates meaning in our world. It was from the books *Truth and Method* by Gadamer (1995) and *Researching Lived Experience* by Max Van Manen (1990) that these embers too hot to handle not only sparked an interest but became a passionate focus.

Human science research is descriptive-interpretive studies of patterns, configurations and degrees of experiential and/or textual meanings (Van Manen, 1990). Human science is connected to modes of experience like art in which a truth is communicated that cannot be verified by methodological means proper to science (Gadamer, 1995). The very essence of humanness is the ability to sense, project, and respond to imagery (Walker, 1988). Art is more than connected, it is a methodology that describes and interprets patterns, structures and experiences as text that explicate meaning. I am suggesting that art is a human science qualitative research method. These findings are important and should not be overlooked because they are the kindling for the fire that lights the flame in understanding my passion for art and teaching.

In this thesis I propose to: explore the phenomenon “passion;” briefly review the themes of passion; explicate more fully the theme “Song of the Self” throughout this thesis; discuss how passion and art are ways of knowing; discuss how art is a language and text; and entertain how art is qualitative inquiry. I present only the visual image of the “Song of the Self”. It is my intent to proceed with the remaining themes of the inquiry in my doctoral thesis which will explore the full interpretive sense of my total human experience as an artist and educator.

Exploring the Center of the Flame

I began this inquiry June 1, 1996, as a teacher and artist fully engaged in finishing out the school year. I found my body renewed with energy as I worked diligently to promote our first summer school session and as I contemplated where this inquiry would carry me. I started by preparing handmade paper that would become the journal that I vowed to write in daily. As I turned to the nature of “Passion: The Lived Experience of an Art Educator,” I found I was asking many questions and beginning to formulate some ideas through a process of reflection.

Fresh in my mind was the knowledge and experience I had gained in an independent study, “Passion: A Painter’s Perspective,” that spanned from November, 1995, to May, 1996. This inquiry provided me with a basic foundation of how to proceed and the impetus to pursue this study. The foundation encompassed reading several books and articles on hermeneutic phenomenology, passion, and art, while concomitantly

producing artworks to exemplify passion. The “Song of the Self” is a theme I carry forward from this inquiry. I call extensively on the work of Robert Solomon (1977) in his book *The Passions*, and John Dewey (1934) in his text *Art as Experience*, for the foundation of this thesis. The experience of passion ignites the flame of my Self. To understand this more fully I sought out the etymological traces of passion.

Prior to the sixteenth century “passion” was defined as suffering and pain, especially in reference to the suffering of Christ on the cross (Simpson & Weiner, 1989). The Christian preoccupation with sin linked desires and passions in an elaborate analysis designating them as greed, lust, anger, envy and pride (Solomon, 1993). Modern times describe it as a strong feeling, sexual attraction, anger, affection, devotion, love, desire, and an intense and overpowering emotion toward some special object such as art (Simpson & Weiner, 1989). Artz (1994) asserts that the everyday experience of passion is taken for granted; brushed aside as disturbing or disruptive; strives to be understood; is sometimes longed for; often wrestled with and feared; and, in the late twentieth century, an experience we try to “get in touch with”.

The word “passion” has had a long and varied history in which various feelings, desires, sentiments, moods, and attitudes depend on an extensive network of social, moral, cultural and psychological factors (Solomon, 1993). Solomon (1977) defines passion in terms of three basic species; emotions, moods, and desires that have the mutual ability to offer meaning to the circumstances of our lives. He believes passion and desire are emotions that provide insight about ourselves, our place in our world, our values, ethics,

configurations, and mythologies in accordance to which we live and through which we experience our lives. The word “emotion” is derived from the Latin *ex movere*, to move out (Hillman & Ventura, 1992). They suggest that “emotions” connect us socially to our world. Heidegger (1962) describes our moods as a way of “being attuned” to the world. Moods structure our world and have definitive influences on the whole of our experience (Solomon, 1977). Desire is a state of being which refers to a certain alacrity and deep interest in an aspect of life (Van Manen, 1990). Desire is knowledge [connaissance] action and passion (Dufrenne, 1973). Desire and effective expression turn into intention manifesting themselves in our ability to perform actions we wish to perform and to express our emotions (Solomon, 1977). “Desires convert mere ‘things’ into goals and instruments, mere ‘facts’ into conquests and frustration, mere ‘possibilities’ into ambitions, wishes, and hopes (Solomon, 1977, p. 132).”

You are what your deep, driving desire is,

As your desire is, so is your will,

As your will is, so is your deed,

As your desire is, so is your destiny.

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishads IV. 4. 5, in Chopra, 1994)

We become what our deep driving desires and passion are. Decartes said that everyone has the experience of the passions within themselves and that is where we need to look in order to discover their nature (Solomon, 1993). Our understanding and appreciation of passion commence with the state of being passionate.

The State of Being Passionate

The love fills, envelops and transforms experiences. It's like dancing to music as I glide across a room with style and grace. I am oblivious to people watching, only focused on the process of attending to the music, as it guides my movements, and as I listen to my inner satchitanada (Journal, June 29, 1996).

Campbell (1988) tells us to be inner guided by being in touch with our own satchitanada, bliss that lies within if you follow your heart. Bliss exists in the form of the Self in order to fulfill our desires (Muktananda, 1980). The smoldering fire within is the embodiment of passion, the satchitanada that defines my state of being in this world. The artist should derive from the world within himself/herself a particular mood expressing a song straight from the heart (Hegel, 1975). The state of being passionate is ecstatic. Passion is a way of life that produces an ecstatic awareness of the whole life (Anais Nin, in Solomon, 1977).

Being in a state of passion is usually associated with physical sensations such as pulsing and tightness of the throat; tension in the arms and legs; mild cramping in the stomach with slight breathlessness; an overwhelming sense of readiness and excitement (Solomon, 1977). Our actions are physical movements in the world; our passions are "in us" (Solomon, 1977). "Our passions--emotions, moods, and desires--define us, our selves, and the world we live in (Solomon, 1977, p. xvii)."

I felt light headed and somewhat anxious in the experience of creating the “Song of the Self”. Often the feelings are spontaneous, hitting hard without warning. As I paint I feel ethereal. I feel fluid and one with the work. My body floats with anticipation. I begin working methodically and transition to a spontaneous flow. I layer meaning through symbols, color and texture that speak of life experiences hidden deep within me. Painting is my life and my life is painting. It is the gift I was given and what I give back. I experience it, feel it in my heart, listen to my inner voice, envision images and interpret in paint what I see and want to express. As I ask myself “what is passion?”, I find the answers develop and change like my painting.

An emotion is implicated in a situation in which the self that is moved in the emotion is also implicated (Dewey, 1934). What we think about our experiences has a great deal to do with what is experienced and is particularly true of emotional experiences (Solomon, 1977). Significant emotions are qualities of complex experience that move and change (Dewey, 1934). We tend to adopt a great many moments in our lives which are defined by passion (Solomon, 1977).

My body aches. The tension of the week is riding in the base of my neck. I felt tied in knots, but chose to ignore it. The whole week has been tense with the interweaving of events, people, curriculum, and guest professional artists. As I relax, I set forth to determine the needs for the coming week.

Passion is the strength to endure, but not only endure. It is the regaining the strength to continue. It's focusing on the job at hand, making endless decisions, and taking action. I live for the excitement and the challenge of each day, always changing. Students bring their own agenda and it is the power and dynamics of the group that determines their individual achievements. I may influence or guide but ultimately it is each student's decision to learn. I set the tone and the pace and try to draw "them" out, "their inner self," that special something we each have to give. I want students to experience and feel the passion of learning (Journal, June 16, 1996).

Emotions belong to a certainty of the self and are attached to events and objects in movement manifested in the experience (Dewey, 1934). Passion allows me to feel intensely, making moments memorable. I value what passion does to my being and how it effects learning. I seek to share this experience of passion with students through art. Through our emotions we make judgments about our "selves" and how they project values and ideals through which we live and through which we experience our lives (Solomon, 1977). I believe that living a passionate life allows each of us to value ourselves more fully by pouring meaning into our lives. What Aristotle called eudaimonia, "living well," is the attainment of wisdom, the "harmony of the soul" where rationality is the search of the passions to achieve self-esteem (Solomon, 1977). My belief is that students are responsible for their learning which results in their taking ownership for their

achievements and thereby increases their self-esteem. We create our “selves” by identifying those passions with which I believe people can live best, while accepting responsibility for the world (Solomon, 1977).

My passion for teaching demands that I reflect on my teaching. I am concerned with my thoughts, actions and behaviors that impact upon the students, faculty and parents (Journal, July 23, 1996).

The most central and entrenched of all of our values have to do with the respect and opinions of other people and are therefore the key to our strongest passions (Solomon, 1977). I am linked passionately to the people in my profession. The fabrics of our lives, our prereflective and social projections which are our passions are meaningful only insofar as we put meaning into them (Solomon, 1977). The state of being “passionate” constructs meaning in my life as an art educator. “Being is the very becoming of meaning (Dufrenne, 1973, p. 554).” The emotional phase of an experience binds the intellectual with the practical (Dewey, 1934). The experience has meaning when the person is interacting with the environment.

Passion is the light of the flame. Passion is not only intense and overpowering emotions, and desires towards some special object, but ignites my life, giving it significance through teaching and the creation of configurations full of knowledge, facts, and meanings. Emotion is the link to the objects of this world which provides the structures of our world (Solomon, 1977). Artworks of the “Song of the Self” call to be read, interpreted and understood. Like artwork, passion is multi-layered. On first view

the layers may appear simple yet are complex. They are simple in that they are natural states that transcend each other. They are complex in identifying their actual structure, and essence. I ignite the flame, “the true flame is alive in our hearts (Siddha Meditation Ashrams, 1983, p. 66),” to the themes of the “Song of the Self,” which is the heart and soul of my very existence.

Igniting the Flame

Chapter 2

Song of the Self



Igniting the flame of the themes of passion begins the journey of the “Song of the Self”. Gadamer (1995) suggests we start with the experience of art to present the hermeneutic phenomenon in its full extent. The “Song of the Self” is the depiction and essence of passion embodied in myself.

“Song of the Self” began stark white to symbolize my entry into the world. The transparent color represents my life experiences, the ebb and flow, as they grow, multi-leveled on each other. The underlying symbol is Sanskrit for Om (I am that), meaning I am in all things and all things in me.

The *Upanishads* referred to Om as “the supreme syllable, the mother of all sound,” and sound was Great Goddess’s tool of creation. She invented the Sanskrit alphabetical letters, which were *matrika*, “Mothers”. Om was the *mantra-matrika*, the Mother of Mantras; that is, the first of all the creative spells spoken by the Goddess to bring the world into being. When the Goddess created all things by speaking their names in her magic language, “as from a mother comes birth, so from *matrika*, or sound, the world proceeds”....Oriental teachings surrounding the Om as ‘creative Word’ were the true roots of the Christian doctrine of the Logos, the Word of God that was supposed to have made the world, and have become incarnate in Jesus. Before it was Christian, this doctrine was Greek (Hermes was the Logos of Zeus)..... (Walker, 1988, p. 99).

Om represents the spiritual nature of passion within the self. The quotation

“Passions and passions alone provide our lives with meaning (Solomon, 1977, p. xvi)” frames the circumference. The importance of the quotation lies in my belief that words and images together are essential in delivering meaning. Language and pictures participate in shaping each other and the world as we know them (Goodman, 1976). “Words can only become images metaphorically and visual images cannot be replaced by words; but both are necessary to help us make meaning (Danto, 1996, in Stankiewicz, p. 5).” Transparent shreds of rice paper ride on the surface marking the piece, scarring like life’s pain. The gold represents our optimum life experiences. “The self contains everything that has passed through consciousness: all the memories, deeds, desire, pleasures, and suffering (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990b, p. 34).”

The “Song of the Self” reflects how this inquiry begins with me, but is not just about me. It is about each of us and the special gifts that sing through us if we follow our passions in life. Passion is singing your song, the one you feel, interpret and envision. It is a voice, a way of being in the world as no other.

There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action and because there is only one of you in all of time this expression is unique and if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and be lost, the world will not have it (Graham, in Sharrar, 1992, p. 29).

I interpret this life force, this vitality as fire and passion that is expressed through the Self. “There is one fire that enters the world and assumes the forms of the objects it

enters; likewise, the one inner Self of all beings assumes the forms of whatever it enters, while continuing to exist outside all forms (Siddha Meditation Ashrams, 1983, p. 141).” This refers to the notion of “I am that,” and expresses the idea of the self as a universal force of nature. “The Self is eternal amid the transient; pure consciousness amid limited consciousness; one among many; and the fulfiller of all desires (Siddha Meditation Ashrams, 1983, p. 142).” It is from this life force that passion is given in many forms.

Some people block this force and I suggest that not only has the world not been enriched but that those people become deadwood. They become dry and cold merely trudging through the motions and routines of life. The following poem by Rilke expresses his profound understanding of the experience of not following your heart.

*Now, already, the ripening barberries grow red,
and the old asters barely breathe in their beds.
Whoever is not rich, now that summer goes
will wait and wait and never be themselves.*

*The man who cannot simply close his eyes
knowing there is image after image
far inside him, quietly waiting until night
to rise all around him in the dark
it's all finished for him, he's just like an old man.*

*Nothing comes to greet him any more, nothing happens
all day, and even the things that do happen cheat him,
even you my God. And you are like a stone that draws him,
day by day, into your depths.*

(Rilke, 1994, in Whyte, p. 240)

There are particular harvests that only can be gathered in season and we painfully face the fact that some part of us may not have planted in the first place (Whyte, 1994).

Whyte goes on to say that people bereft of the inner images that are based on the soul's desire, have no fire in the hearth and will starve if they are not fed sustenance. Rilke asks us to follow our hearts to feel the soul's images and desires, the gravitational pull of God's presence, that draws us to the work to which we belong and love (Whyte, 1994). Whyte concludes that "a soulful approach to work is probably the only way an individual can respond creatively to the high-temperature stress of modern work life without burning to a crisp in the heat (p. 79)". I return to the quotation "It is our passions, and our passions alone that provide our lives with meaning (Solomon, 1977, p. xvi)" as the heart and soul that ignites the flame for the "Song of the Self". A person whose life is meaningless is a person who is not emotionally committed (Solomon, 1977).

The more I engage in art and teaching the more passionate I become. I feel self indulgent and selfish sometimes enjoying it so much when others around me seem to deny themselves the same joy.

I ask why is that? Why do people not follow their heart, their loves, their passions? What possesses people to punish themselves so? Passion is what gets me up in the morning, puts a smile on my face, makes me feel good about others and myself. It truly directs my life. Passion is my state of being that realizes dreams (Journal, July 28, 1996).

Realizing Dreams

Passion in my life as an art educator is realizing dreams: personal

and professional dreams; having students realize their dreams; and together living these dreams out. I am real with my students, creating relationships and an environment where dreams come true. We work, play, struggle, and celebrate in our accomplishments. The passion in teaching art is about dreaming, imagining big ideas, and seeing them come alive and visible. Creating the "Alberta High School of Fine Arts" was a life long dream, shared by other faculty members and myself. At first I thought passion was just a dream, but it is more. It is also action! Without action the dream just lies there.

Passion is about realizing dreams such as: waking up every morning and loving going to work; knowing your students can't wait to be in the art class; having parents tell you their child now loves going to school; creating artworks that are truly meaningful; critiquing artwork and making meaningful aesthetic judgments; a student's profound aesthetic experience of a Monet original in a London gallery; annual Limited Edition Print competitions that provide unique professional artist experiences; creating a twenty square meter, chalk, Birthday Cake for the International Children's Festival which is the largest chalk art in the Guinness Book of World Records and which was signed by the Prime Minister of Canada, Jean Chretien; placing first in provincial exhibitions and winning scholarships; working with professional artists; mentoring;

visiting galleries; attending gallery openings; attending faculty shows at art colleges and universities; student commissions; having a student create and present a proposed core course for all our programs called "Professionalism in the Arts;" all applicants from our art program have been accepted to the Alberta College of Art and Design; exhibiting and selling student and teacher artwork to the University of Calgary; and then being commissioned to do it again (Journal, June 3, 7, 8, July 10, & 17, 1996).

I wrestle with how to make visible this "Realizing Dreams". Passion grows over time, rages and flows as my life and life experiences unfold. It gnaws at my soul, making me restless, interrupting my dreams and my sleep. I awake with ideas, rampant, angry, feelings of urgency in expressing these ideas. The ideas are not always fully understandable, but more like impressions in a code or language I decipher. They emerge from an enveloping rich energy field, a collective consciousness. I tap into this field sometimes through sleep, meditation, or daydreaming. When I rationalize or think it helps to develop the ideas, but this is not the source. It comes more from feelings inside. Like the self plugging into an energy field of desire, all possible, and all potential. Waiting, more open and inviting. Out of this field, dreams are created, yet to be realized. The passion lives here and within me. A connection of interaction, symbolism

and love in the endless energy field of possibilities (Journal, June 2, 1996).

When an artist is said to be inspired the experience is often described as being forced to serve the work through a labor whose end they cannot foresee (Dufrenne, 1973). Passion transforms the vision into unexpected expressions. It molds and shapes its own voice. The real work of an artist according to Dewey (1934) is to forge an experience coherent in perception while shifting with its constant transformation and development. The artist responds to his/her subjective needs and to the image he/she has created through a series of trials and errors like life itself (Cherny, 1961). “Realizing Dreams” is an endless energy field of possibilities that I am able to connect with. It is choice, change, empowerment (a dynamic force or power to motivate) which fosters risk-taking, experimentation, decision making and action.

I am passionate about becoming the best teacher I can be and providing the best art education possible for students to realize dreams. My passion in teaching evolves out of a strong foundation of commitment to an engagement in excellence, which carries with it particular values and philosophies (Journal, June 8, 1996).

Engagement in Excellence

Passion defines my degree of engagement in excellence. I listen to my students, conduct research, and through the experience of teaching, have developed a way of

instructing art that is interactive. The interaction is directed by experience where decisions are made based on recognizing elements of the interaction that occur in the act of responding.

Students interpret, choose, combine and manipulate the curriculum objectives to create personalized objectives and lessons that fit their own interests, their passions, giving relevance to their learning. Through artistic innovation, the students create new curricula that are relevant, creative and founded on personal commitment and passion. Students are active learning partners in a flexible and creative process. Artists develop their own style as they follow their inner paths (Journal, July 6, & 7, 1996).

The studio is the fundamental shell or space in which we play out our dreams. The walls are decorated with posters that explain design, composition, drawing, art history and various media. The air is filled with music, display albums reflect past classes and student achievement, media areas are organized and the atmosphere is welcoming. The students actively move throughout the space, observe others, and focus on their own artworks while learning how to manipulate media, and manage their time while engaging in their passions (Journal, July 11, 1996).

The palette of an artist is a signature. It grows, develops and becomes particular. Feedback from my students is my lighthouse on how

things should change, responding to their needs, always firm on a solid foundation from which to grow and be flexible (Journal, July 14, 1996).

"Interaction" is my role and my relationship with the student. I interact with the subject matter, and environment as an artist. As a facilitator, mentor and catalyst I am flexible in that relationship. I feel confident in my understanding of the curriculum, employ a variety of teaching styles and feel comfortable with students controlling their own learning. This requires that I genuinely value students by treating them with respect and trusting in their ability to achieve excellence. I try to bring out what is already there. Each child carries a special gift waiting to be opened, discovered, a song to be sung. I follow my heart in my passion for teaching and encourage students to do so as well (Journal, July 20, 1996).

It is our passions that constitute the framework within which our knowledge of the facts has relevance and meaning (Solomon, 1977). The painting "Engagement in Excellence" represents a medallion, a circular form of striving for excellence. There is a cyclical ebb and flow of the intensity of love in the work. The Celtic knot design symbolizes the overlapping, layering, and weaving of the attention to detail required by the elements of excellence. The star knots are two layers. The center represents the students. The outer rings illustrate "Art as Experience," "Art as Cultural Anthropology," and "Art as Aesthetics and Criticism". Excellence in art education emphasizes mentoring,

professional artist experiences and the teacher as a facilitator of self-directed learning.

I continually challenge myself and others to do their best. Sometimes it's easy, sometimes a struggle. The paths for each are different and it is in respect of these differences that passion embraces dialectical dynamics (Journal, July 22, 1996).

Dialectic Dynamics

The search for meaning moves on a continuum of opposing feelings and structures of knowing such as: work and play; conflict and peace; frustration and contentment; structure and flexibility; intense and relaxed; agony and ecstasy; methodical and spontaneous; thinking and sensing; simple and complex; impatience and patience; ebb and flow; powerfulness and gentleness; and suffering and pleasure.

It was a frenzied crazy day. The students had their own intense rhythm. I felt "piranhaized," my own term for students six deep asking simultaneous questions, all needing assistance, wanting marking done, needing special supplies, wanting attention or direction. The class is a robust, fervent, flurry of activity as students are engaged, diverse, intense, and experiencing panic attacks about completing quality artworks for an upcoming exhibition. In addition I am trying to fit in my own agenda of media demonstrations in raku firing and Japanese brushwork, and add to that; greeting, touring and accommodating unexpected guests who are

potential new students, their parents, and a teacher from the Calgary Public system, who just dropped by, unannounced, to observe for the day.

This was truly a day from hell (Journal, June 14, & August 20, 1996).

I compare this description with one from a previous day.

I feel as if I am drifting on a powerful current slowly meandering on a path. The river of passion enveloping me, flowing, ebbing, cascading, cool, inviting and dreamlike. Sometimes I bump the shore and need to set a new course, but there is no rush, no pressure, nor urgency. Just a gentle nudge and on I go again. I question? Is this work or play (Journal, August 9, 1996)?

Passion is described by Fourier (1851/1968) as having the duality of development where pain and pleasure are its sources. "Dialectic Dynamics" are the thumbprint of passion. Each person has a unique thumbprint. A thumbprint separates us from animals and passion or the manner in which we express our passion also sets us apart from each other. The painting "Dialectic Dynamics" is done entirely with my hands except for the small area produced through the means of technology. One image is small and the other large. One image is crisp and clear in black and white, the other one, in subtle color, laden heavy in impasto. The line is drawn between the two opposites, yet they embrace on a continuum of subject matter.

I bathe in the luxury of knowing I have this passion that makes my life so alive. When you have such a deep attachment everything is very

personal. This is a fine line to walk. It is a continual balancing act to be firmly planted in your convictions and flexible enough to change. It is exciting and heartbreaking. The heartbreak can be deep, causing suffering and pain (Journal, July 22, 1996).

Suffering

The suffering in passion is a physical and mental process of enduring pain that cannot be hidden by denial and that I want to fight against or escape from. Through inherited sensibility artists have identified spirituality and seriousness with the ability to evade or transcend the penalty of suffering and passion (Sontag, 1967).

Suffering. I do suffer. So many things cause pain. Pain. What is pain? How do I suffer? My gut turns, aches, tightens, and gnaws at me. Suffering causes physical pain. So many times I have battled with the continual wrenching of my mind and body. So many questions are left unanswered in my life. Why am I not satisfied in my life? There are so many hurdles to leap and so many brick walls to break down. So many questions about why people can not be happy in life. Why do people search for discomfort? Why can I not be whom I want to be? Why will people not see me for who I really am? Why do people not listen?

Now I scream, so loud, so unbearably loud, yet no one hears me. The days when the students don't listen, or when the staff treats me like

another kid, or when I see the look in administration's eyes when I suggest something and they look at me like I don't know what I am talking about, all adds to the stress, pain and suffering.

So much pain, physical and mental are reflected in "Casting of Injuries". So long ago I created this piece yet remembering the torturous methods in which it was created has sent me into shock. I try to deny all feelings reoccurring as I write. This artwork was definitely painful both physically and mentally. I began knowing that if I was to truly express my feelings I had to find the most physically painful media to work in. Initially I thought of paint but I have overcome my fears through experimentation. Secondly, I considered clay. Clay however is not physically or mentally painful enough. Deep consideration was needed. Although dreading the thought of working with styrofoam I knew that it was the only media that would truly reflect how I have been feeling. The sounds echo in my mind and will not go away. Carving styrofoam is not just like nails on a chalkboard to me but more like a knife wrenching into my back. I screamed inside, my mind crying for the pain to go away. It followed me everywhere. As I carved out the chunks they got stuck in my shoes only to find the sound haunting me with every step I took. Finally the carving was over. Burning the styrofoam with a torch caused its blistering. I wanted to fight back, only then to recall my fears of fire from

when I was a child.

Watching the students working in the classroom has proven to be a healing process for me. Usually being in the classroom lets the pain go away or become less suffocating. I felt now that I needed some healing. Making paper and molding it into the styrofoam while watching the students work would be my key for sanctuary. Contrary to what I hoped, the suffering could not be hidden. I added a natural herb tea to my paper thinking that the scent would encourage therapy. I can't hide. Allergies to the tea caused my hands to blister reminding me for another week of the torment and pain I feel.

How can I exorcise this pain? I do it through the "Song of the Self" where I bare myself (Journal, August, 1996).

Professional Nudity

I make myself vulnerable, baring who I am. There is a nudity of the self, a professional nudity. I am trusted because I am real with my students. The relationship is open. I do not hide behind the title "teacher" and the power and control it can wield. I put myself on the same playing field and we explore together, celebrating the successes and enduring the disappointments while commanding mutual respect. Respect is not imposed but earned over time as we connect in the common bonds

of the love of creating art. There is compassion, understanding, genuine deep caring, and concern wrapped up in unconditional love. I listen and expect them to be real with me. A sharing of who we are. I am excited about what I do and what students are capable of doing. This positive energy is so intoxicating it invites and draws us into creating art (Journal, July 27, & August 24, 1996).

I make inquiries into the students' lives, about their hobbies, interests and concerns. I genuinely care when a problem arises. I really listen and try to "be there" for each student. I understand, tolerate and appreciate our human imperfections. How we solve problems defines the integrity in our relationships. Honesty, tempered with compassion, is what I strive for. I try to assist students in solving their own problems. In this way they own the result and realize the successes as personal triumphs created through their own abilities and accomplishments. This is where self-esteem really grows, as well as in the mentoring, the being trusted to help another. These gifts go with them forever (Journal, August 24, 1996).

Teaching kids means cultivating the ability to hear their novel character and ideals and then to be struck by those (Jardine, 1996). There is an importance in knowing and listening to learners in a way that their most base utterings become profound (Foggin, 1996). This knowing and listening is bound in the relationship we choose to form in the

lifeworld of a child. I suggest it is passion that allows distinct voices to be not only heard but amplified through a relationship. Passion is a dynamic energy field that is produced through the interaction and relationships formed. An emotion, such as passion, is a decision to have a certain relationship (Solomon, 1977).

Passion provides my life with meaning where the "how" of that meaning is experienced is through relationships between myself, students, classroom, environment, curriculum, media, creation of art, writing, and the world. Passion exists in the interaction of relationships becoming visible through them and amplified by them (Journal, August 22, & 28, 1996).

We define ourselves in terms of our relationships and our potential for them...The Self is not the faceless form that wears the masks of everyday life, a transcendental Self that itself is never seen. But neither is the Self the sum of those masks, our appearances to other people and our objective roles in the world. Rather, the Self is the wearing of those masks (Solomon, 1977, p. 91).

"Where My Journal Lives," is the artwork representing professional nudity. It is open, no locks or keys, leaving me vulnerable. The black signifies the mysterious, obscure relationship which passions reveal. The surface texture is modeled and undulating, contrasting with the linear trapezoid shape analogous to students and teachers defining their relationships in a structured system bound by codes, ethics, and authority. When the

box is fully open the shape resembles a coffin wherein lays the “death” of tradition. The mask of myself represents the personal facing of “truth” where the streams of gold and silver pour out binding my vision in kinship to an unfolding art education.

Teaching art is an artistic process where the passion lives and breathes between the layers, holding it all together like a binding medium (Journal, June 2, 1996).

Passion connects my experiences to form a way of knowing which intuitively directs the flow of my teaching. How I instruct, conduct and orchestrate my pedagogical passion shapes the experience the students undergo. My philosophy or “truth” of teaching is: treat students with respect. Love them, understand them, be sensitive to them, listen to them and expect from them. Provide a learning environment that is varied and exciting. Do not compare them, as each is unique and holds special gifts. Allow them to unfold naturally. Empower them to control and direct their own learning. Lead through example. Teaching art is a spiritual relationship between myself, passion, students, knowledge, learning, and art (Journal, July 4, 1996).

The passion I have for teaching melds a relationship and a sense of loving responsibility. “I experience the undeniable presence of loving responsibility: a child who calls upon me may claim me in a way that leaves me no choice (Van Manen, 1990, p. 6).” The claim that is made upon me is to be professionally nude. I engage in a way of

teaching that allows students and their ideas to be validated. This relationship promotes and gives students permission to take responsibility for their learning. This claim on me addresses the idea that learning is a reciprocal situation without a hierarchical order (Foggin, 1996).

Passion ignites the flame of the “Song of the Self,” my state of being, and becoming who I am, so that I can make meaning in my life. I gaze into the smoldering fire within to discover how passion informs my art as a way of seeing and embodiment.

Chapter 3

The Smoldering Fire Within

The love within, the love of self and other is within my paintings. It is not visible, but may be felt by those who view the work. It is subtle and luring. It draws you into the work. I am true to myself in the vision, execution and resulting painting. Only these works instill the passion, the smoldering fire within. Passion is embodied in an artist in “what” and “how” an artist sees. Passion is the love we put into--the degree or strength of that love that emanates in a work of art. The ecstasy of art lends strength to life and warmth to the mind where such passions are genuine experiences, full of fire and authentic fundamental growth (Arnold, 1968).

Art as a Burning Passion

Plato told us long ago how passion, or, as he put it Eros, moves toward the creation of form. Eros moves toward the making of meaning and the revealing of Being. Originally a daimon called love, Eros is the lover of wisdom, and the force in us that brings to birth both wisdom and beauty. Plato says through Socrates that “human nature will not easily find a helper better than love [Eros].” “All creation or passage of non-being into being is poetry or making,” Plato writes, “and the processes of all art are creative; and the masters of arts are all poets or makers.” Through

Eros or the passion of love, which is daimonic and constructive at the same time, Plato looks forward to “at last the vision...of a single science, which is the science of beauty everywhere” (May, 1975, p. 158 & 159).

Passion is the basis of creation. The artist’s creation originates from passionate excitement about the subject matter (Dewey, 1934). The transcendent power of artistic creation is the awakening of every kind of emotion in us through every content of life where there is a realization of all these movements of soul-life (Hegel, 1975). The very soul of our existence is the passions (Solomon, 1977). A precise knowledge of the truth of form must be balanced with a proven familiarity with the souls of human beings, the passions that ascend in the heart, and everything that I desire and strive for (Hegel, 1975).

A work of art is good if it has grown out of necessity. In this manner of its origin lies its true estimate: there is no other....I could give you not advice but this: to go into yourself and to explore the depths whence your life wells forth; as its source you will find the answer to the question whether you *must* create. Accept it as it sounds, without enquiring too closely into every word. Perhaps it will turn out that you are called to be an artist. Then take your fate upon yourself and bear it, its burden and its greatness, without ever asking for that reward which might come from without. For the creator must be a world for himself, and find everything within himself, and in Nature to which he has attached himself (Rilke, 1966, p. 218).

An artist has the passion of work born in him and the very notion of art demands that the productive energy of the soul and its artistic realizations go hand in hand (Hegel, 1975). Artistic inspiration is wrapped up within the soul that seeks to express itself in the unfolding and revealing to us the essential substance of the subject where both the soul and substance radiate embodiment in art (Hegel, 1975).

I believe the passion has always been in me but to varying degrees.

I have searched for a means of expressing it. It grows over time, rages and flows as my life and life experiences unfold. It gnaws at my soul, making me restless, interrupting my dreams and my sleep (Journal, June 2, 1996).

As a maker of art, I construct meaningful forms that sing the “Song of the Self”. This is a soulful activity as I interpret my world through passion. It is through emotion and emotional energy that the artist expresses a claim to the substance and embodiment of artwork as part of his/her own spiritual substance, as something of the self that unites an affinity with our very souls (Hegel, 1975).

The unseen knowing of passion is something I call on and it calls on me. It is a bond and relationship stronger than blood, family and friends. It is an anchor for the soul, or is it the soul? Is passion the soul of our self, the voice speaking and guiding...or perhaps our mission in life? Passion defines who and what I am. Without it I have no future and

*no past. My soul speaks through thoughts, language and vision,
inseparable from passion; embodiment (Journal, August 11, 1996).*

I experience passion as it drives me to create. The process of creation and the artworks themselves bind me to this world in time and space. The Romantics admired passion and worshipped genius above all for their exceptional vision and self-driving power (Solomon, 1977). Passions tie me to the moments of my life with a sense of secure yet transient permanence (Solomon, 1977). “My aim is a continuous, sustained, uncontrived image motivated by nothing but passion (Lebrum, 1961, p. 31).” Rothko (1961) believes that he expresses basic human emotions--tragedy, ecstasy, doom and so on--and the fact that people break down and cry when confronted with his art shows that he communicates those basic human emotions. “I paint not the things I see but the feelings they arouse in me (Kline, 1961, in Rodman, p. 105).” The affective quality of expressing the deep self is manifest in the work of art that epitomizes the soul and the work’s affective quality (Dufrenne, 1973).

The “Song of the Self” is a painting that embodies the experience of passion within me. The voice of the self imparts the state of being centered and expressing that which only I have to share. The voice emanates from a fluid, permeable, porous core within that is built on past experiences. Works of art are made up of and possess qualities of feeling and emotion found only in experience (Tilghman, 1970). Art and love are united where the artists’ producing consciousness are active and proactive, imaginative and free even in the retroactive exploration of their own history (Beittel, 1973).

The melody of the song is how I express my interpretation of passion, the diversity and unpredictable outcomes of those experiences. Artistic expression is secured in the reworking of the raw and primitive experience (Dewey, 1934). Dewey suggests that the act of expression that constitutes a work of art is a construction in time, a prolonged interaction of both self and circumstances in a process where form and order are stirred into action in fresh desire, impulses and images. The object is to describe the phenomena in such a way as to know, with a depth of penetration achieved through feeling (Wyeth, 1961). I want to share an example of how this “Song of the Self” is about each of us and the special gifts that sing through us, that builds from life experiences.

There is great power of personal experiences expressed through art. One student I had this year created an artwork that told a story. It was composed of thirteen scribble drawings and paintings taped onto a science-fair board. The story was expressed through the eyes of a three-year old child. This presented a real challenge to a seventeen-year old male artist. The series of pictures and hand prints tell of the death of his twin brother who drowned at the age of three. All of his artworks relate to this tragic event and loss in his life (Journal, July 18, 1996).

The making of art is best understood with an artist's series of works that link meaning through time with all the echo of occurrences along the way (Beittel, 1973). This student's series of artworks reflects his changing thoughts and emotions. The artist's series is active, changing and a movement of desire where artists evoke their own peculiar

stream of consciousness in the expressive act (Beittel, 1973). Beittel states that the search for meaning and understanding is found in the individual artist's own series of works (the context) and the setting in which they occur. This student created the artworks in a supportive and trusting environment that allowed him to express his innermost feelings.

He skillfully employed methods to disguise the symbolism throughout the drawings. He released a great deal of tension, pain and grief through art. He has developed an intense sensitivity to illustrating children while maintaining his passion with life and death issues. As he progresses he appears more able to move on and to let go of the pain. It has been a creative, transforming experience and journey of personal growth in expressing a conceptually complex work of art (Journal, July 18, 1996).

This student expressed his deep emotions of grief and loss. Works of art should essentially concern an author's world. They should communicate ideas, notions, feelings and beliefs about life and every aspect of it (Baskin, 1961). Art transmits thoughts, experiences and feelings of people like love, tenderness and rage (Tolstoy, 1995; Wayne, 1961). It was in the continuous "working out" of his emotions through his art that he was capable of creating a work of art that was aesthetically full of passion. Natural emotions are transformed as they are evoked and attached to materials that are expressive (Dewey, 1934). Dewey views art as nature transformed into new relationships that evoke emotional responses. This art student created new relationships with the artistic form that

stemmed from a combination of passion for his subject and his imagination. Feelings accompany and complete imagination as sketching out relationships (Ricoeur, 1978). The artwork drew out the stinging emotions that surround the death of an infant in full display. The relations of line for the artist become full of meaning as he passionately sees them more distinctly in the development of the new form (Dewey, 1934). He suggests that an artist is gifted with an element of passion in aesthetic perception in that they are unusually sensitive to the qualities of things. This student mastered the profound sensitivity of what it is to be a child, and gained the ability to express his grief about it.

Everything you think and feel reflects who you are....To dive deeper into yourself and, hopefully, to get to that place where you are love, compassion, trust, and truth, you have to follow the path of your present responses...Your emotions are the most present-centered thing you have. An emotion is a thought linked to a sensation. The thought is usually about the past or the future, but the sensation is in the present. (Chopra, 1993, p. 185).

The entire world of particular existence, whatever can be found in the human heart, as emotion, idea, and purpose, and whatever is capable of being shaped may form the diverse varied presentations of painting (Hegel, 1975). The activity of art is based on the ability to express feelings that are capable of moving and infecting others to experience those same emotions of admiration, devotion, fear, and love evoked through the medium

of movements, lines, colors, or forms (Tolstoy, 1995). The emotional quality of paintings must be understood within the context of a certain kind of experience (Tilghman, 1970).

When this student's artwork was presented in a group show at the University of Calgary the audience was overcome with emotions. People shared the pain and agony, openly shedding tears. The original emotion becomes aesthetic in nature through this transformation formed by the expressive act (Dewey, 1934). A work of art is seized through feelings as well as through the senses and an emotional aesthetic experience defines what properties a work of art has (Goodman, 1976). Without emotion, there may be workmanship, but not art (Dewey, 1934). Passions are visualized structures (Solomon, 1977), where art is the ideal medium for expression.

The difference between representation and expression is that expression is of feelings and representation is of objects or events (Goodman, 1976). Artistic expression is based on the intelligent inspiration in people's nature to raise both the worlds of the soul's experience and that of earthly existence into a concrete object in which the artist rediscovers self (Hegel, 1975). This student came to terms with a powerful tragedy and deep emotions through a series of artworks where the expression of his "grief" transformed him. The evidence of self-discovery is in the artist, where a series of artworks emanates from the process and experience of "seeing".

Seeing and Embodiment

I am driven, compelled and transformed by passion. I think and see differently, more clearly somehow. There is more going on here of which I am a part. I feel more alive than ever. I want to seek out those hidden trails of who I am, and how I am, for with it comes new self-discovery. Being in tune with the passion, flowing fresh, and alive, is like the exhilarating feeling one gets as a child in discovering something new (Journal, September 7, 1996).

Passion, the caring about something increases our ability to see clearly as we look more carefully (Pitcher, 1994). Solomon (1977, p. 6) writes, "The key to concrete philosophy is the passions; to understand them is to understand the essential structures of human experience....it is with an understanding of particular passions that we in any sense understand ourselves".

Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak. But there is also another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled. Each evening we see the sun set. We *know* that the earth is turning away from it. Yet the knowledge, the explanation, never quite fits the sight (Berger, 1972, p. 7).

This presents a gap between the seeing and knowing. Berger (1972) confronts this gap with pictorial essays. I am proposing to bridge this gap by making art that embodies passion. To look is an act of choice and the way we see things is influenced by what we know or what we believe (Berger, 1972). Berger declares that we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves. We find that language, ideology and art are founded upon a more fundamental link between human beings and world--namely embodiment.

Passion and art are an anchor for my soul. It is a voice that speaks and guides my mission in life with thoughts, language and vision, inseparable. Passion and art define who I am, a mind--body thing: embodiment (Journal, August 11, 1996).

Passion is a body, embedded, embodied inside and throughout. A painter produces a body of work--impassioned. Passion lives and breathes in me (Journal, October 13, 1996).

“With all its sensuous means, it is art that gives this dimension its fullest expression (Crowther, 1993a, p. 54).” “The visual arts provide this sense of discovery in the form of concrete objects that embody human action (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990a, p. 183).”

Every image embodies a way of seeing. The painter's way of seeing is reconstituted by the marks he makes on the canvas or paper. Yet, although every image embodies a way of seeing, our perception or appreciation of an image depends also upon our own way of seeing.....No

other kind of relic or text from the past can offer such a direct testimony about the world which surrounded other people at other times. In this respect images are more precise and richer than literature. To say this is not to deny the expressive or imaginative quality of art, treating it as mere documentary evidence; the more imaginative the work, the more profoundly it allows us to share the artist's experience of the visible (Berger, 1972, p. 10).

The "Song of the Self" is an imaginative work that expresses my experience of passion in a visible way. I leave traces in the form of artworks that reflect what I see, feel, interpret and express. "Every animal leaves traces of what it was; man alone leaves traces of what he created (Bronowski, 1973, p. 38)." My artworks reflect what I see in a particular time and space. What is essential in art is the ability of the artist to enable us to see their way of seeing the world, as given by them, expressing the interior that mirrors a cultural period (Danto, 1981). Art is a reconstruction of an experience.

Before an artist can develop his reconstruction of the scene before him in terms of the relations of colors and lines characteristic of his picture, he observes the scene with meanings and values brought to his perception by prior experiences. These are indeed remade, transformed, as his new esthetic vision takes shape (Dewey, 1934, p. 89).

The artist is a person creating meaning in a dynamic process of symbolically expressing their experiences in the real world (Beittel, 1973). One of the functions of

imaginations is to project new possibilities of redescribing the world (Ricoeur, 1978). Art transcends reality as it is and attests instead how it could be (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990a). The work of art gives a sensuous interpretation through the artist's style that distends the world into fuller meaning (Crowther, 1993a).

"The more personal the art, the more meaningful is the model of reality it provides (Shiff, 1978, p. 110)." Not all art is passionate, but may maintain technical proficiency. "The natural talent and genius of the artist in essence requires development by thought, reflection on the method of its proficiency, and practice and expertise in producing (Hegel, 1993, in Crowther, p. 47)." Art is a dialogue between artist and evolving work called artistic causality, idiosyncratic meaning and intentional symbolization (Beittel, 1973). These elements are important but what is even more critical is that the more personal the art the more passion that emanates from it.

Each person is a unique individual, and though we can expect different subjects to share a common phenomenal field and similar carnal formulae (through the fact that we are all embodied), each person will have his own style of relating his body to the field.....In re-creating or exploring these original responses through the handling of a medium, the artist not only responds to, but in a sense, relearns the situation(s) which give rise to his equivalences. Consider the example of a woman passing by:

If I am... a painter, what will be transmitted to the canvas will no longer be only a vital or sensual value. There will be in the painting not

just 'a woman' or 'unhappy woman' or a 'hatmaker'. There will also be the emblem of a way of inhabiting the world, of handling it, and of interpreting it by a face as by clothing, by ability of gesture as by inertia of body -- in short, the emblem of a certain relationship to being (Crowther, 1993a, p. 44-45).

"Art connects because artists make it connect, because artists strive to express not just the anatomy of bodies but the anatomy of the human condition and of the universe that impinges upon it (Perkins, 1994, p. 90)." It is what the artist sees, the selection, and discrimination of that vision that connects the human condition with expression. The artist strives for a deeper understanding of what the human condition is through the creation and process of creation.

Passion is the interaction of pushing and pulling myself to achieve, a relationship, a bond, or a language I understand tacitly, an invisible knowing. A way of being and becoming that is transcendent. My inner self grows stronger as the passion grows stronger. The love of teaching art is my life. All parts evolve around the center of this passion. It integrates my experiences, centers them and focuses who I am (Journal, June 23, 1996).

Passion is the reaching out to new levels, letting yourself expand, taking risks and pushing limits. It forces us to take the next step, drives us onward into unknown territory. Passion will not allow me to stand still.

Always forward. Through reflection passion can be ignited but it moves us forward, pushing, motivating, pulling and demanding. The passion seems to grow when I am in touch with my current flow of life. I move on a continuum, time, building on experiences that connect the passion in the development of a critical eye (Journal, June 25, 1996).

I listen to this unseen force guiding my life as it directs the choices that I make in the creation of art. Passion strengthens my abilities to teach and make assessments as I pay specific attention to detail. It is the development of a critical eye. Passion demands reflection, to know where to go, and how to proceed. To be passionate about teaching art means I connect to the world in a unique way. I discover my inner self, my song to sing, my gifts to the world, only found in me where passion and art are a way of knowing.

PART TWO: FINGERS OF THE FIRE

Chapter 4

Dance of the Intelligent Fire

The dance of intelligent fire comes from within the self where passion and art are embodied ways of knowing. Art is the embodiment of love and passion. “The artist has so much love to give back to the universe that it spills over, and the fallen drops become ‘works of art’ (Jackson, 1992, in Steward & Kent, p. 172).” As Jackson so eloquently put it, art is love in another form. Western contemporary culture has treated love [passion] with no serious artistic validity (Ahasiw, 1996). Ahasiw suggests that western art theory has been dominated by the antiseptic Lacanian psychoanalytic construction of desire where there is little basis for any discussion of love. He further challenges the Lacanian notion “loving is giving what one does not have,” with the concept of “co-editorship” where there is “participation in creating an identity in the act of loving and toward establishing a state of vulnerability that can be open to being loved”. Artists engage in this act of loving in the creation of their artworks by exposing themselves, their thoughts, feelings and passions. They become vulnerable.

The human connection, the love we give, the openness to give of oneself, this is where passion lies sleeping. Knowing, understanding and giving passion as I make myself vulnerable, baring who I am (Journal, July 22, 1996).

There is a nudity of the self, a professional nudity. Ellie and I analyzed one of her recent paintings of our classroom. We discussed how it reflected her relationship to teaching. The doors are open, the classroom ready, an apple on a drawing table, white papers on easels. She is discovering herself. We spoke of how the apple represents the rewards, and her openness and readiness to teach. I queried where is the teacher's desk? There was not one there, as Ellie is not yet there, a practicum yet to complete and courses too before she will be certified. She is confused about her role and how she fits in, however, the imprints of students have made their mark on her evident by the marks on the white papers. Her signature balances on a beam, as she is balancing her role. Passion is about relationships, the ones we form with our art, and our students. Passion may provide our lives with meaning, but "how" that meaning is experienced is through relationships (Journal, August 22, 1996).

This example shows the participation in the act of loving and creating art that produces a state of vulnerability. We interpreted this work of art exposing Ellie and her emotional confusion. Art is an interpretation of the world we experience that opens up the self through passion. What is important about Lacanian theories is that he views desire [passion] as the essence of interpretation (Fuery, 1995). Our passions are modes of interpretation of ourselves and our world (Solomon, 1977). It is through our

interpretations that we come to know the world. Artists paint not what they see, but what they are (Glasco, 1961). It is through our passions that we come to know ourselves and our world.

Passion as a Way of Knowing

Ways of knowing are the reflective and active methods that we use to shape and incorporate our experience in the course of forming knowledge and understanding (Artz, 1994). When we are passionate we are actively engaged in communicating the quality of an experience. Emotions are powerful knowing processes and judgments that organize our experiences and actions into coherent meaningful heritages (Malhoney, 1991; Solomon, 1977). There is an intelligent purposiveness of every emotion as it dictates a certain abstract “logic” geared to the particulars of the situation (Solomon, 1977). He declares that our passions constitute the framework within which our knowledge of facts has some relevance and meaning to us. Solomon goes on to say that this framework is interconnected and intertwining, like a web that constitutes the basic structure of our world. Emotions are informative roots of knowledge and understanding that are an essential and dynamic part of our sense-making processes (Artz, 1994).

I was introduced to the power of visual self-expression giving me the ability to articulate thoughts through painting. I became obsessed with the desire to create, loving every moment. I became one with my work. An indescribable feeling so intense that it transcends time and

ecstasy. My insatiable love of art was the deciding factor to become a High School Art Teacher (Journal, July 3, 1996).

Passion is a way of knowing, sensing and relating to the cradle of humanity. It is "how". Thus I approach my beingness in this world of which I am enmeshed. I throw myself over to it, and allow the "how" I do anything to color it...Passion, like the heart, is the seat of where I live (Journal, September 11, 1996).

Every day is new and different. Circumstances change as I do. I listen to my inner self for guidance, making countless decisions. I try to read situations and personalities, weighing what is best. I get a sense of fulfillment when students are excited, absorbed and demanding. Demanding is a positive experience as students desire the most from me, searching me for answers, materials, advice, knowledge, even calling me at home just to talk when they need someone to listen. This career goes far beyond the classroom to lifetime relationships. The richness that surrounds me makes me cherish each class, each student and each experience. I move beyond. It transforms my life. The passion transforms it (Journal, July 23, 1996).

I reflect on how I have been transformed. I am more open, more daring, and exceedingly thankful. My senses are heightened with an awareness that is icy crisp, warmed to the core and painted with colors of

passion. Plunking coins into a fountain. I know that passion shapes, imprints, stretches and carves out my life. The final limits are reached and I am stretched. I search for the target (Journal, August 19, 1996).

In the construction of the series of artworks reflecting passion, I find that my vision has been rewritten. This transformation is about reflection and “sense making” of experiences. The artist gives form to the nature and values of his/her time which in their turn form him (Jung, 1964). Reflection transforms emotions and is a part of the passions (Solomon, 1977).

“An emotion is a transformation of the world (Sartre, 1977, in Solomon, p. 212).” “Jean-Paul Sartre calls the emotions ‘magical transformations of the world’ (Solomon, 1977, p. 230).” The following summarizes Solomon’s discussion of emotions. Emotions are concerned with the way the world ought to be. Every emotion is an ideology, a set of demands on “how the world ought to be” that is not only an interpretation of our world but projects into the future desires that sometimes become intentions and commitments. Emotion as it constitutes our world establishes ideologies such as a set of desires, hopes, demands, and expectations that we seek to satisfy. The meaning of our lives and our emotions depend on the gaps between emotions and their satisfaction, between the “the way the world is” and “the way it ought to be”. It is through a variety of challenges and provocations that we make the most desirable of emotions the central structures of our lives. To understand passion is to understand the essential structures of human experience which in turn allows us to making sense of ourselves and the richness of our lives.

I am impassioned. The connection to inner guided energy that propels me: forward-back; in and out; all simultaneously through life experiences and in unforeseen patterns gives life to my passion. I am living in the moment, thinking through feeling. Passion joins the two. It is a spirit mind, an intelligence, an awareness, a perception linking us to the world around us. The invisible made visible (Journal, September 15, 1996).

David Hume (Solomon, 1993), viewed reason as the slave of passion. Throughout history from the Greeks to Goethe it has been declared, “wisdom” is “the harmony of reason and the passions” (Solomon, 1977). Freud described the passions as themselves having more reason than reason (Solomon, 1993). Decartes spoke of passion as the perceptions, feelings or emotions of the soul that we relate specifically to and which are the ingredients in the good life (Solomon, 1993).

For Aristotle, the ideal of wisdom and the good life was not lack of passion, but the harmony of the passions with reason. Hegel, usually known as a super-rationalist, is well known for the phrase “Nothing great has ever been accomplished without passion.” What is less well known is the fact that he borrowed that phrase almost verbatim from super-duper-rationalist, Kant, who had written in his History that “nothing great has ever been accomplished without enthusiasm”. (The phrase appears again

and again, for example in Benjamin Disraeli, who writes that “man is only truly great when he acts from his passions” (Solomon, 1977, p. 24).

Through art I have discovered a mode of expression which demonstrates how passion and art are ways of knowing.

Art as a Way of Knowing

Art exercises our minds to observe, analyze, probe and muse about its ambiguities in a game of speculation and interpretation (Yenawine, 1994). We prompt our experiential intelligence to arrive at more varied and deeper reading of the work before our eyes (Perkins, 1994). Intellectual inquirers engage with qualities once removed, through the agency of symbols that stand for qualities but are not significant in their near proximity (Dewey, 1934). Artists have the qualities of the things of direct experience for their subject matter (Dewey, 1934). “There are values and meanings that can be expressed only by immediately visible and audible qualities, and to ask what they mean in the sense of something that can be put into words is to deny their distinctive existence (Dewey, 1934, p. 74).”

The word art, from the Latin *ars*, is the skill of the artisan who fits things together: it relates to *arma*, which is a tool for fitting things together, and *articulus*, meaning little joints, from which we derive the word *article*, such as the articles of the constitution which link together (like the knee bone to thigh bone) a culture’s beliefs. Art, of course, is a subset of

everyone's "knowing" and represents, in a variety of ways the relationship between psychic interiors and social exteriors; it is also a way of knowing made to communicate something greater than its parts....art's fundamental making comes from hands and minds and the essential relationship between a hand's "knowing" and a mind's schematizing what it senses intimately know. The relationship of thought and process comprise art's calculus (Rian, 1996, p. 83).

The Greeks used the word *techne* that they applied to craft and art but denotes rather a mode of knowing. "*Techne*....is a bringing forth of being in that it *brings forth* what is present as such *out* of concealment and specifically *into* the unconcealment of its appearance; *techne* never signifies the action of making (Heidegger, 1977, in Krell, p. 184)." To create then, becomes the cause for something to emerge as a truth that has been brought forth in a work of art (Smoke, 1982). It is precisely through our restless dissatisfaction, our seeking for realities that the artist gains that sense of urgency that constitutes what we call emotion in art, therefore truth (Shahn, 1961). Art is the becoming and happening of truth thrust up through the elements with which the artist works (Heidegger, 1982; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Smoke, 1982). The function of art is to reveal truth under the mode of art's sensuous or material configuration (Hegel, 1975). Dufrenne (1973, p. 282) declares "...the truth of the pictorial object is not a relationship of the self to something else, but a relationship of the self with itself".

Thus art is the creative preserving of truth in the work. *Art then is a becoming and happening of truth....* Truth, as the clearing and concealing of beings, happens in being composed. *All art*, as the letting happen of the advent of the truth of beings, is as such, in essence, poetry. The essence of art, on which both the artwork and the artist depend, is the setting-itself-into-work of truth (Heidegger, 1977, in Krell, p. 196 & 197).

Heidegger conceives of art in terms of the propriative event where truth is the object and art is human creating and preserving (Krell, 1977). Merleau-Ponty, and Gadamer, believe that a work of art is in some sense enriched being (an increase in being), in that the artist gives us the “essence” of the subject-matter that “emerges into truth” (Crowther, 1993a). Hegel (1975, p.70) states that “Art is truth the primary instructress of peoples.” whereas Nietzsche (1986, in Campbell, p. 122) declares that “Art is the proper task of life. art is life’s metaphysical exercise....Art is more worth than truth.” Art is a fundamental way of knowing the world (Winner, 1982) that allows a sudden appreciation of and an understanding of our connection to the world (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990a) as truth, an event, an enriched being, capable of teaching and our life task.

Thus, the work of art symbolizes all the levels of reality that lie between the phenomenon and the idea. It counteracts the impoverishment of vision that results when any one of these levels is viewed in isolation of the other and encourages the synthesis of conception that is the mark of wisdom (Arnheim, 1966).

Art today is a neoteric kind of instrument of modifying consciousness and organizing new modes of perceptiveness (Sontag, 1967). The new perceptiveness understands art as the extension of life (Sontag, 1967). The main effect of painting is to resist the entropic tendency of ordinary vision where the painter masters a new alphabetic material and is able to write a new text of reality (Ricoeur, 1976).

Through our passions, we constitute our (subjective) world, render it meaningful and with it our lives and our Selves. The passions are not occurrences but activities; they are not 'inside' our minds but rather the structures we place in our world (Solomon, 1977, p. 169).

The Self is based upon its own ideals and value-laden interpretations, our quintessential judgments of which our passions are the most important (Solomon, 1977). "It is the dialogue, the living relationship of the self, to things, men, and mystery that bring about art, life, and religion (Beittel, 1973, p. 11)." The Self is an ideology which tells us who we believe we ought to be (Solomon, 1977).

Over time, I have become who and what I am and am not. It is an on going process of discovery. I have always used my passion for art as a lighthouse to guide me in the current of life. Harmony, peace and contentment within those passions are the harbor for the force of my nature. I feel the pull of the past influencing and anchoring the expression of my passion. The manifestation of passion and its hidden power instruct me. Passion is excitement, enthusiasm and a commitment

to making a difference in a significant way (Journal, August, 2, & September 15, 1996).

I am reading James Hillman's (1996) book The Soul's Code, in which he speaks of the soul as having a calling. This calling, an intuitive knowing that guides our life, I believe is another name for passion. I knew when I was young I would dedicate my life to teaching. I never realized how much of my life it would take up or that I would feel so strongly about it and art. The passion has always been there but the intensity just keeps growing. Just when I think it can't get any bigger, deeper, truer, more compelling, it does. As my life unfolds, my "calling," is heard in passion, art and education. The song I sing so special and in me (Journal, September 22, 1996).

Merleau-Ponty suggests that art is the most successful method of giving expression to humankind's fundamental contact with being (Crowther, 1993a). Art is the means in which I explore my life task and myself. Works of art serve as bridges for the communication of intensely felt experiences from artist to spectators, from civilization to civilization and from one historical period to another (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990a). Art is knowledge. Experiencing an artwork means sharing in that knowledge where truth is recognized and mediated with historical consciousness (Gadamer, 1995). "Hence aesthetics becomes a history of worldviews—i.e., a history of truth, as it is manifested in the mirror of art (Gadamer, 1995, p. 98)." Art reveals unique forms of knowledge

(Clifford, 1988; Gadamer, 1995). The experience of art connects and communicates thought and passion, giving life to our inner visions and cultural bonds.

Your tradition is “there” always. You’re flexible enough to make of it what you want. It’s always with you. I pray to the old pots at the ruins and dream about making pottery. I tell them I want to learn it. We live for today, but never forget the past.

Our job as artists is to go beyond, which implies a love of change, always accomplished with traditions in mind, by talking to the elders of the tribe and by being with your grandparents. The stories they tell are just amazing. When you become exposed to them, everything becomes a reflection of those events. There’s a great deal of satisfaction being an artist of traditions.

We’ve always had charms: everything that’s new is old with us (Coe, 1990, p. 165).

Art is one of the powerful elements in human culture, both a symptom and a sign of cultural change, and its evolution has significance not only for its own future but for understanding the larger society as well (Berleant, 1991). Art in culture transmits values, attitudes and identifies cultural meaning (McFee, 1966). The result of the work of artists and artisans of particular time and cultures is what we know of human history (Warren, 1984). Art connects culturally and historically by bridging thought across diverse contexts explored in tandem with the work of art ranging from those easily accessible to most

human beings to arcane references only penetrable by a scholar (Perkins, 1994). Art is a means of communication that renders accessible to human beings of the latest generations the evolution of feelings experienced by their predecessors for the well-being of humankind (Tolstoy, 1995).

If Bertand Russell was right when he said in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech that the love of excitement is one of the fundamental motives of man, then art may be valuable because it gives scope to this motive, which otherwise, in a civilized society that no longer hunts, sometimes plays its dangerous part in promoting social unrest and war. For, as Russell also said, the excitement of invention or artistic creation and the excitement of discovery including the discovery and exploration of a new complex work of art are two of the highest, purest and most satisfying types of excitement (Beardsley, 1995, in Neill & Ridley, p. 549).

The artistic drive to create is related to the quest for knowledge and discovery (Winner, 1982). Passion sings this excitement of invention and discovery in each of us. What Russell is describing is the excitement not only of creation but the excitement of discovery found in the heart of an aesthetic experience. Aesthetic experience is tied with subjective responses and the conditions of embodied subjectivity in the reciprocity of sensibility, imagination, and comprehension (Crowther, 1993a).

It is said that the visual image is born in the intensity of individual experience and the work speaks for itself as it delivers its message confidentially to each person who

encounters it (Shiff, 1978). What is implied here is that no interpretation into some other medium or mode, as in discursive thought, is possible without thoroughly changing its existential and presentational meaning (Beittel, 1973). The aesthetic experience of a work of art entails a vibrant, magical return to the world in some way more open and enriched (Sontag, 1967). The very meaning of art cannot be captured except through perception of the work (Dufrenne, 1973).

Artists create art for the sake of realization and transfiguration in a quest of our "Self," that drives us along an eternal journey (Beckmann, in Chipp, 1968). Passion and art as a way of knowing is expressed in the "Song of the Self". These ways of knowing are evident in the symbols, language and text of metaphors and narratives created by an artist that must be experienced and understood. Art is a narrative knowledge; a postmodern way of seeing and knowing (Keith, 1995).

Chapter 5

Listening to the Roar

Listening to the roar of passion that lies in an artwork requires understanding of the unique language in which it is given. The study of art belongs to “communications theory” as it conveys facts, thoughts, and feelings (Goodman, 1976). There is isomorphic resemblance between language games and artistic styles within which thoughts and feelings are expressed through gesture and as they are embedded in conventional practices (Hagberg, 1994). In order for the language of art to become a significant factor in reshaping our lives the artist needs to learn and apply flexible organization: to employ visual illustrations of space-time events; to incorporate this into powerful expressions in the development of dynamic iconography (Kepes, 1964). “Thinking directly in terms of colors, tones, images, is a different operation technically from thinking in words (Dewey, 1934, p. 74).” It is in this robust visual language of aesthetic discourse which encompasses text, metaphor, and narrative that an artist reshapes our world. Art is a text to be read through its symbols and means of expression in the forms of metaphor and narrative.

Art as Text

Humankind has increasingly relied upon systems of significant symbols such as language and art for orientation, communication, and self-control (Geertz, 1973).

Paintings, like writing, are inventions of notational systems presenting analytical properties of discreteness, finite number, and combinatory power (Ricoeur, 1976). For a picture to represent an object it must be a symbol for it, refer to it, as a passage describes an object that denotes it (Goodman, 1976). Art differs from reality in much the same way the contrast exists between reality and discourse (Danto, 1981). "Artistic languages build meaning directly out of sensory qualities, instead of or in addition to the standard meaning of signs (Hecht, 1982, p. 30)."

Language gives an inadequate or distorted expression through the inability to grasp the depth of "invisible" relationships (meanings encountered in perception), whereas art is more valuable in giving voice to this tacit domain (Crowther, 1993a). Humans, with their symbol-making propensity, unconsciously transform objects or forms into symbols and express them in their visual art (Jung, 1964). Paintings are symbols or signs in that they are substantial conceptions of notions, abstractions from experience fixed in perceivable forms, concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgments, longings, or beliefs (Geertz, 1973). Semiology studies the signs in the language of art that communicate thought and emotion (Berger, 1984). The search for the aesthetic code's hidden meaning invites us to interpret and understand the work where we find the more sophisticated the work, the more difficult the undertaking (Berger, 1984). The private experience transforming into a coherent public language is a hallmark of 20th century painting (Krauss, 1966). Visual language is permeated with much more information, is

absorbed much more quickly and much of the knowledge shift occurs at a preconceptual level (Hecht, 1982; Hobbs, 1991; Miller, 1992).

The language of vision, optical communication, is one of the strongest potential means both to reunite man and his knowledge and to reform man into an integrated being. The visual language is capable of disseminating knowledge more effectively than almost any other vehicle of communication. With it, man can express and relay his experiences in object form. Visual communication is universal and international: it knows no limits of tongue, vocabulary, or grammar, and it can be perceived by the illiterate as well as by the literate. Visual language can convey facts and ideas in a wider and deeper range than almost any other means of communication. It can reinforce the static verbal concept with the sensory vitality of dynamic imagery. It can interpret the new understanding of the physical world and social events because dynamic interrelationships and interpenetration, which are significant of every advanced scientific understanding of today, are intrinsic idioms of the contemporary vehicles of visual communication: photography, motion pictures, and television.

But the language of vision has a more subtle and, to a certain extent, an even more important contemporary task. To perceive a visual image implies the beholder's participation in a process of organization. The experience of an image is thus a creative act of integration. Its

essential characteristic is that by plastic power an experience is formed into an organic whole. Here is a basic discipline of forming, that is, thinking in terms of structure, a discipline of utmost importance in the chaos of our formless world. Plastic arts, the optimum forms of the language of vision, are, therefore, an invaluable educational medium.

Visual language must be readjusted, however, to meet its historical challenge of educating man to a contemporary standard, and of helping him to think in terms of form (Kepes, 1964, p. 13).

It is necessary to learn the language of postmodern art in order to understand how art is critical, critiquing both culture and society (Wolcott, 1996). Writing visually produces a new form of social text (Denzin, 1992). We need to be able to “read” this language of art in order to translate the original meaning (Hobbs, 1991). Art of our time speaks in a specialized language that demands an education of sensibility (Sontag, 1967). The new sensibilities demand less “content” in art and are more open to the pleasures of “form” and style (Sontag, 1967). Only if we recognize what is being represented are we able to “read” a picture (Gadamer, 1995). Artworks speak volumes and to understand what they say takes a lot of discipline (Randolph, 1992).

“The Song of the Self” is a text to be read. It carries in it a message of passion. The form is a square shape and the symbol “Om” is centered as passion is centered in my life. When your being is centered, life’s trials and joys come and go. I struggled with what to write around the circumference of the painting, and how much. I toyed with the

idea of filling the entire painting with writing, but chose framing it with words. In the efforts to keep my message clear, concise, and simple, I chose one quotation that will be repeated. I want the words around the circumference to remind me of how passion ebbs and flows. The fading in of the black and gold lettering represents these states of transition. Passion has the dual nature of love and desire against rage and suffering. This duality is expressed in the symbolic form and texture against the vibrant transparency of layers of color. The symbol represents the core of my beliefs and is at the foundation of self. The depth of transparent colors also represents the depth of our perceptions and experiences of passion. The texture varies and is seductive as passion is seductive. The gold splashes represent life's optimum moments. The rice paper designates the pain and suffering throughout life. I recall how I pushed and pulled it into the painting, physically releasing tension and grief. The paper dissolved and the acrylic medium dried the obscured forms into the surface. This is analogous to the pain of life experiences. When you are centered, pain touches the surface, leaves marks, but never reaches or disturbs the core. The core is represented by the "Om" symbol which is filled with love, passion, a will to create, a song of the self. Through painting I remain centered in passion. This is a painting you should want to touch, view close and far. It embraces passion at its height.

This is my interpretation of the painting; however, the interpretation is not static and I do not claim that others will have the same interpretation. The meaning of an artwork will depend upon the context in which it is grasped and the interpretation that is given the artwork will depend upon the context with which the interpreter addresses the

work (Fish, 1995). There is a dialogue that ensues with the artwork or as Csikszentmihalyi (1990a) professes some people prefer to be overcome, seduced and captivated by the work. Visual literacy demands an opening up and listening to what our senses are telling us (Preble, 1973). The analysis of a painting reconstitutes the discourse of the painter; in the attempt to recapture the artist's intentions which are transformed into lines, surfaces, and colors; and in revealing the virtual outlook that forms the artist's view of the world (Foucault, 1972). The artist discovers the symbols that make the art symbolic and the viewers also need to recognize them (Thorburn, 1925). Having the ability to recognize the symbolic nature of art is to understand the text in terms of it as a metaphor and narrative.

Art as Metaphor

Metaphor presents one thing in the semblance of another. The things juxtaposed open their boundaries to one another.... Metaphors convey and link the basic elements of our nature, including the unconscious, defenses, relationships, the reframing of old experiences and learning of new ways, self-actualization, and transcendence (Gorelick, 1989, p. 151 & 152).

Metaphor....is now considered to be an essential process and product of thought. The power of metaphor lies in its potential to further our understanding of the meaning of experience, which in turn defines

reality. In art and language, metaphor urges us to look beyond the literal, to generate associations and to tap new, different, or deeper levels of meaning. The metaphoric process reorganizes and vivifies; it paradoxically condenses and expands; it synthesizes often disparate meanings. In this process, attributes of one entity are transferred to another by comparison, by substitution, or as a consequence of interaction (Feinstein, 1996, in Stankiewicz, p. 4).

The essence of art is that it functions as a metaphor to be understood in its form where the import is to be immediately perceived (Langer, 1967). "Universal meaning resonates in a language of organization and metaphor; not only do words, shapes, colors and movements refer to things and ideas in the world; but arrangement and relationships among parts implicitly enact and communicate meaning as well (Hecht, 1982, p. 26)." The "Song of the Self" is the metaphorical symbol that I have created from my experience of passion. A painting is a metaphorical symbol and a transformation of the artist's experience into a visual statement (Agell, 1989). Agell suggests that the visual statement is composed of many layers of meaning, synthesized in the image the artist creates in order to impart some mode of feeling.

To understand the artwork is to grasp the metaphor.... The greatest metaphors of art I believe to be those in which the spectator identifies himself with the attributes of the represented character.... and sees his or her life in terms of the life depicted.... where the artwork becomes a

metaphor for life and life is transfigured. Art, if a metaphor at times on life, entails that the not unfamiliar experience of being taken out of oneself by art -- the familiar artistic illusion -- is virtually the enactment of a metaphoric transformation with oneself as subject: you are what the work ultimately is about, a commonplace person transfigured.....the structure of such transfigurations may indeed be like the structures of making believe...and artistic experience is internally related to this structure. It is rather the power of the work which is implicated in the metaphor, and power is something that must be felt. There is, then, a measure of truth to the claim that we ought to 'pay attention to the work itself,' that there is and can be no substitute for direct experience (Danto, 1981, p. 172, 173, & 174).

Contemporary art moves beyond superficial representations to an aesthetic codifying symbol and metaphor presenting greater intellectual complexity (Brayshaw, 1995). "Art, regarded as expression or communication, functions as metaphor, linking the individual to this expanding world (Shiff, 1978, p. 106)." Shiff declares that the present concern for metaphor in the artistic community is but one of many reflections of our awareness that life is a process of the progressive attainment of knowledge through experience where the truths revealed in art are founded in our experience. The artist gives expression to their inner vision of man, to the spiritual background of life and the world which touches the many through the direct contact with the work of art (Jung, 1964). To

engage directly in a painting means to enter into a dialogue with the text so that the painting has the power to successfully communicate the artist's inner vision. The vividness of excellent metaphors lies in their ability to suggest a kind of pictorial dimension of the sense that they display (Ricoeur, 1978).

Art is a "metaphorm" in that it combines metaphor, analogy, hypothesis, figure of speech, symbol and story (Siler, 1995). Siler coined the term "metaphorming" as a process of contrasting, relating, experiencing, analyzing, transforming, integrating, connecting and communicating. He derived the terms *metaphorming*, and *metaphorm* from the Greek words meta which means "between," and "beyond," "transcending," and *phora*, or "transference". "To *metaphorm* something is to transfer -- or relate from one object to another—a new meaning, pattern, or set of associations (p. 29)."

Campbell (1986, p. 121) declares "...the artist is a master of metaphorical language." Siler (1995) views the work of Leonardo da Vinci as an exemplary metaphormer in his ability to metaphorm the world through his artwork and writings. Siler believes the metaphorm creates meaning by connecting things that allow us to explore, interpret and experience the mercurial properties of the creative process by "becoming one with" the things we create or discover.

"Metaphormers understand that an act of creation is an act of connections, as you intuitively strive to make or discover meaning -- to communicate (Siler, 1995, p. 31)." Siler suggests that to metaphorm is to create something new, and as you create you connect, and in that connection is meaning. "Metaphorming is the power of meaning and

the natural ability every human being has to use this power positively in enriching one's life, work and understanding the world (p. 32)." It is a process and a way of gaining more complete knowledge of the world. Artworks are also forms of narratives that search for more complete knowledge.

Art as Narrative

A narrative is composed of a unique series of events, intellectual states, experiences involving people, real or imagined that bond the unusual and the ordinary (Bruner, 1990). The relating of a personal story becomes a human process for making lived experience understandable and meaningful (Ellis & Flaherty, 1992). Ellis & Flaherty state that lived experience serves our shifting sense of ourselves as we exist, a part of this world, with and without certainty, in a state of belonging and being estranged. Lived experience is an interpretive story that embraces plurality and the enigma of language to make new and different things conceivable, focusing on how we talk about the world and try to deal with its changes, disparities, ambiguities, encumbrances, re-counts and innovations.

If we want to understand lived experience we must investigate our narrative materials against the horizon of historical and cultural contexts (Ellis & Flaherty, 1992). A narrative is a story that describes a sequence of events that has significance for and makes sense to the narrator (Denzin, 1989). Authors of postmodern narratives write

personal stories, dramatic accounts, and poetry that expresses lived experience (Ellis & Flaherty, 1992). Art is postmodern narratives expressing lived experience.

Postmodern narratives may be personal and emotional. A personal narrative can be viewed as an “experience of the experience” where understanding is achieved through an ongoing and continuous experiencing of the experience (Ellis & Flaherty, 1992). They see emotional narratives, within the context of everyday life, as introspection on how emotions are experienced (Ellis & Flaherty, 1992). How we experience emotion is through the self.

As self reflects on the experience undergone by body, self - at first without interaction with others - also alters. The internal dialogue shapes the new changing self, sensed as vulnerable because of potential loss, loss of self itself, or loss of social potential. When stories are told and retold to others and symbols are provided with which to interpret events, dramatic or mundane, the continual transformation of self continues (Olesen, in Ellis & Flaherty, 1992, p. 215).

Narratives in Kantian terms are “an art hidden in the human soul” (Bruner, 1990). It is a return to native territory recording private experiences in publicly available media: in poetry, novels and memoirs, in painting and photography, in instrumental and operatic music, and in architecture (Ellis & Flaherty, 1992).

The tools being used by the human disciplines to gain access to the self-concept are, in general, the traditional research implements designed

for formal science to locate and measure objects and things....We achieve our personal identities and self-concept through the use of the narrative configuration, and make our existence into a whole by understanding it as an expression of a single unfolding and developing story. We are in the middle of our stories and cannot be sure how they will end; we are constantly having to revise the plot as new events are added to our lives. Self, then, is not a static thing or a substance, but a configuring of personal events into a historical unity which includes not only what one has been but also anticipations of what one will be (Polkinghorne, in Bruner, 1990, p. 150).

There is a narrative of passion residing in the symbols, metaphors and text of the artworks. These artworks describe the story of passion as I live it. It begins in the series with the "Song of the Self" that shows passion as emanating from lived experience transforming the self. It is about realizing dreams, inspiration and a driving force that is dialectic. It tells of engaging in excellence, attention to detail and the human suffering that is so much a part of passion. The story speaks of professional nudity where passion is revealing and leaves you open and vulnerable. The story is interpretive in nature urging the reader to listen, interpret and understand the meaning that roars within the artistic form.

Chapter 6

Embers Too Hot to Handle

The embers too hot to handle are discoveries within the inquiry of the “The Song of the Self,” that suggest art can be qualitative research. It was through the process of creating the painting and study of hermeneutic phenomenology that I noticed their similar characteristics. This has forced me to think and see differently. I am not suggesting that all art is research, however, all art is qualitative and for many artists is research. This discovery brought personal reflection that permeated the series of my works. I found that my creation of art went beyond the surface accounts of what I was seeing to interpreting and describing my inner self. It encompassed a search for knowledge and truth through personal experiences and meanings in texts like the “Song of the Self”. The text presents a holistic view of passion and its relation to the self in full view, yet words need to unravel and impart to others the meaning layered within it. I sift through the embers in search of knowledge and truth that reveals art as research.

Qualitative research is a site of multiple varying methodologies. Qualitative refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, denotations, analogies, forms, symbols or metaphors characterizing and describing things (Berg, 1989; Van Maanen, Dabbs & Faulkner, 1982). The researcher studies subject matter and reveals meanings through analogies, interpretations, and descriptions that capture its essence. Qualitative researchers maintain that knowledge is a human construction that focuses on different

interpretations of reality by creating a clearer experiential retrospection that assists us in obtaining a more sophisticated description of things (Bresler, 1994). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) describe qualitative research as a bricolage and the researcher as a bricoleur. In his 1988 text *"Wake of the Imagination,"* Richard Kearney presents a postmodern paradigm that conceptualizes the artist as a bricoleur who relies on allegories, metaphors, and narrative elements to create art (Clark, 1996).

Eisner (1979, 1991) states that there is no domain of human inquiry that embodies and epitomizes the qualitative more than what artists do in their work. "If we seek to know what qualitative inquiry consists of, we can do little better than analyze the work of those for whom it is a necessary condition (Eisner, 1979, p. 190)." Artists inquire in a qualitative mode both in the formulation of ends and in the use of means to achieve such ends (Bresler, 1994).

Eisner and Peshkin (1990) argue that the way we do educational research need not be restricted to a few traditional and institutionalized procedures, but rather needs to explore the possibilities of creative scholarship that exemplifies qualitative thought. Further to this, they suggest that we seek concomitant development in our capacity to conceptualize, investigate, conduct, draw meaning from and present our studies to enhance our scholarly pursuits that will in turn enhance the educational process. The artistry and craft of qualitative research is to be found at the confines of any given investigation where invention or descending upon procedures and echelons of inquiry that perhaps go beyond, is the substance of which worthy qualitative research is made (Van

Maanen, Dabbs & Faulkner, 1982).

Art, as a source of lived experience, allows me to gain insights into my own experiences of teaching and researching. For me, art is research and research is art. The foundation for this assertion rests in the common features of qualitative inquiry, phenomenology, and hermeneutic phenomenology.

Natural Setting

Qualitative researchers look to natural settings as their direct source of data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Artists pursue their practice by engaging personal drives in relation to other people, things, and situations giving rise to the notion of thinking in a setting (Sullivan, 1996). This includes; selecting what to attend to; what to record; being aware of preconceptions deriving from one's heritage, education and past experiences; and sensitivity to the environment and culture (Jacobs, 1979). MacGregor (1995, p. 5) states that "art provides both means and context".

Self as Instrument

The most admired thinkers within the scholarly community learn to use their life experiences in their intellectual work (Mills, 1989). As an artist I employ my life experiences as sources for artworks. I have a unique personal history that is carried in and throughout my paintings. The way a person engages a situation and makes sense of it bears their own signature and is the positive exploitation of our own subjectivity (Peshkin,

1988).

The Self is the experiencer who identifies itself with the mind, senses and physical body (Muktananda, 1980). Nature and human beings interact with each other to form direct experience (Dewey, 1934). Artwork is a bridge between the world of experience of the artist and the world of “shared” experience or culture in the discovery and expression of common truths (Shiff, 1978). Artists shift back and forth along the metaphoric bridge where their life is modeled upon their art and art is modeled upon their life in search of knowledge and truths by means of experience (Shiff, 1978).

Descriptive and Interpretive Data

Qualitative research is descriptive and interpretive. The data collected is not in the form of numbers, but in words or pictures (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Descriptive writing enables the reader to visualize what a place or process is like while penetrating the surface of manifest behavior to reach the meaning that events have for those who experienced them (Eisner, 1991). Denzin (1989) describes interpretation as a process of setting forth the meaning of an event or experience where intentions and actions of a person define meaning. Meaning is rendered public and communal by virtue of participation in culture (Bruner, 1990). Our culture depends upon shared meaning, shared concepts and shared modes of discourse for negotiating differences in meaning and interpretation (Bruner, 1990). Participation in the symbolic systems of culture provides understanding into how experiences and acts shape humankind (Bruner, 1990; Denzin, 1989). Interpretation

produces understanding of symbolic expressions of experience that often are in the forms of personal experience and personal narrative (Denzin, 1989).

Interpretive interactionism asserts that meaningful interpretations of human experience can only come from those persons who have thoroughly immersed themselves in the phenomenon they wish to interpret and understand. Every topic of investigation must be seen as carrying its own logic, sense of order, structure and meaning. Like a novelist or painter, the interpretivist moves the reader back and forth across the text of his or her prose. In so doing, the researcher makes recognizable and visible a slice of human experience that has been captured (Denzin, 1989, p. 26).

The artist thoroughly immerses themselves in the phenomenon they wish to interpret and understand. Art is a form of communication that captures a slice of human experience. “The root metaphor within interpretive-hermeneutic forms of knowing is communication, that is, relating people to their social world (Clark, 1996, p. 23).” Root metaphors are expressed in the commonplace character of society, as well as in particular social organizations, actions, events, interactions, proposals, ideas, responses and corporeal products such as artistic creations (Hamblen, 1982).

Process Oriented

The “how” is emphasized in qualitative research over the outcomes or products (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Artists seek answers to questions in the nature of the tasks in

which they are engaged much like qualitative researchers. The process is an unfolding of a concept, an interpretation of vision that translates into techniques, skills and modes of expression. The process is a struggle with decision making. What media do I choose and how do I express my vision? I listen to my intuitive self for guidance. The culmination of life experiences, self-confidence, self-esteem, risk-taking, ego-strength, knowledge, ability, skills and passion direct the choices that I make. Accompanied by these choices are assessments, evaluations, specific attention to detail, and the development of a critical eye that are essential in the refinement of the "Song of the Self". Artistic activity is a form of perceiving and thinking, indivisibly intertwined where in the artists think with their senses (Arnheim, 1969). Creating a work of art involves a dialectical process in which the work grows in leaps forward and backward through visual thinking (Arnheim, 1962). For artists the process is one of problem solving in a medium and in visual thinking (Winner, 1982). Often I start with a vision in mind and through the process of creation I often stumble accidentally on solutions, not previously considered, that change the final work. It is a process of engagement, listening, being open, making decisions and choices along the way. Creating art is a problem solving process, which is a combination of thinking and sensing intuitively leading to moments of insight. Studies suggest that the creative process involves a combination of reason and intuition in a series of small logical steps (Winner, 1982).

Inductive Analysis of Data

Bogdan & Biklen (1992) claim that the qualitative researcher builds abstractions from the gathering and grouping of the particulars. The qualitative researcher as bricoleur produces a bricolage that is a complex, thick, reflexive, collage-like creation that represents the researcher's images, understanding and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). "You are not putting together a puzzle, whose picture you already know. You are constructing a picture which takes shape as you collect and examine the parts (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 29)." These descriptions of analyzing data are highly reflective of the artistic process. It is a creative process of divergent thinking, interconnections and associations. Artists synthesize knowledge in the creation of artworks. Artists aim for universal statements of how things are by synthesizing perceptions of the world into constructed representations that create coherent meaning, a language revealed for all time (Hecht, 1982). Art communicates through symbols, text and a language as metaphors that connect apparent disparities and compact meaning.

Essential Concern for Meaning

Qualitative researchers probe for meaning by entering into the world of their research participants in order to gain an increased understanding of their perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Eisner, 1991). "Science states meanings; art expresses them (Dewey, 1934, p. 84)." People have propensities for visual, auditory, or kinesthetic

manners of expression and representation (Van Maanen, Dabbs & Faulkner, 1982). A neglected resource for presenting data is visual techniques concerned with presenting complex social information in simple and compelling visual form (Van Maanen, Dabbs & Faulkner, 1982). Artists create texts composed of symbols that convey complex social information. Symbols in many forms are “charged” with meanings (Langer, 1963).

The modern mind is an incredible complex of impressions and transformations; and its product is a fabric of meanings that would make the most elaborate dream of the most ambitious tapestry-weaver look like a mat. The warp of that fabric consists of what we call ‘data’ the signs to which experience has conditioned us to attend, and upon which we act often without any conscious ideation. The woof is symbolism. Out of signs and symbols we weave our tissue of ‘reality’ (Langer, 1963, p. 280).

Sign and symbol are knotted together in the production of those fixed realities that we call ‘facts,’ as I think this whole study of semantic has shown. But between the facts run the threads of unrecorded reality, momentarily recognized, wherever they come to the surface, in our tacit adaptation to signs; and the bright, twisted threads of symbolic envisagement, imagination, thought - memory and reconstructed memory, belief beyond experience, dream, make-believe, hypothesis, philosophy - the whole creative process of ideation metaphor, and abstraction that makes human life an adventure in understanding (Langer, 1963, p. 281).

The art form makes the everyday experience understandable by presenting it in terms of acts and objects where their meaning can be more powerfully expressed and more exactly received (Geertz, 1971). Artworks are texts for interpretation where the translations can be best understood in the light of the context in which they are created (Geertz, 1971; Sontag, 1967). Interpreting meanings and meaning making can only be achieved in the examination of the structure and coherence of the context in which they are created and transmitted (Bruner, 1990).

Visual art develops meaning entirely according to context, simultaneous relationship and matter; its language is particularly well-suited to the philosophical emphasis of phenomenology: simultaneous patterns bridge the categories of other languages and point out relatedness; a reliance on context and sensory qualities instead of predefined word units emphasizes the implicitly enacted, metaphorical qualities of communication and provides for very flexible formation of new categories to bring new aspects of reality to consciousness. Clearly artists think according to the language they use (Hecht, 1982, p. 31).

A text must be understood in its own terms (Gadamer, 1995). Art is a special medium for understanding life because in its “boundaries between knowledge and action,” life reveals itself at a profound level that is inaccessible to observation, reflection and philosophy (Gadamer, 1995). Arthur Danto’s (1981) phrase “transfiguration of the commonplace” refers to modern art, where, as in nature, the crux is to pull out meanings

from phenomena that many think lack them (Fine, 1992, in Ellis & Flaherty, p. 162). The meanings of pictures mediate among; the world of sensory experience, the disembodied forces underlying the objects, events of that experience portraying the inherent nature of the things, and events of the world (Arnheim, 1969). Art has a unique quality in that it clarifies and concentrates meaning (Dewey, 1934). If all meaning could be adequately expressed by words, art would not exist (Dewey, 1934). The true meaning of a work of art is never finished, in fact it is an infinite process (Gadamer, 1995). It is in the texts we read, the images we see and the songs we sing that we come to know the world (Eisner, 1991). "For the artist, the artwork is the text, voice and signature (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 425)." The outcome of the process of meaning-construction configures our lives and selves (Bruner, 1990).

Phenomenology and Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Phenomenology and hermeneutics are embedded in an evolving history of tradition, "a body of knowledge and insights, a history of the lives of thinkers and author which, taken as an example, constitutes both a source and methodological ground for present human science research practices" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 30). Edmund Husserl, is credited with being the originator of contemporary phenomenology and was strongly influenced by the work of Kant, and Hegel (Van Manen, 1990). Phenomenology evolved from Husserl, to Heidegger (1962) who proposed that consciousness was a function of the lived human experience emphasizing being-in-the-world. This is a binding relationship

between the individual and the world in which there is co-constitutionality.

Phenomenology is the description of the lived-through quality of lived experience and a description of meaning of the expressions of lived experience (Van Manen, 1990). Hans-Georg Gadamer, a student of Heidegger, elaborates on his idea that all knowing and doing involves understanding and interpretation. Gadamer developed a philosophical hermeneutics concerned with ontology (being) where understanding and interpretation are not restricted to the comprehension of written texts but includes the aesthetic appreciation of art.

Phenomenology approaches research in a holistic manner attempting to understand the totality and complexities of the phenomenon in context. Qualitative research is rooted in a phenomenological perspective that is holistic and begins with a search for understanding of the whole (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Art subscribes to this phenomenological notion that reality exists, is whole and is totally interconnected with itself and with human experience (Hecht, 1982). Art holds within it the artist's dialect, their signature, a way of communicating that presents a holistic account of an experience. "The palette of an artist is a signature. It grows, develops, and becomes particular (Journal, July 14, 1996)." The reality to which the artist is exposed is of their own innermost truth brought to consciousness, through reflection in the masterworks of their art (Campbell, 1986). The painter [artist] dwells at the level of images prereflectively becoming phenomenologists who affect our vision so we see the world differently (Beittel, 1982). Merleau-Ponty (1962, p. xxi) makes the following statement about

phenomenology..

It is as painstaking as the works of Balzac, Proust, Valery or Cezanne -- by reason of the same kind of attentiveness and wonder, the same demand for awareness, the same will to seize the meaning of the world or of history as that meaning comes into being.

Phenomenologists seek to explicate the fundamental structures or meanings of the lived experience (Van Manen, 1984, 1990). Hermeneutic phenomenology is descriptive of lived experiences and asserts that the “facts” of lived experience are already meaningfully (hermeneutically) experienced (Van Manen, 1990). The hermeneutic element of qualitative research focuses on meanings and the interpretive nature of understanding. Gadamer (1995) believed that language and experiences are interconnected where language tells us who we are. He maintained that by interpreting the text the researcher cannot separate themselves from the meaning of the text. Tracy (1978, p. 95) maintains that “...understanding of hermeneutics, meaning (in the shift of metaphors employed implicitly by Hans-Georg Gadamer and explicitly by Paul Ricoeur) is located not *behind* but *in front of* the text”. It is our participation with the language of art, and the work of art as text that creates meaning.

“The function of art is consciously to restore....the union of sense, need, impulse and action characteristics of the live creature (Dewey, 1934, p.15 & 25).” Such an occurrence integrates and consummates what Dewey calls “an experience,” the distinguishing mark of the aesthetic. “In short, art, in its form, unites the very same

relation of doing and undergoing, outgoing and incoming energy, that makes an experience to be an experience (Dewey, 1934, p. 48).” In the aesthetic experience of art is a present fullness of meaning that stands for the meaningful whole of life (Gadamer, 1995).

Aesthetic experiences, as I have suggested, involve us as existing beings in pursuit of meanings. They involve us as historical beings born into social reality. They must, therefore, be lived within the contexts of our self-understanding, within the context of what we have constituted as our world (Greene, 1978, p. 180).

The goal of interpretive work is to evoke a new way of understanding ourselves and the life we are living (Jardine, 1992). Jardine (1992) describes interpretive work as concerned with the re-generation of meaning that is disruptive of fossilized sedimentations of sense that open up and allow the new to erupt.

Passion is a generative explosion. Passion for art is a way of knowing, sensing, and relating to the cradle of humanity....It is “how,” I approach my beingness in this world in which I am enmeshed....I throw myself over to it, and allow the “how” I do anything color it....It is disruptive. I become disorientated in knowing anything. It perplexes and shakes the foundation of my being to go through, and know, or know not that you know. I do know I have a lot more to gain in knowledge and need to forge ahead recognizing my structures of knowing are under new

construction. Renovations are messy affairs and very unsettling (Journal, Sept 11, 1996).

Art is always visionary and disturbs our present realities (Shahn, 1961). The aesthetic quality is found in the experience of humankind in the combinations of movements and culmination of ruptures and re-unions (Dewey, 1934). The interaction, when carried to fullness, is heightened vitality, and a transformation of the interaction into participation and communication (Dewey, 1934). The communication with a work of art is a multidimensional experience that integrates the visual with the emotional and the intellectual (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990a). For a viewer to perceive a work of art they must create their own experience that is comparable in relation to those which the artist experienced (Dewey, 1934). There is collegial interplay in which the viewer contributes symmetrically to meaning and interpretation (Miller, 1992). "The information in the work of art fuses with information in the viewer's memory -- followed by the expansion of the viewer's consciousness, and the attendant emotional consequences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990a, p. 18)."

The aesthetic experience is a mode of self-understanding where we learn to understand ourselves in and through it (Gadamer, 1995). Gadamer (1995) goes on to say that self-understanding always occurs through understanding something other than the self and includes the synthesis and wholeness of the other. There is no self-understanding which is not mediated by signs, symbols, and texts (Madison, 1990).

The aesthetic experience has a sense of integration, a feeling of self-acceptance and

self-expansion yielding wholeness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990a). The process of experiencing a work of art leads to a heightened awareness that is often described as a feeling of transcendence and the loss of self or transportation outside the self (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990a). Csikszentmihalyi (1990a, p. 35) states “....you get kind of passionate about some of these things, ...lustful might be the right word....or there is a kind of seductiveness to a work of art that I think people do feel.” I believe what Csikszentmihalyi is describing is the passion that exudes from a work of art. Feeling is very much a part of the aesthetic experience. Tolstoy (1930) declared that the essential property of art was not the form, but the expression of emotion in a sensuous public medium. By expressing inner emotions, artists convey messages to the viewer through the work so that the essence of the aesthetic experience is to apprehend the hidden messages (Winner, 1982).

Art is a form of qualitative research very much like hermeneutic phenomenology in that art seeks to describe and interpret lived experience through creation and the aesthetic experience. Hermeneutics holds that truth or the meaning of behavior exists in the interaction between the observer and the observed as in the aesthetic experience. Artists and hermeneutic researchers maintain that human knowledge is always interpretive. Hermeneutic phenomenologists use themes to describe an aspect of the structure of the lived experience (Van Manen, 1990) in much the same way artists construct bodies of artworks that trace themes in their work.

Artists are concerned with context, as are researchers. Hermeneutic

phenomenologists use texts and the researchers own experiences as a source of data. Artists create the text as they draw from their own experiences. Hermeneutic phenomenologists and artists are engaged in a process that synthesizes knowledge, describes, and interprets lived experience in the search for meaning. This is a fascinating inquiry that broadens my horizons as a researcher. I embark into new territory bridging a gap in educational research that exemplifies the qualitative. Going beyond the traditional means taking risks in the hopes that what I accomplished is regarded as innovative, creative and worthy. It is exciting to stir these embers sparking a wildfire that creates a life's work.

Chapter 7

Sparking a Wildfire

Who knows where this may take me? I feel as though I am truly listening and following the passion. I get so involved I lose track of time. I lose track of my self, only to gain a new self, my body is in ecstasy and I want to kiss the sun. This manic state is such a high I may never come down. I am profoundly changing as passion explodes into my life, painting, creativity, learning, and relationships. I only hope that when I die I will come to know all the answers, and more. Life has more questions than answers (Journal, August 11 & September 2, 1996).

I began this hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry of passion not knowing where it would take me. It has lured me to a place of self-discovery that has profoundly changed me as a researcher, artist, and educator. "Hermeneutics is about finding ourselves, which also, curiously enough, is about losing ourselves; that is, giving up the precious 'fundamentalist' logocentric impulse in the name of a greater freedom and dignity (Smith, 1994, p. 125)." Engaging in this mode of inquiry requires that I give myself over to it in search of showing an understanding of what passion is. This inquiry has sparked a wildfire that promises to blaze for a lifetime.

Light of the Self

Passion is the “Song of the Self”, a fiery embodied experience similar to what Kabir (in Chidvilasananda, 1989, p. 312 & 313) speaks of in the following poem:

Light of the Self

*The effulgence of the Self,
is not perceived by all,
But it is always blazing.
Though there is no wick,
there is a flame.
Though there is no oil,
that flame never goes out.
It never falls asleep,
nor is it awake.
It is there —
like lightning, like thunder.
The light of the Self is constantly scintillating;
It shimmers like a pure pearl.
It is so bright, so beautiful!
Kabir says, My dear ones!
You all know about it,
You read so many holy books.
You know the Truth exists.
Then why don't you experience it.*

I experience the light of the self and truth through passion and art. The heat of passion warms my heart. The flame ignites, burns, flickers and smolders as a deep mystery inside. It can rage out of control into a blaze or be a light that mesmerizes thought, provoking, and drawing out the self. Passion flares up, is explosive or full of calm and peace at the center of the flame. The light is a guiding light. I dance with the flames that draw me in seductively. I respect it and want to understand this fire that informs my life. Passion is a medium for thought, and a practice. The want of this experience is addictive

and stimulating. This state of being passionate constructs meaning in my life. Passion and art are knowledge that informs my practice as an artist, researcher, and educator. It has always been there but not acknowledged so fully. I search for knowledge, and as a teacher I lead students to discover the knowledge that lies inside them through passion and art.

Then said a teacher, Speak to us of Teaching. And he said: No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge.

The teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple, among his followers, gives not of his wisdom but rather of his faith and his lovingness.

If he is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind.

The astronomer may speak to you of his understanding of space, but he cannot give you his understanding.

The musician may sing to you of the rhythm which is in all space, but he cannot give you the ear which arrests the rhythm nor the voice that echoes it.

And he who is versed in the science of numbers can tell of the regions of weight and measure, but he cannot conduct you thither.

For the vision of one man lends not its wings to another man.

And even as each one of you stands alone in God's knowledge, so must each one of you be alone in his knowledge of God and in his understanding of the earth (Gibran, 1989, p. 56 & 57).

I give faith and lovingness in the passion I share with students. It is the passion we share for art that draws students to self-discovery and the knowledge of "who," and "what" they are. Art interprets and expresses who we are. The process of interpretation is the transformation of self-understanding that engages my own life and the life of others. An attempt to understand it has changed who I am, and what I understand myself to be (Jardine, 1992). Works of art are expressions of a creative spirit and good interpretation shows the connection between experience and expression (Smith, 1994). Expression is becoming what is expressed through the revelation of the self (Dufrenne, 1973). "The artist has been through all time, a person of unquenchable thirst to know, see, feel, and express through their work what they are experiencing (Warren, 1984, p. 62)." Each artist expresses their own version of an experience in a unique way. Postmodern art is a complex connection between art and its antiquity that casts neoteric light on our expansive relation to the life-world as a consequence of artists seeing their world and their particular discipline's history from contrasting perspectives (Crowther, 1993b).

The Engulfing Flame

I am engulfed by the flame of passion as I engage in an inquiry in which I am predisposed to conceive of art as knowledge (Gadamer, 1995), a complex language

(Hecht, 1982; Hobbs, 1991; Kepes, 1964; Preble, 1973; Ricoeur, 1976), and a text (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Ricoeur, 1976). Art is: a language that I speak; a text that I create composed of metaphors and narratives; meant to be read. This inquiry seeks to describe the nature and essence of the experience of passion captured through the imagery and action of two-dimensional studio work. This research moves beyond the form of phenomenological writing, transforming the lived experience of passion into visual structures of meaning in order to gain a deeper understanding. To my amazement, I have discovered that art is also one of the primary methods in which I conduct qualitative research. Art is more than a source for phenomenological writing it is also a means of conducting research.

Passion enmeshes vital forces of power within one's self to sing the 'Song of the Self'. I anticipate investigating the prevailing fiery themes of passion. The fireworks of passion ignites as I "Realize Dreams," that are personal and professional. "Engagement in Excellence," gauges the scorching heat of passion in degrees of interaction. "Dialectic Dynamics," anneals my being as passion is heated and cooled on a continuum of opposing feelings and structures of knowing. Passion seers the "Suffering," soul in physical and mental anguish. "Professionally Nudity," exposes the fleshy relationships of passion not in candlelight but in glaring spotlights. This wildfire sparks me to pursue these remaining themes explicating the underlying structure of passion in a doctoral dissertation. The experiential meaning that is gained through this inquiry has research implications for the fields of fine art, education, and psychology.

Passion like fire burns, is a fuel to motivate, that is the vital spark of becoming. The flames engulf me, consume me, become me. The understanding of what passion "is" has become unnerving. I flounder, spin and reel in its fury. Harnessing a lightning bolt is what it has become. I question will I ever really understand it? Is it just something that I will do and be?

I struggle and become more impatient as the end of the research draws near. I wonder if I have captured, revealed, and elucidated passion in all its facets. I question if I have missed something. I ask myself where to begin and end?

Passion is the heart of my actions. The love of what I do. This love I feel is so immense these days. I am boiling over with its energy. It is my life, how I live, how I relate, and who I am. Passion is the one constant in my life that constitutes my life. The opening of a door of how I live in this world. I want others to know about it and experience it. The fire burns within me as I share this way of being in the world, like no other. I know this is not just about me, but a way of being in the classroom. I want to teach about it and through it. I am alive because of it. The song I sing is about passion. I call to the world, listen! Hear me (Journal, October 12, 13, 14, & 31 1996)!

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