PAINTING LIKE A HOUSEWIFE:
An inquiry into gender bias in professional art education

by

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I owe a debt of gratitude to all of the wonderful women artists who took time out of their busy lives to meet with me and put up with my questions. I treasure each of the interviews as small pieces of their personality. Their generosity in sharing their experiences is genuinely outstanding.

All of the artists interviewed continue to take great personal risk and generate intense effort to bring their art to life. They each feel a responsibility to produce work that mirrors our society by offering their own intimate and personal insights and critique. Truly the more intimate the work of art, the more universal the message, and the more capable it is of exposing hidden truths. Being able to connect personally with a work of art both extends and reaffirms our humanity.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the post-secondary art educational experiences of female artists. The focus of the thesis is an analysis of their perceptions regarding the effect of gender on their art, their lives as artists, and their education. In essence, it explores the synthesis of artist and woman. Such an exploration directs attention to those virtually excluded from previous research.

In order to accomplish this, the primary research method consisted of conducting in-depth interviews with 10 female artists from the Thunder Bay area. With regard to these female artists I explored: their personal perception of art education, their construction of professional identity as artists, their integration of the role of artist with other roles, as well as any perceived or real barriers to creative work. To understand fully the perceptions women artists have of their own professional identity, it was necessary to incorporate other societal roles held by the participants, and explore the resultant juxtaposition.

A portion of this thesis is an autobiographical investigation of my own journey as an artist designed to integrate with and provide additional focus to the investigation. This research contributes to the understanding that there is a great deal to discover from the standpoint of women, and also from personal reflection.

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PREFACE

Art is not merely about the visual. It is also about the visceral and women were created for the visceral.[1]

My outside skin has never fitted like a glove. The seams are permanently torn and ragged, held together by a series of safety pins and hasty stitches. While the rents make it feasible to contemplate more than the obvious outer layer, for most of my life I have allowed this skin to suffice as a summation of who and what I am.

To the world I am a middle-aged housewife, still married after 30 years, with two children and the regulation trappings of a lower middle-class life. The dilemma is that such a description is simultaneously both the smallest and the largest part of me. For society I exist as a hint – a suggestion – a shade, the superficial appearance merely a skin covering the authentic person. For me this was a large and tedious barrier I needed to break through. It became essential to both recognize and respect the person I truly was.

I am sure my story is not isolated. There are and have always been countless women who are more that they are

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[1] All of the quotes preceding the chapters are by the author.

allowed to portray. Had I not possessed a need to create, I would never have recognized and restored my true self, the individual who was there before I filled the duties of daughter/wife/mother/scholar and so on. The list of who I had become in society would seem to be endless, yet it failed to fully acknowledge the person within. Correction, perhaps it was only I who failed to recognize the person within. As I grew up and experienced my education I also experienced the inevitable loss of my individual, private ways of knowing and acquired those offered by society. To seek to become original again I needed to use different ways and these new forms of originality, based on socialization, were by default at least partially derivative.

Originality is of course not the summation of creativity, merely a partial evocation; for creativity, by acknowledging the ordinary and seeking its consent imposes upon itself certain restrictions. True originality has no consideration for social judgement, or the need to fulfil a social want or change society in any way; it merely presents itself as it is (Arietti 1976:8). Creativity however, remains burdened by the dilemma of social evaluation. There is a social scale where creativity and

its creations must be weighed against the acceptance of society.

A lot of my personal struggle stems from the fact that I have been blessed, or possibly cursed with numerous and varied creative talents. Upon my belated graduation as an artist, a life-long neighbour, made what at the time I considered to be a chance comment. "You could have done anything you wanted in this world," she observed. At first blush this remark had the ring of a compliment, until I factored in her acerbic wit. Candidly, her summation was also a chastisement for my assiduous neglect of my aptitude for not only academia, but also music and art.

All I have ever really wanted to do was make things. As a child my best playthings were the tools of creativity, and I loved to draw, paint, sculpt, take things apart and fasten things together. While this description may sound like most children, for me, art as part of the assertion of my individuality was a serious occupation, and I was constantly engrossed in one plan or another as though training for a lifetime occupation.

Academics have always come easily to me. As a child the school game offered some diversion and as a "gifted student" I proceeded to immerse myself in academia. Along the way, somewhere between public and high school I lost

the opportunity to gratify and value the important creative part of my personality. Put simply, the artist was taught out of me, replaced by the ideal student. It would seem that society had judged me, and placed me where I did well but had little satisfaction. Eventually I rebelled against the system by refusing to continue in a post-secondary academic career. I had no idea one could study art at university, nor did I recollect the skills and abilities so integral to my youth. Had I been cognizant of the pathways open to me, I now realize I would have made different decisions.

It would be half a lifetime before I would revisit my authentic self, and when I did, it was as if a light suddenly came on in a room I had not entered for a long time. There was a gradual remembrance of the person I had left behind long ago, and I liked that person.

This small yet very significant realization was the source of this examination. The following chapter introduces the initial stages of my academic inquiry and lends contour to the rationale for the thesis.

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

Each of us owes our existence to an individual spark of
creation that makes us who we are. Inexplicably, artists
retain this initial spark, tending and refining it into
personal creativity. Imagination and inspiration combine
to provide society the tangible results of this effort ...

This investigation began as I started to question what

it means to have a sense of self - and further, how many

women of my acquaintance, busy providing for the lives of

their loved ones, fail to adequately provide for their own

fulfillment.

Selflessness is a word that we as a society often

apply as an absolute expectation for a woman, and

additionally as an ideal description of the lives of women

and mothers. Our culture frequently defines the virtues of

women as disregarding personal needs in a response to the

welfare of others. Despite the inroads that have been made

in the form of equal pay in the workforce, and in a more

equal division of labour in the home, our society retains a

deep-rooted sense of women as primarily nurturers. This

connotation can of course backfire on women as they seek to

find a self-identity that is not entirely borrowed from society.

Throughout my years of university study I have had countless conversations with other female students. Understandably, most of these conversations have centred on their feelings about classes or the progress of their personal education. As my primary specialization is art, most of these women have been artists of one kind or another. I began to notice certain similarities between conversations. Many women had hesitant feelings about their university art education, but never about the subject that they had chosen to study. They felt unsure of themselves as artists, but not about their passion for the art. Some of these women, even after years of education, still found it hard to express how inadequate they feel as artists, believing that others could never share their insecurity, remaining reluctant to call themselves professional artists. I noticed a persistent lack of confidence in the soundness of their personal art practice. Feelings of being an outsider to the art world were also expressed. It is ironic that all of these women are making and showing serious art, often while apologizing for and qualifying its very existence. Duffin (1995), in a discussion on exhibiting, declares that:

...while possessing at least as many artistic attributes as their male counterparts, most [women artists] suffer from lack of confidence, they frequently put themselves down and "forget" to acknowledge their achievements; some even find it difficult to call themselves artists – as if they have to pass some unfathomable test to qualify (Duffin 1995:68).

As I continued my exchanges with female artists, I began to believe it possible that art classes reinforce these attitudes as female students encounter critiques of their work and are exposed to the larger art world. I saw that the very classes that should sustain and cultivate the concept of what it is to be *an artist* also serve to subtly qualify who may be a *real artist*. It is a lesson that is hard to unlearn, because the view of self as artist affects the art created. To me the feeling of being an authentic artist must begin with the feeling of self in society; the two are inextricable.

With this discovery came the objective of this thesis:

This research into the educational experiences of female artists from Thunder Bay is prompted by the lack of research and knowledge regarding post-secondary art education and gender. It is my belief that the gendered division of labour is a very significant reason why many women have been excluded from the world of art, and further that gender remains a very significant determinant in art

education. As such, gender plays a substantial part in how female artists come to define themselves professionally. With regard to these female artists I explored: their personal perception of art education, their construction of professional identity as artists, their integration of the role of artist with other roles, as well as any perceived or real barriers to creative work. In order to do this the primary research method consisted of conducting in-depth interviews with 10 female artists from the Thunder Bay area.

Conflicting messages exist about the position of women in the world of art, and the suitability of art as a career. Many art students, with the potential to become prominent artists, art historians, theorists or educators do not truly think such success a possibility for themselves, and for women the possibility seems even more difficult to grasp (Calvert 1996:155).

It is through language, myth and ideology that the relations of power in a society are replicated discursively and their influence on how people live, behave and think regarding their lives cannot be discounted (Millar, 1998:25). While our socio-economic, cultural and sexual status remain crucial variables in how we interpret and are interpreted by the society in which we live, these

categories are in constant flux being created and recreated by the dominant discourse and this discourse is, to some extent, directed by ideology. Lemke (1995) has described ideology as "the very common meanings we have learned to make, and take for granted as common sense, but which support the power of one social group to dominate another" (Lemke 1995:2). Through the narratives that flow through our culture we come to know ourselves and our place in the world. This is how we learn to make sense of our lives and ourselves.

All of the lessons I learned in both studio and art history classes were not about materials, criticism or art theory, nor were they merely an account of my progress as an artist. I also, very effortlessly internalized the subtle lesson that important artists are usually men. When I failed to see women artists accorded the same degree of study, respect and admiration as their male counterparts, subtle conflicting messages became internalized. These unstated messages emanate from the curriculum studied and from attitudes that prevail in our culture. My classes corroborated the art historical tradition that males have created virtually all of the *important* art since time began, and popular culture serves to reinforce this idea. Within the media a man generally plays the role of the

serious artist. Park (1996) makes it clear that "gender based roles of artist and model, artmaker and art object are everywhere reinforced by words and images" (Park 1996:5).

Despite the many advances of the women's movement, concepts of male and female roles are so deeply ingrained, that western popular culture continues to find it hard to see biology and destiny as discrete. Decades after the modern women's movement each new generation of women continues to invest self-esteem and energy in the maintenance of households and families. Women still embark on long-term commitments to bear and rear children and remain largely responsible for making a home (whether they have paid employment or not), while men are expected to continue the pursuit of human enterprise beyond the simple sustenance of life and into the realm of the mind by engaging in intellectual work. Women are easily identified with what we view as the drudgery of the everyday, preoccupied on a continual basis with acquiring the necessities of daily life and their maintenance (Eichler 1997: 59; Luxton 1980).

According to Gilligan (1982) females and males pursue moral ends along differing emotional and ethical vectors. Her work reveals the development of an ethic wherein women

define themselves in terms of their ability to care (Gilligan 1982:16). This ethic motivates many women to remain connected even when to do so leads to their physical or material disadvantage. Duffin (1995) remarks that "women have traditionally put ... family life and sharing and caring before their ambitions"(Duffin 1995:68). Further, she feels that "traditional female qualities of sharing, communication, flexibility and a desire to collaborate with and acknowledge the work of others can be seen ... as weaknesses" (Duffin 1995:68). Despite these connotations women continue to remain linked to the family and all it means regardless of additional or divergent personal wants and needs. Concerning women and education this often means that a woman's education is seen as secondary to the well being of her family, not only by the woman concerned but also by society in general.

Classical theory has assumed that a women's attachment is to the home and this attachment is biologically defined and connected to reproduction (Sydie 1987). Society does not recognize most so-called women's work as "real activity" because it is generally associated with the development of others rather than self-enhancement or self-employment (Miller 1975:53). As much of the activity performed in the home is focussed on the well being of

others, a woman has difficulty using her own life activity to build a self-image based on an authentic reflection of what she actually is and does. Miller (1975) states:

> In the course of projecting into women's domain some of its most troublesome and problematic exigencies, male-led society may have simultaneously, and unwittingly, delegated to women not humanity's "lowest needs" but its "highest necessities" - that is, the intense emotionally connected cooperation and creativity necessary for human life and growth (Miller 1975:25-26).

Within the home her labour there is often characterized as consumption or leisure because there is no direct contribution to the paid labour force. Eichler (1997) states that in "traditional economic terms, all activities that generate money are considered 'work' and are hence 'productive', while activities that do not involve the exchange of money are regarded neither as work nor as productive" (Eichler 1997:17). The work within the household, done without benefit of pay, is therefore not considered to be real 'work' and according to Eichler (1997) the designation of 'work' depends on "who is doing it and under what conditions it is being done (Eichler 1997:17). Armstrong and Armstrong (1990) claim that when women's paid labour is considered it is usually seen as less important than the labour of men and unlike the labour

of men, always "linked to the home and domestic responsibilities" (Armstrong & Armstrong 1990:15).

This consistent identification of women with the private has been reinforced by millennia of historically established gender constructions that have come to describe our very concept of what it is to be male and female. The public sphere is visible and masculine while the contrasting private sphere is invisible and feminine. While the public and private are interdependent, interconnected and interactive, the invisible private sphere with its involvement in the everyday has been devalued in favour of the intellectual work of the public sphere. Males predominate in the public world, while females predominate in the undervalued world of the everyday. Consequently the everyday has become privatized, feminized and associated with the other. A key premise of feminism is that women have been defined as "the other" and in a society defined by men a consequence of this idea is that women have been both invisible and voiceless (de Beauvoir 1952/1974).

An indisputably dualistic symbolic order has therefore been secured in the history of western culture and political thought: the masculine is linked with reason, science, culture and *production* in the public sphere, the

feminine, with passion, nature and *reproduction* in the private sphere (Littlewood 2004:44). It is pertinent to note the application of production and reproduction, for this is the very heart of the dualistic symbolic order. The male produces, the female merely reproduces. This concept is deeply evident in the study of art, where much of female art is seen as derivative of other male artists. Tippett (1992) refers to the common view that women artists are "mediocre, scaled-down versions of male artists, only able to produce imitative and weak copies of work in a field where the male excels" (Tippett 1992: XIII).

The assumption that gender generates intellectual and creative dualism becomes weak when we consider that males and females cross gender lines in aptitudes, interests and occupations. Male-defined elitism assumes that male-designed educational priorities, curricula, values and social rewards apply just as suitably to women. According to Rich (1979), there is still an enduring belief that the intellectual structure as well as the contents of education available to men is viable, enduring, and universally applicable. Women are of the belief that by reason of its universality they may freely enter this world of knowledge and be treated equally. This is frequently not the case as my discussion of women and art education demonstrates.

In this chapter I have outlined some of the issues surrounding women's place in society, and how this may cause problems for female artists as they pursue higher education. Vital to this examination is the idea that the concept of "artist" is socially constructed. I speculated on the role family responsibility plays in the careers of women, bringing forth the differing emotional and ethical vectors of males and females. Also explored was the societal expectation of a dualistic symbolic order and its effect on the history of western culture and political thought.

Chapter two reviews the literature pertinent to the study of women and art as well as their position within the art historical canon. It highlights the historical exclusion of women from the study of art, and the resultant division of art into fine art and the "womanly" or minor arts. Also included as part of a feminist critique of art history is a discussion of art history as an organized discipline and its impact on the production and transmission of knowledge relevant to the specific experiences of women. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the marginalization of women artists within our society.

Chapter three explains and outlines the methods used in my research and offers a description of the participants in the study. I further clarify the intention of my research to provide a socio-biographical description and analysis of the art educational experiences of 10 female artists in Thunder Bay.

Chapter four brings to light the findings of the research, highlighting with direct quotes the four recurring themes of this study. They are: Art and the domestic sphere for women artists: Societal attitude toward art as a career: Unacknowledged barriers to creative work: and Professionalization.

In Chapter five I conclude with a synopsis of previous chapters and a reflection on insights that emerged during the research process. Further study involving the professional careers of female artists is also suggested, as I would like to deal with the greater participation and satisfaction these artists find within the art world.

I also discuss my own appearance and disappearance throughout this inquiry and how it has constantly challenged my research. My writing, that is my prose, can't remain silent in this discussion. My prose and my art merge with my research, echoing and rebounding within me to collide with hard fact. What has emerged is

hopefully a worthy undertaking producing a greater self-knowledge of my own artistic practice, and the context in which I work, as well as a contribution to our social understanding of women and post-secondary art education.

CHAPTER TWO - REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Time is a strange phenomenon. Shadows inevitably lengthen in life as well as days. Matters are brought into greater relief and a diverse *perspective* becomes possible. What at one time appears singular and obvious attains the dual potential to become inexplicable and vague, or clearer still and more palpable.

There is a widely held, socially acceptable belief that women's art is second best. This view, inherent in Western thought is based on common assumptions regarding women as well as inadequate historical analysis. It would appear that women are ensnared by modern culture in an uneasy social equilibrium revealing a need to challenge the discursive and ideological structure of the art historical canon. More than a century ago, social essayist and philosopher John Stuart Mill pointed out that everything that is **usual** appears **natural.** "The subjection of women by men being a usual custom, any departure consequently appears unnatural" (Mill 1971[1899]: 441). If we accept what Mill has suggested concerning social institutions, then the *usual appearing natural* must also apply within the realm of academic investigation.

Heller (1991) makes reference to an old New Yorker cartoon depicting a group of prehistoric women painting images on the walls of a cave. One of the women pauses and asks: "Does it seem odd to any of you that none of the great painters have been men?" (Heller 1991:11). This is an old parody of an even longer held perception: that men created all prehistoric art. Yet, why for centuries would we automatically assume that men created prehistoric art, when we have no real idea of why the art was created in the first place?

The most famous early image of a human is a woman: the *Venus of Willendorf* (Austria c. 30,000 - 25,000 BC). Found in 1908, it is a small figurine of an obese woman, carved of limestone and designed to fit easily into the hand. Witcombe (2003) allows that:

> Her great age and pronounced female form quickly established the Venus of Willendorf as an icon of prehistoric art. She was soon included in introductory art history textbooks where she quickly displaced other previously used examples of Palaeolithic art. Being both female and nude, she fitted perfectly into the patriarchal construction of the history of art. As the earliest known representation, she became the 'first woman,' acquiring a sort of Ur-Eve identity that focused suitably, from a patriarchal point of view, on the fascinating reality of the female body (Witcombe 2003:1).

Identification of the statuette as a "Venus" served to satisfy fashionable assumptions about taste, women and all

things primitive. To classify the Willendorf figurine as such linked the primitive and uncivilized female with the "tamed" female sexuality of the classical Venus goddess, exemplifying sexual love and beauty. The ancient Venus of Willendorf was a "reassuring example to the patriarchal culture of the extent to which the female and female sexuality had been overcome and women effectively subjugated by the male-dominated civilizing process" (Witcombe 2003: 2).

Currently the statuette is sometimes referred to as the "Woman" rather than the "Venus" and this signals a change in how she is comprehended. The intended purpose of the figurine is not known, nor is the gender of its creator, so by removing the references to a deity the figurine can be interpreted on its own merits.

While the gender of Palaeolithic artists has been debated a great deal, the long-held traditional hypothesis favours the male (Bahn 1998). In my estimation the basis for this belief would be that the hunting scenes depicted on cave walls, as well as the preponderance of nude female statuettes, such as the Venus of Willendorf suggest that art was a male enterprise: the reasoning being that women would not be attracted to creating or making use of this art. Men were the hunters and would also be interested in

creating and fondling a small female statuette either for erotic or symbolic purposes to honour the Earth or Mother Goddess. Recently, others have contested the idea of solely male Palaeolithic artists by introducing an alternative theory.

McDermott (1996) has proposed that this type of statuette is a representation of real-life, or self-representation created by Palaeolithic women as visual depictions of their own bodies: the distortions and exaggerations the result of the artist's perspective. They are based on what the eye sees rather than what it knows. In other words these statuettes are visualized not conceptualized (Honour and Fleming 1994:7).

If a female artist, possibly pregnant, created a sculpture from her own perspective, viewing herself from the neck down, thereby not focusing on the extremities, but rather on the round fleshiness of her trunk and genital area, the result would be very similar to the Venus of Willendorf. Other female figures from a slightly later date also emphasize the breasts, belly, vulva and buttocks. While McDermott does not account for the lack of reference to a model or the artist's own visual memory, his theory that the exaggeration of primary sexual features indicates a symbolic interest in female fertility is persuasive.

Taken from this viewpoint, and the idea that these types of statues are fertility charms (which is widely held) the notion of a female artist makes sense. Witcombe contends that:

> If the "Venus" of Willendorf was made to function within this sort of context [fertility charm], it would place the figurine emphatically within the sphere of the female. This would increase the possibility that it was carved by a woman (Witcombe 2003:4).

If the origin and purpose of ancient art can be questioned, then we must also question the largely patriarchal content of the current art historical canon. A comprehensive examination of secondary source literature addressing this issue indicates several historical and current themes regarding women and art, including:

1. The current art historical canon emphasis on male artists.
2. The historical exclusion of women from the study of art.
3. The resultant division of the "womanly" or minor arts.
4. A feminist critique of art history recognizing feminist and non-feminist artists.
5. The marginalization of female artists.

2.1 CURRENT ART HISTORICAL CANON EMPHASIS ON MALE ARTISTS

Academically, art history can be described as a discipline studying cultural artefacts within particular categories, respecting some and their creators more than others. The requisites of this study are in no way

detached or inclusive; rather, art history reinforces social values and beliefs. Art history, involves itself with the analysis of works of art, and within our patriarchal society both the analysis and the works of art contain the inscription of gender difference (Chadwick 1990:9). In order to achieve a more adequate and accurate view of historical situations, the unstated male domination of art history, put forth as a series of intellectual distortions must be corrected (Nochlin 1988: 146).

The Renaissance brought the contemporary concept of both art and artists to full maturity. Until that period, art was largely considered a form of craft created for some purpose, utilitarian, decorative, or religious, viewing the artist as a craftsman. With the Renaissance came the idea that the artist was a special person, and that the process of art was dependent on some sort of genius able to transform the natural realm in the service of the intellectual (Chadwick 1990:15; Piper 1990: 61). There are a host of myths regarding the idea of genius and creativity. One of the greatest is the "idea that if only one can be Genius, in our culture that role is usually assigned to men and that all attempts at competition (real or imagined) by women defeminize her and are considered potential threats to 'his' productivity" (Chadwick & de

Courtivron 1993:10). There is also the question of "second best". If not viewed as being in direct competition with male artists, women are often considered to be imitators or copies of the true genius making them mediocre or inadequate.

The question of "Why have there been no great women artists?" has been a point of discussion in art history since the 1970's, when Nochlin released her essay of a similar name. Nochlin argues that the chances of a female being considered a 'genius' or an innovator in the field of art are minimal no matter what degree of talent is shown (Nochlin 1979: 4-5).

Nochlin (2004) insisted it was a false question for it invited the negative answer that women were incapable of greatness. She explained that in order to become 'great' it takes hard work and study. One is not simply born with substantial ability in a discipline (i.e. born a genius), rather it is acquired and learned through study and the influence of others. Because the mythic measure of greatness was already male-defined as the innate nugget of genius, and the natural property of men, it is impossible to ever attribute greatness to the female. Women's lack of major achievement in art may be formulated as a crude syllogism: If women had the golden nugget of artistic

genius then it would reveal itself; because it has never revealed itself therefore women must lack the nugget of genius (Nochlin 2004:5). As women historically did not have access to the study of art, and Nochlin feels that art is not something one is born with, the reason that there have been no recorded great women artists can be traced to the oppression and lack of interest in a woman's ability in the field. In her own words Nochlin's basic argument is:

> ...as we know, in the arts as in a hundred other areas, things remain oppressive and discouraging to all those -women included- who did not have the good fortune to be born white, preferably middle class, and above all male. The fault lies not in our stars, our hormones, our menstrual cycles, or our empty internal spaces, but in our institutions, and our education – education understood to include everything that happens to us from the moment we enter, head first, this world of symbols, signs and signals (Nochlin 2004:2).

The failure therefore lies in society's institutions and education. Art making is dependent on favourable social and cultural conditions, and women have consistently worked under unfavourable conditions. They were excluded from training at the academies (especially in nude anatomy classes), and restricted by social ideologies of femininity. While Nochlin's original work made a critical intervention in the 1970s, and aimed the inquiry directly into social explanations of the gender hierarchy, there is a lingering idealism involving the ideal of greatness.

Nochlin leads us to believe that women can escape from the merely social obstruction of feminine roles by becoming more like a man. This creates a tacit reinforcement of the patriarchal definition of the male as the model of humanity, and women as the disadvantaged other.

In harmony with the accepted canon, texts of Canadian art history pay scant attention to women artists. The standard study of art history embodies a sequential history of men of genius, and this is not a category to which women are invited. Any suggestion that there are innumerable women worthy of inclusion in the history threatens the accustomed order. Most often women exist merely as negative images contrasted with the positive image of the male. Being female, women artists are not relative to the functional historical discussion. The *woman* as artist cannot therefore be found as a category in past history; she must be reconstituted and viewed in context. The designation of "female or woman artist" is certainly not inconsequential. In Canada, it is by way of heritage, a given summation of the virtual entirety of women's art. The elemental notion of "second best" already evident in history extends further to encompass a view that female artists are amateurs or at best part-time professionals,

and that their art is not an authentic or viable part of the dialogue on the narrative of art.

Attempts to re-evaluate the authentic chronological circumstances under which these women worked are inconsistent with art history's custom of identifying art not solely with the artist, but to an equal degree with the wealth, power, and privilege of those who acquired or commissioned it, the men who wrote about it, or those who acknowledged it. Vogel (1991) informs us that even "today's art world is firmly grounded in wealth, pretension to status, and a certain sensibility cultivated as a badge of class position" (Vogel 1991:23). The minor body of work relating to women in the art historical canon is identified with particular female artists, such as Artemsia Gentileschi, Berthe Morisot, Judith Leyster, Georgia O'Keefe, Frida Kahlo or a handful of various others. In Canada a similar list would include Emily Carr, Joyce Weiland, or Betty Goodwin. It would seem they are pulled out as examples of the "other" rather than artists in their own right, for even when women such as these have been recognized and admitted to the art historical canon they are most often referred to as being exceptions to the rule (Chadwick 1990:10).

Historically isolated from the nucleus of artistic philosophy or theory and from the role of the significant instructor, few women have been able to directly bequeath their talent and experience to the next generation (Chadwick 1990:10). It appears impossible to remove the historical and critical assessment of women's art from the ideologies that classify her situation in our culture.

Notions of who can and cannot be artists need to be reappraised. Chicago (1982) tells of her discovery that:

> The women in the various art programs are being virtually untouched by their education. They sit in classes taught primarily by men, look at slides of work done almost exclusively by male artists, and are asked to work on projects that have little to do with their lives and concerns. If they make images that are relevant to the facts of their femaleness, they are put down, ignored, laughed at, or rejected (Chicago 1982:91).

It has been over twenty years since Chicago wrote this, and yet very little has changed. In my own classes, I studied a very limited number of female artists, and felt little freedom to address aspects of my female life, or indeed to possess any "female" facet at all.

Duffin (1995) reaffirms that "students may not be introduced to a single woman artist throughout their Fine Art course, and most gallery directors, critics and funders have been brought up on a similar diet of male imagery,

concerns and directions" (Duffin 1995:62). Change happens very slowly in art history, for while now it is possible to study the "feminist" artists, those not under this banner are often left out of the texts, and anyone wanting to study their work must do their own research.

2.2 THE HISTORICAL EXCLUSION OF WOMEN FROM ART EDUCATION

Art historical tradition has in the past, through heavily gendered practices, denied women the status of artist and recently, served to underscore the gender differences in process, product, language and experience. There is a natural trap in seeking to validate art created by women. The historical archaeology only implicitly reinforces any negative connotations surrounding art by women and places them in a history not of their own making. Firestone (1970) declares:

> It would take a denial of all cultural tradition for women to produce even a true 'female' art. For a woman who participates in (male) culture must achieve and be rated by standards of a tradition she had no part in making – and certainly there is no room in that tradition for a female view, even if she could discover what it was. In those cases where a woman, tired of losing at a male game, has attempted to participate in culture in a female way, she has been put down and misunderstood, named by the (male) cultural establishment as 'Lady Artist', i.e. trivial, inferior. And even where it must be (grudgingly) admitted she is 'good' it is fashionable...to

insinuate that she is good but irrelevant (Firestone 1970: 15).

Instead of merely trying to place women artists in history, it is more relevant to focus on the experiences of women artists in order to bring forth a different viewpoint than is now available.

Although there were of course many practicing artists, both male and female, from the beginning of time, the education of female artists in an academic sense begins in the time period of the Renaissance. In the mid sixteenth century according to Heller (1991), the first women artists of international repute arose primarily from Italy. Changes in the attitudes regarding the education of women meant that it was no longer considered dangerous to teach females to read and write, and so daughters of the aristocracy were introduced to poetry, music, dance and painting. This education was of course only meant to produce dilettantes to serve as entertaining companions for noblemen (Heller 1991: 13). Heller further notes:

> The Renaissance had [also] altered the role played by artists in society. Once considered mere craftsmen, painters and sculptors now were perceived as cultured, creative individuals who mingled with political, religious and intellectual leaders. Such artists were expected to have a thorough grasp of many fields, including art history, perspective and anatomy. Women could not freely travel to study art in other areas,

were not taught the sciences or mathematics, and were unable to study from the nude model (Heller 1991:13).

This meant that any of these early female artists who did manage to practice professionally were most often enabled in their studies by a familial relationship to a professional male artist. Though this relationship gave then access to studio space and artistic training, due to the absence of nude models most tended to create portraits or still lifes.

Taking the British Royal Academy as an exclusionary example, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, women were barred from the study of the nude model, and so lacked this imperative foundation for academic training and representation. Women were also excluded from membership within the Academy itself until 1922 when A.L. Swynnerton became an associate member, and L. Knight was elected to full membership in 1936 (Chadwick 1990:7).

In the past three centuries, Canadian women have taken an active part in shaping their own lives, and the lives of those around them. Even though previously, under British common law, Canadian women, particularly those who were married, were subordinate to men, there existed accepted and separate spheres of life for men and women (Prentice, Bourne, Brandt, Light, Mitchinson & Black 1996). A woman

was presumed to be emotionally, intellectually, and of course physically different from a man. By virtue of her sex, she was thought to be most suited to be a wife and mother, and therefore her natural field of endeavour was the home – a protection and haven from a hostile and volatile world. Even well into the twentieth century, women studying art required a protector or chaperone.

In Canada, at the time of the First World War, women could only study from flat copy, cast or a draped model. Consequently, women tended toward subjects that did not require life drawing, simply because they were not allowed to acquire the needed technical ability (Farr 1976:2). This meant that women turned to their own environment for inspiration and subject matter, and these subjects were not as highly regarded as life drawing. It has only been a very few decades that women have been able to access the same specialized art education available as a matter of course to their male counterparts, but we must recognize this for what it is – the extension of a male-defined and executed valuation of opportunity to the *other*.

2.3 THE RESULTANT "WOMANLY" OR MINOR ARTS

In the introduction to her book, *By a Lady,* Tippett (1992) declares that "there is a common view that women artists are second-rate, scaled down versions of their male contemporaries, producing derivative and diluted examples of work in genres dominated by male excellence" (1992: xii). This measure of gender rather than artistic merit has led to the widely held idea that art by women is inferior. Tippett derives the title of her book from the common, past practice in Canada (Pre-Confederation and early Post-Confederation) to label artworks, especially paintings, "by a Lady" rather than with the name of the artist. This practice, while in tone and intention created as a protection from the outside world, only served to place the artwork in a sub-category of its own, and made the name of the artist as irrelevant as the work (Tippett 1992: xi).

By routinely relegating women's art to the "by a lady" category or attributing it to another, usually male artist, the status quo created an atmosphere that tolerated very little degree of proficiency. As soon as a female artist exhibited any degree of expertise, she was poaching on traditional male territory. "Art" was something created by men, and if women stepped out of the secondary role to which society had relegated them, they could not expect to

be applauded for the effort. Chadwick (1990) refers to art reviews from this time period as being "full of charges that aspiring women artists risk 'unsexing' themselves" (Chadwick 1990:167).

In the field of art history, the white, western male viewpoint is unconsciously accepted as the viewpoint of the art historian. Analysis suggests that this viewpoint has proven to be inadequate to encompass or define women's art on all foundations - moral, ethical and intellectual. The patriarchal norms of sex-role socialization have remained relatively stable for centuries and the emphasis on the role of women in society has obscured many efforts that women have made to assume other roles. It is possible for art to tell a social truth about our culture that has been ignored or misinterpreted and in doing so to expose the sexual bias that imposes distortions upon both the creation and interpretation of art in our culture.

The hierarchy of value in the arts holds painting, sculpture, and architecture as more significant than the crafts and decorative arts. While these distorted valuations lead to and perpetuate an association between women and folk arts and the crafts, the larger issue is the higher value placed on the so-called fine arts. The devaluation of the 'minor arts' has led to the exclusion

from our histories activities such as pottery, weaving,
needlework, and quilting; all work that women created. The
question is not whether these forms of art should be seen
as fine art, but rather, whether the fine arts are indeed
higher in any important historical or social sense than the
traditional arts and crafts. There is a serious need for a
critical framework, free from sexist hierarchies that can
accommodate both the fine and traditional arts, for in the
broadest historical sense, the fine arts have existed for
only a few centuries. If one realizes that for millennia
"weaving and pot making were among the world's principal
forms of art, it is easy to conclude that the fine arts are
history's aberration" (Broude and Garrand 1982: 12).

Art practice has been created to address men's
experiences and relationships and is still largely
appropriated by men as their territory. When the
traditional themes are viewed through the work of female
artists, "the stereotypes are revealed for what they are:
ethical and interpretive categories devised by men and
imposed on women for social purposes" (Broude, Garrard
1982: 14). When feminist analysis approaches patriarchal
supposition and privileging of the masculine view as the
'norm', women's work, both past and present becomes viable

demonstrating the need to re-contextualize women's art and women artists.

The 'masculine' has consistently been associated with the mind and the 'feminine' with the body, a duality of thought inherent in western philosophy. The subjugation of the feminine (the flesh) has ensured the domination of the masculine (the mind) at the very level of knowledge itself.

Betterton (2004) outlines the "feminist critique of knowledge as putting forth two important points: that sociology does not offer an analysis of women's lives", and further that such analysis could never be adequate (Betterton 2004:15-16). Analysis is "based on a 'masculine' approach of distance and neutrality" not designed to gain information about women's lives and therefore the "whole nature of scientific inquiry remains gendered" (Betterton 2004:16).

When women as gendered beings are denied access to the established language of the arts it creates an easy, limiting reliance both on manual skills and the comfort of their own everyday world. According to Smith (1990) the 'fathertongue' can be seen to be the essential language of the academic discipline, and women must learn to translate it before they can interact, for the 'mothertongue' is of no use. Yet there is hope, for Smith assures that we are

"not condemned forever to a borrowed language" (Smith, 1990:4).

Because formal education and instruction in all areas, including the arts, was a male attribute, women were previously simply denied the formal background and influence necessary to the study of the discipline, and so their histories do not appear in texts. Women have not been accidentally or prejudicially omitted. The structural sexism of the discipline actively contributes to the production and perpetuation of a gender hierarchy. What we learn about the world is ideologically patterned in conformity with the social order within which it is produced. The conventional forms of social awareness alienate women from the reality of their own experience.

2.4 A FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF ART HISTORY

Chadwick (1990) acknowledges that "feminism in the arts grew out of the contemporary women's movement and its first investigations relied heavily on sociological and political methodology" (1990:8). The duality inherent in Western thought has been replicated within art history and used to reinforce sexual difference as a basis for aesthetic appraisal. The feminist desire to recoup women's

histories, and to resituate women within the history of cultural production led to an important focus on female creativity.

The earliest feminist investigations confronted art history's constructed categories of human artistic production and the veneration of the individual male artist as a hero, as well as confronting the dislocation of art from the social conditions associated with its production and distribution (Chadwick, 1990:9). Since Modernist accounts of art history continued to present the work of women artists in the twentieth century as followers and their work as derivative of the achievements of *great* male artists, persistently ignoring and thereby tacitly reinforcing the social production of art, a feminist scrutiny became essential. Fresh investigations focused on the work of remarkable women artists and revealed within art history the negative relationship between female creativity and high culture. A feminist analysis regarding the aesthetic value of painting and sculpture reveals that women's artworks are often defined using terms directly in opposition to the qualities used to describe the feminine social ideal. Chadwick (2001) clarifies:

> It is now a tenet of feminist analysis that the aesthetic value of painting and sculpture is often defined in opposition to qualities such as

"decorative," "precious," "miniature," "sentimental," etc. Those very qualities which are used to construct a social ideal of "femininity" are also employed to denigrate its productions. ...women and their art have provided a set of negative characteristics against which to oppose "high" art (Chadwick 2001:523).

Within the past several decades, feminism has resulted in women becoming more dynamic regarding the creation of academic art theory. This has provided them the ability to create valued theoretical and critical structures capable of including female artists, while recognising their more traditional roles as storytellers and custodians of personal, familial and community heritage. Freuh, Langer, and Raven (1991) explain that:

Women, who once hesitated to use their sexual and gendered identities in their art, fearing to be shamed and branded inferior by art world 'authorities,' began to affirm and inspire one another and to make changes within and among themselves that also altered art world institutions and practices (Freuh et al 1991: X).

As in other academic disciplines, theories based on the ideological and political conviction that women were more unified by being female, rather than they were divided by race, class and history have been challenged as insufficient, and many contemporary feminists now turn to other theoretical paradigms designed to address multiple aspects of identity and subjectivity (Gluck& Patai 1991:2).

Structuralism is a theoretical perspective acknowledging the existence of social structures that are not easily observed, but have the capability to produce observable social phenomena (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner 1988:245). For the structuralist, while the individual is shaped by sociological, psychological and linguistic structures beyond personal control, these structures can be brought to light through investigation. Marshall (1998) acknowledges that "basic to the approach is the idea that we can discern underlying structures behind the often fluctuating and changing appearances of social reality" (Marshall 1998: 646). As a logical next step to structuralism, poststructuralism draws on structural linguistics and assumes that meaning is constituted within language and is "not the guaranteed expression of the subject who speaks it, so there can be no biologically determined set of emotional and psychological characteristics which are essentially masculine or feminine" (Chadwick 1990:11). Poststructuralism stresses the subjectivity of meaning which is not fixed or singular, but is rather in a constant turmoil of economic, social and political forces. Broude and Garrard (2005) explain that "under the impetus of postructuralist theory, the notion of a unitary feminism yielded to feminisms, whose agendas were

differentiated by race, class, ethnicity and the very concept of gender came to be problematized as a socially constructed entity" (Broude & Garrard, 2000:1).

By shrugging off the belief in a deep underlying structure or truth, Foucault (1969) came to the conclusion that the search for knowledge actively shapes and creates what is found. Knowledge is not independent of the subject, it can only be understood in the encompassing political and social context.

Subjectivity is therefore seen as socially constructed within language. As an example, it has been demonstrated that one way in which patriarchal power is structured is through men's control of seeing women, or the hegemony of the 'male gaze' (Berger 1972:45,47). Berger argued that from the beginning of the Renaissance, European art had depicted women as being "aware of being seen by a [male] spectator" (Berger 1972: 49). Sydie (1997) concludes that the "artist's gaze became a privileged gaze – objective, physically and emotionally removed from the object of study, like the eye of God" (Sydie 1997:316). Further she states, "the artist's vision was both an objectively measurable effect as well as a subjectively organized intellectual process" (Sydie 1997:316). Combined, these positions have resulted in new attitudes toward the

relations between artist and work, and "artistic intention can be seen as only one of many overlapping strands – ideological, economic, social, and political that make up the work of art" (Chadwick 1990:11). Obviously, a distinctly new way for feminist art historians to think about art history itself needed to arise. It became necessary to probe the fundamental assumptions surrounding the whole enterprise of officially sanctioned knowledge, and to accomplish this, attention began to focus on the dissemination of visual culture, and its affects.

Many questions have been raised about the function of visual culture as a defining, regulating, creative practice and the place that women occupy in it. Of particular interest in addressing this issue is "Foucault's analysis of the way in which power is exercised, not through open coercion, but through its investment in particular institutions and discourses and the forms of knowledge that they produce" (Chadwick 1990: 11). His distinction between 'total' and 'general' history, where the 'general' does not focus on a solitary connotation, but rather relies on "series, segmentations, limits, difference of level, time-lags, anachronistic survivals and possible types of relation" would be pertinent to the "feminist problematic of devising a corresponding, history which is responsive to

women's specific experiences without positing a parallel history uniquely feminine and existing [outside] the dominant culture" (Chadwick, 1990: 12).

Foucault (1969) also provided an investigation of what he called the human sciences. These are the bodies of knowledge and writing that take *Man* as their object and category of analysis. Discursive formulation allows the systematic investigation of a field of knowledge. Foucault observes that those in power control "domains of knowledge", thereby overpowering, disguising or disqualifying other knowledges considered to be "located low down on the level of hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" (Foucault, 1980:84). Therefore the analysis of the history of art includes not just the history of art, or the art of the past, but also the discursive formation of the body of understanding responsible for the art record. The history of women and art needs to take into account the way art history is written and by whom. Trickner (1988) comments that:

> some narratives, concepts and methods are dominant in the *generalized* profile of art history, not only as it is taught and practiced in the academy – which is of course how academics think of it but also as it informs a range of related activities in schools, museums, auction houses, general publishing and the mass media (1988: 251).

The terms of art history analysis underpin a wide scope of activities from creating the art to teaching, writing and publishing on the subject of art as well as the commerce of the works themselves. The underlying values, assumptions, omissions, and prejudices and the way that they are recorded is central to the study. Within Post-structuralism the power-laden definitions of 'high art' and 'craft' are exposed as deceptive. These theoretical occurrences serve to shift the attention on to broader social issues involving ideologies of gender, sexuality, and power, and show us that there can be no straightforward category marking a history of art as feminist. Instead it is necessary to intercede in certain areas rather than integrate feminism into existing structures.

In a feminist analysis, art history is understood to be a practice that presents a series of representational systems that actively instils definitions of sexual difference and helps to contribute to current patterns of sexual politics and power relations (Pollock 1988: 11). Art history can be described as a masculinist ideological discourse based on a specific account of how and who manufactures art. The primary figure in this discourse is the individual creator or the genius figure. It would seem that theories based on the social production of art

combined with the structuralist assassination of the primary author would also lead to the destruction of the "archaic individualism at the heart of art historical discourse" (Pollock, 1990: 11). The imperative remains to deconstruct the ideological fabrication of a privileged masculine individual that exists in the nucleus of the historical discourse of art.

In recent history, largely due to the feminist movement, women have found a voice and recognition in the world of the arts. Feminist artists continue to have a desire to modify stereotypes about women that have prevailed in a male-dominated society, but it is prudent to remember that not all female artists think of themselves as feminists. Female artists are finding that their efforts lead them down diverse paths. Most do not want to be thought of as women caught in the focus of feminism, but rather as individuals creating in the social context of their own complex identities, which include not only gender, but also sexuality, ethnicity, personality, life stage, religion, class, and politics.

Female artists find that the "deconstructive discourse is double-edged: on the one hand it acknowledges that 'woman' is a historically and discursively constructed category; on the other it asserts that it is a category we

must continue to employ and that it is compatible to suggest that 'women' don't exist – while maintaining a politics of as if they existed – since the world behaves as if they unambiguously did" (Wolff 1988: 9). To clarify, we need to acknowledge both the category "woman" and the lived experiences of real women.

To place oneself, or be placed in the category of "woman" artist is to be judged differently than a male artist. The goal for feminist artists has long been a gender blind interpretation of art allowing equivalent opportunity for professional success, but perhaps this blindness can cause problems of its own.

2.5 MARGINALIZATION OF WOMEN ARTISTS

Although more women than ever are becoming artists there seem to be very few advances toward career equality. A 2004 Canadian statistical profile study (based on the 2001 census) produced for the Canada Council for the Arts details some significant findings about artists in Canada (Hill Strategies Research Inc. 2004). Despite high levels of education, and very strong growth in the number of artists from 1971 to 2001, there is a high proportion of self-employment, very low earnings, and a predominance of

women in the field (Hill Strategies 2004: 1). For these female artists, the employment outlook is not good. In Canada 54% of visual artists are female, and although more than half of all degree-holding artists are female, male artists have much higher incomes (Hill Strategies 2004: 9). Female artists earn only 56% of the average earnings for male artists (Hill Strategies 2004: 10). A previous 1991 study, cited by Beal and Van Den Bosch (1998) found that only 22% of artists exhibited in commercial galleries across Canada in 1990 were women. They reported that in the National Gallery of Canada, women's works account for 12.5% of the Canadian Collection and 6.5% of the International Collection and further, at mid career women earn only half as much as men (Beal and Van Den Bosch 1998:72). While gender blindness has been a goal for many women artists it has not been an effective strategy for the promotion and recognition of women's art.

In order to avoid being stigmatized as a 'woman artist' it is necessary to subscribe to the objectivity of the aesthetic evaluation, from which women have been historically excluded. While feminists have long cried for museum curators to see more in art than just 'male' and 'female', not all female artists create feminist art. Perhaps by looking for career equality, women have isolated

themselves more, making female art a socially conscious fad rather than a respectable and durable institution. Chicago (1999) contends that "as long as women's art is treated as an 'exotic other' it will continue to be marginalized (Chicago 1999:14). Fear of tokenism, and too much emphasis on inequity has made some female artists shy away from feminism (Deepwell 1995: 2).

Deepwell (1995) clarifies that "feminism itself is not a singular approach, but a broad umbrella term for a diverse number of positions and strategies used by women in all aspects of art production, distribution and consumption" (Deepwell 1995:1). If the problematic can be described as the theoretical and methodological field from which statements are made and knowledge produced, then the problematic for feminist analyses of visual culture as part of a wide-ranging feminist enterprise could be defined in terms of the social construction of sexual difference (Kelly 1980). This definition would however, need to be complemented by analysis of the psychic construction of sexual difference, for this is the site for the inscription onto individuals, through family, and the socially determined distinction, which privileges sex as a standard of power (Kelly 1980). Pollack (1990) contends that:

...art made by women is different – but not in ways which we can easily recognize or understand. But difference does not just mean being 'different from...' - whatever we put in that space would thus be the norm. Its difference is not singular enough to allow the constitution of a new curatorial category. Its differences are as vivid between women of diverse historical moments and cultural locations: the difference is part of the calculation of sexual difference – differentiation on the axis of sex – articulates with other imperatives and burdens. The artistic practices of women require deciphering, like monuments from lost or unfamiliar cultures. There is some system to the patterning of signs into meanings. We need, however, to find the codes that lend the symbols generated their resonance and meaning, both within the content of their productions and across time and space to other contexts. These codes, as I name them, are not merely semiotic signs, but those shaped in concrete social and historical conditions, which in turn shape and are shaped by the psychic life of individuals framed and formed in specific trajectories of socially constituted but psychically lived subjectivity (Pollock 1996: xv).

Once we insist that sexual difference is produced through an interconnecting series of social practices and institutions of which families, education, art studies, galleries and magazines are part, then the hierarchies which sustain masculine dominance come under scrutiny and stress, and we are able to study the visual arts as part of this production of difference.

Defeating the 'male' has never been a goal of most feminists, but there is a stereotypical image of feminism that some artists would rather not be part of. Yet it does

not seem that women can succeed by ignoring feminism and its efforts against oppression altogether.

In spite of the advances made through feminism, today when contemporary women artists, - and even contemporary feminist artists - are involved, current canon formulation is based on male lineage. Legitimation is through the father, and consists of the "invocation of the mega-fathers, or the geniuses of art history" (Schor 1994: 43). The canon comprehensively constitutes the patrimony (the inheritance) of any person wanting to be considered educated in the arts. Schor makes it clear that "all women are inculcated with patriarchal values and all women artists are taught about a male art history" (Schor 1994: 46). This perpetuation of patrilineage occurs when female artists routinely relate their work to that of male forebears. Admittedly, the residual heavy dependence on a male system to authenticate feminist practice is ironic; however dealing with the resonance of patriarchy is challenging.

Failure to recognize the patriarchy that has occupied such a considerable presence in the art world would be a type of tacit endorsement. Complete independence from the masculine traditions would cause women artists to deny the possibility of accepting the nature of women's experiences

as a vital part of human culture. To define art, only through the canonical discourse, is to recognize masculinity as constituting power and meaning, and through extension equivalent to truth and beauty (Pollock 1999: 9). Pollock (1999) contends that when feminist practice limits itself to the same formulation, and also tries to be a discourse concerning only art, truth and beauty, it becomes a female facsimile following the inadequate structure of the existing canon. Women's success in the art world depends on an awareness of gender, for although we live in a world that is no longer bound within the strictures of gender; we will never live in a world that is gender-neutral.

Shifting the thought from a gender-dominated discourse to one that accounts for both the public and the private spheres permits a greater holistic reality to come into focus taking us beyond gender to a more comprehensive level of social and intellectual order. Rich (1979) contends that:

> If we conceive of feminism as more than a frivolous label, if we conceive of it as an ethic, a methodology, a more complex way of thinking about, thus more responsibly acting upon, the condition of human life, we need a self-knowledge which can only develop through a steady, passionate attention to all female experience. I cannot imagine a feminist evolution leading to radical change in the private/political realm of gender that is not rooted

in the conviction that all women's lives are
important; that the lives of men cannot be understood
by burying the lives of women; and that to make
visible the full meaning of women's experience, to
reinterpret knowledge in terms of that experience is
now the most important task of thinking. (Rich 1979:
213).

Feminist art and criticism have clearly shown that

there are other standards by which we can judge the past

and terms by which we can recognize the greatness of past

women creators. The isolated perspective of woman's

otherness only obscures the artists hidden in history,

because we treat them as a group rather than individuals.

The formalism inherent in the art history narrative has

served to dehumanize art by separating it from its cultural

meanings and the context of its production. It is obvious

that female creativity holds traditions divergent to that

of the male and we must be able to see the different

reality of women's lives, as extending and expanding from

the assumption of a single mode of social experience and

interpretation.

The main endeavour of this literature review has been

to identify and recognize the following evident themes: the

exclusion of women from the art historical canon; the

emphasis within the canon on male artists; the division of

high art from the minor arts; a short feminist critique of

art history and the marginalization of female artists.

What has become evident through this review is a need for a closer look at the art educational experiences of the female artists themselves. Little of the secondary literature included research involving actual female artists. Only Chicago (1999), while recalling letters received from innumerable female art students, made any reference to these artists by contending that:

> Too many educational and art institutions continue to present women's work in a token way, and hence young women are being deprived of knowledge about what women before them thought, taught, and created. Rather than inheriting a world made different by the infusion of oppositional ideas, new generations of women are experiencing the same identity problems that motivated my own search for a female history and for images that affirmed rather than negated my existence (Chicago 1999:14).

This confirms that the art curriculum as currently taught reinforces the culturally constructed gender differences inherent in our society, despite advances that feminism has produced. In order to obtain a greater understanding of how the concept of gender relates to female artists research involving artists themselves must be conducted.

The next chapter outlines the pertinent methodological issues and gives details of the methods used. The following chapter provides an analysis of the data obtained through interviews I conducted with 10 female artists. The

last chapter, the conclusion, provides a synopsis of the research and a reflection on the insights that emerged. It also outlines further study involving the professional careers of female artists.

CHAPTER THREE – METHODS

Sometimes, right in the middle of drawing or writing I will look very closely at my hands, and I am always taken aback. How can these marvellous implements belong to me? They are familiar, yet somehow so strange to me that I begin to question myself. Am I really who I think I am?

My own experiences are the lodestone for this investigation. I am trained as a professional artist. As such, my hands are a distinct necessity. They are, so to speak, my stock and trade. I use them to create my work, acting as faithful servants who know my every wish.

In many of my university drawing classes, the task consisted of drawing one's own hand, truly a painful, tedious exercise. I quickly theorized that although drawing is about illusion, it is also about truth: finding the truth in whatever you draw. Learning to draw consists of two things, the actual skill itself, and discovering how to truly *see*. Of course that sounds incredibly simple. In reality, research has shown that the key to learning to draw is learning to make a mental shift to a differing mode of information processing, using the right side of the brain (Edwards, 1979: 5). For me, refining my drawing skills resulted in making my own self visible. Someone who

was there all along suddenly became evident. These lessons taught me to search not only for the familiar but also, perhaps more importantly, to see the unfamiliar within the familiar.

Peter Berger (1963) described the sociological perspective as the ability to see the general in the particular and further, the strange within the familiar, so while training as an artist I unwittingly also became a budding sociologist.

Sociology is of course, the scientific study of society, and research an essential element. It is necessary to gather a descriptive and explanatory analysis of patterns of behaviour, all the while assuming that these patterns are products of social structure. An awareness of the relationship between human behaviour and the contributing historical, cultural and social contextual factors encompasses what C. Wright Mills called the *sociological imagination* (Esterberg 2002:4).

My own journey as an artist perplexed me on many levels, and I became increasingly interested in the experiences of other female artists. Throughout my university art career, I was bothered by a niggling dissatisfaction with the attributed contribution of women artists as set forth in the art historical narrative.

The study of art history as presented in the narrative is monumental. My first year text (Honour and Fleming, 1995) consists of some 860 pages, addressing the time period from homo habilis to homo sapiens sapiens, or from the stone age to the space age. Of course, even spread out over a full year it is possible to study only a small portion of the available information. In other words, in class we hit the highlights, and female artists are only on rare occasions part of the highlights. There seemed to be so few female artists prior to the 20th century that I began to believe that women must be either untalented or invisible. While there is outstanding merit in studying all the great male artists of history, during my studies it became constantly necessary to fill in the blanks regarding female artists with my own research.

It became essential for me to imagine myself within the art world and to be able to see women represented in the art making rather than just represented in the art. I needed to look at art from a perspective closer to my own understanding of being. Smith (1990) contends "the standpoint of women situates the inquirer in the site of her bodily existence and in the local actualities of her working world" (Smith 1990: 28). I required a place to

locate myself or a standpoint situated in "the actualities of the [my] everyday/everynight world" (Smith 1990:31).

As Lather (1991) explains, "to do feminist research is to put the social construction of gender at the center of one's inquiry" (Lather 1991:71). To re-examine art from a feminist perspective often means to leave behind the perception of *pure* aesthetic and *universal* values, and to envision art not as a passive reflector of social history but as a tool that can and has been used as a potent social influence. Lather (1991) clarifies:

> Through the questions that feminism poses and the absences it locates, feminism argues the centrality of gender in the shaping of our consciousness, skills and institutions as well as in the distribution of power and privilege. The overt ideological goal of feminist research in the human sciences is to correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position (Lather 1991:71).

In order to know that I too could fit into an art history that I felt alien to, and that the work of female artists held lessons of benefit to everyone, I needed to see these artists in history. Smith (1990) concludes that "an alienated knowledge alienates those not members of the dominant male minority" (Smith 1990:28). Gender therefore became an elemental category necessary for my own understanding of both the invisible and the visible social order. As I approached my graduation I began to wonder if

other female artists had also searched for clues to the same problematic inquiry.

Esterberg (2002) tells us that "some of the earliest feminist scholars challenged social scientists to include women as subjects in their research" and encouraged them "to study the contributions of earlier women social scientists whose work had been ignored or forgotten" (Esterberg 2002: 19). I sought to make women my subject of research and further to study their awareness of the history and education of female artists.

Research, like many endeavours in life, has deep autobiographical roots, and these roots are essential to sustain a personal connection to the intended research. Without roots, the energy indispensable to the endeavour wanes. As an artist, who also happens to be female, I felt in a remarkably good position to interview other female artists about their art-related experiences. In order to carry out my qualitative research I began by performing a literature review within the following areas, the sociology of education, women and art, art and feminism, and arts education. Following this review I conducted in-depth interviews with women whose lives have been directly impacted by post-secondary art education: 10 female artists from the Thunder Bay area. My particular focus had three-

main areas of investigation entailing their perception of their art education, their views on being an artist, as well as how they envision the concept of "professional". My last data source remains my own autobiographical reflections. Although it was easy to continually glimpse my own experience mirrored in the lives of others, of paramount importance is an understanding of the meaning the female artists made of their own experiences.

My research is directed by and examined within the general precincts of feminist theory, epistemology, and methodology. Interviewing women requires the ability to speak and listen as a woman, and is based on the concept of "women's standpoint" as brought forth by Smith (1987). Smith (1987, 1989) tells us that routine procedures in the discipline of sociology draw us insistently toward conventional understandings that distort women's experiences. These practices within the objectifying discourse are those that directly change personal experience from the "everyday/everynight world" into types of unrecognizable knowledge (Smith, 1990:4). Smith (1990) searched within sociology for what it is within the discipline "that alienates and occludes the standpoint of experience... [to] subdue the lived actualities of people's experience to the discourses of ruling" (Smith 1990:4).

Opening women's experience up to research that is aware women are "actively constructing, as well as interpreting, the social processes and social relations which constitute their everyday realities" situates the researcher on the very same "critical plane" (Stanley 1990:34). This provides for a more balanced research approach blending innovative research with the conventional, capable of understanding how women's lives are shaped by forces outside of their control (Esterberg, 2002:19).

Enduring in both qualitative and quantitative research is the important goal of investigating and illuminating how humans construct social reality, and social abstractions, such as education are best understood through the experiences of those whose lives they affect (Ferrarotti, 1981). By focussing on the qualitative aspect of the research spectrum, standpoint theory allows for the most suitable position of inquiry: not merely an objective observer, but rather exploration that incorporates the perspective of the insider.

Qualitative research in social science, being primarily a matter of interpretation, is fundamentally different from research conducted in the natural sciences. According to Esterberg (2002), instead of beginning with

theory, qualitative research often "begins with an examination of the empirical world" to help develop "grounded theory" (Esterberg 2002:34). This involves seeking to understand social processes in context, and paying attention to the subjective nature of life. To this end, interviewing was an obvious avenue of inquiry; it is capable of upholding the significance of the individual without overlooking the possibility of community input.

While interviewing has long been a mainstay of qualitative research, Oakley (1981) informs that the importance in interviewing *women* is not the "taken-for-granted sociological assumptions about the role of the interviewer but a new awareness of the interviewer as an instrument for promoting a sociology for women", or the making visible the meaning of being female in a patriarchal capitalist society (Oakley 1981:48).

It is necessary to look at what is accepted as knowledge within this society. According to Smith (1990), and her standpoint, situated in the everyday/everynight world, knowledge generates from knowing, but knowing always entails a ubiquitous social dimension. Knowledge therefore has a need to discard the social subject involved in knowing. It would appear that knowledge, as a specialized form of social organization, is independent of the subject

and therefore becomes externalized. This creates a conflict, as knowledge cannot exist except in the "activities and participation of the subjects as knowers" (Smith 1990:66). Feminism seeks to explore the practices of knowing that are hidden from social reality. To begin from the standpoint of women is to insist on the validity of an inquiry that is interested in, and begins from a particular site in the world. While this appears to violate the sanctity of scientific objectivity, the knower cannot be eliminated or subsumed into the knowledge without loss of knowledge.

The ensuing question of subjectivity applies not only to those I studied but also to myself. I needed to query my own perspectives as well as those of the group. According to Lather (1991), the researcher is not a distanced observer but a self-reflexive participant in the events, who seeks to give meaning to the experience (Lather 1991:150). Lather defines self-reflexive participants as those who develop skills of self-critique and who incorporate critical reflection, as they struggle toward ways of knowing that move the self. I took this one step further and integrated my own experiences into the research by interviewing myself. I did this in order to compare my experiences directly with those of the participants. In

this way it was possible to separate to a great degree, my own ideas, feelings and experiences. I allowed my reflections to stand on their own as a separate interview rather than interfere with the reflections of others. So in point of fact I actually interviewed 11 female artists. My key role as researcher was to provide an opportunity for participants to speak on their own behalf in order to contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding women and art education, while allowing my own standpoint to benefit both the interviews and the analysis.

3.1 THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Primary research began by setting up the interview guide. I used a semi-structured interview in order to be able to gain flexibility, while ensuring that all the topics I wanted to cover were addressed. This allowed for the use of open-ended questions and reflection. In this manner, it was also possible to vary the order of the questions or to ask additional questions and acquire feedback on material previously obtained.

The literature review guided my interview questions as I became cognizant of the pertinent themes (such as feminist art practice, the history of women artists and the marginalization of women artists) flowing through the

current available literature and research. It became obvious to me very early on that little research had been conducted involving artists as participants and I could find no research addressing their own personal perspectives.

My introductory interview questions involved what I call a "demographic snapshot" aimed at collating fundamental demographic facts pertinent to the artist. From this simple beginning, designed to give me basic facts regarding the artist and act as an ice-breaker to put the artist at ease (Reinharz 1992:25), I went on to further questions concerning their personal identification as an artist (i.e. professional or not), their goals, experiences, and influences, and types of activities. From here I went on to questions regarding educational experiences, favourite artists (and why), female artists, gender (including any bias) as addressed in classes, their jobs, family and peers, and their feelings and experiences relating to the question of gender and art in their own lives.

3.2 FORMING THE GROUP OF PARTICIPANTS

Following ethical approval of the research by the Research Ethics Board of Lakehead University, I officially

began my investigation. In order to form a group of participants I contacted 5 female artists known to me through professional association and requested an initial meeting. From this preliminary contact, the participants, informed as to what my study entailed, and that I was a Masters student from Lakehead University, were asked to suggest several other contacts to form a group of 10 participants. Given the time constraints, I felt that a smaller number would make for a more manageable, but still adequate study group for my in-depth study. I contacted a further 5 artists as suggested by the initial group. As I was clearly not looking for specific ethnicity, class or other diversity, (such as sexuality), age, gender and education became the three deciding parameters for my choice of participants. It was necessary to gather participants who were university trained as my formulated questions addressed art educational experiences at the post-secondary level. Female artists without post-secondary education were not a part of my research.

I was also interested in having participants representative of 3 basic age groups: a younger group from the age of 18-30, a middle group between 31 and 60, and an older group over the age of 60. Given these simple criteria it was a straightforward task to choose

participants. Not one of the 10 chosen participants declined to be interviewed.

3.3 BASIC PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

The 10 participants ranged in age from 23 years to 75 years of age. Two artists were under the age of 30, two were over the age of 60, and the other six participants were between 36 and 60 years of age. All but two of the women were married, had been divorced and remarried or were in a long-term relationship. Of the remaining two women one was divorced and one was single. Only two of the women had no children, the rest had from 1 to 4 children. The majority of the artists (7) held degrees in other disciplines in addition to Fine Arts courses or degrees. Two artists held Honours degrees in Fine Arts only with no other post secondary education. One artist held a Master of Fine Arts degree.

3.4 THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

The elemental portion of my job was to set up an agreeable time for interview, then during the interview to put the artist at ease by highlighting the importance of her story and to actively and attentively listen to everything she said.

The interviews were conducted between January 18th, 2005 and March 1st, 2005. All interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants. Only three of the interviews took place at the home of the participant. All other interviews were conducted at various restaurants in Thunder Bay. Each of the interviews took place in the afternoon. The artists themselves chose where and when they would like to be interviewed, allowing them a certain amount of power. I felt that while this gave them some control over the process, it also served to put them at ease. I noticed no difference in the manner in which the participants conducted themselves in either context. In either setting the artist and I sat together, had a cup of tea or coffee, and began a conversation. This easy beginning provided normalcy to the interview, and they very quickly forgot that they were "on tape".

Directly before the interview, participants were given a cover letter and asked to sign a consent form (see Appendices C & D) addressing issues of confidentiality. Any questions they had were answered and they were assured that they could drop out at any time, ask questions of me, choose not to answer a question, or to have the tape recorder turned off. None of them dropped out, all of them asked me personal questions about my art, and they all

answered every question posed by me. Only one person asked that the tape recorder be turned off, when she was recounting information about another person. None of them was shy in sharing personal experiences, although there were obvious personality differences.

Each interview lasted as long as was required to cover the material, approximately 1.5 hours, although one lasted over three hours. The first few minutes of the interview time were devoted to providing life history or background information for the demographic snapshot (Appendix A) following which the rest of the interview time was used to explore the questions regarding their education and life experiences (Appendix B).

In conducting the interviews, I discovered that each question provided a foundation for the next, for by transforming their experience into language; participants constructed meaning and came to realizations. In other words the participants begin to analyse their answers to some degree as they are being interviewed. With the open-ended questions, and semi-structured interview guide, it was not necessary to ask each question in order. Instead, often a natural progression took place and questions were answered without me having to ask. When necessary, I would rephrase questions if they misunderstood, or probe for

further information. Although the interviews were taped, I also took careful field notes consisting of approximately 5 pages, providing myself with a quick reference to the answer each individual gave. The interview process assisted in my own research training, as I felt better equipped each time an interview ended and the process itself evoked other ideas or areas of interest for further research. At the end of the interview each participant was thanked for their participation.

Ironically, an unintentional bonus occurred as a result of these interviews; the artists interviewed reported feeling a sense of catharsis immediately after the interview. While my questions appeared to me to be the essence of mundane, somehow they elicited reactions and answers that moved the artists. Instead of feeling drained, or tired by my questioning, they felt quite the opposite, and remarked how "good it felt" to talk about such things. An explanation could possibly include that they felt a secure and satisfying validation of their feelings and experiences. This was despite the fact that each of them discounted why I should want to interview them. Invariably, believing my intent was to quiz them on art history or theory each felt some version of "not smart enough" to be interviewed. They were however, easily

reassured when told they would be speaking about themselves and as the obvious experts on the topic their thoughts and words were important. It put them at ease when I made it clear that I was interviewing them to discover their experiences and thoughts on their art education, and that there were obviously no right or wrong answers. Anderson and Jack (1991) explain that in this type of interview "each person is free to describe her idiosyncratic interaction between 'self-image and cultural norms'" and "when the woman and not existing theory is considered the expert ...one can begin to hear the muted channel of women's experience come through" (Anderson & Jack 1991: 20).

The obvious warm response and positive feedback given to me suggests that the participants offered answers to the best of their ability and formed honest and considered opinions where needed. I believe that the artists interviewed were pleased to talk about their experiences not only to another artist, but also to someone studying female artists.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

As previously mentioned, the data I collected throughout this process consist of my personal field notes

of approximately 5 pages of significant answers from each artist and the taped interviews. Analysis actually began as I was involved in the interviews themselves. I had to decide when to pursue a topic further and when to drop it, and additionally, to keep track of what had already been said in order to follow up with further inquiry. I also had to be aware of the length of time a participant spent on a topic, or if they were really not interested in the subject, and to decide whether there was an avoidance of the topic. It was also necessary to be aware of any self-contradiction by the artists and to pursue it.

Another necessity was to be conscious of what I would describe as the "socially acceptable" answer. This would be an answer that is either a reflection of what others think or a stock answer made without proper consideration. While such a problem is not as likely to surface without a group dynamic, I did want to be aware that socially acceptable reactions to certain types of questions (perhaps those involving gender bias) were a possibility. While there is no guarantee of veracity, I did not find any evidence of a socially acceptable answer being made. All of the artists, were either careful in formulating their answers surrounding gender bias or very clear and direct, depending on their personalities. In either case, there

seemed to be careful consideration taken before an answer was given.

Immediately upon leaving the interview I made any extra notes regarding the demeanour and disposition of the artist, as well as notes on any other minor matters discussed off tape. With each of the artists I did have a conversation both before and after the interview that was not on tape and much of this was not directed towards the interview.

Directly following the interview was the point where the participants mentioned some sort of cathartic effect to the interview, and this gave me much needed incentive by extending confidence in my procedure. We often talked about art in general, upcoming or previous art shows, or personal unrelated matters. These prior conversations helped in the rapport of the interview, and at the end of the interview, returned both the participant and myself to the footing of our previous relationship.

3.6 DATA REDUCTION AND INTERPRETATION

Despite the relatively small number of interviews, each was fairly long, and I did not want data to become lost in reams of transcribed dialogue. To avoid this problem I chose not to fully transcribe the taped

interviews, but rather to listen carefully to the tapes over and over again. Listening to the tapes, instead of focussing on the written word also preserved the temporality of the interviews: Pauses, hesitation and quickness of rhetoric were easily observed and noted. It was important to look for detail while retaining my focus on the entirety of conversation within the interview. I felt that the immediacy and intimacy of repeatedly listening to each actual conversation, with all of its subtle intonation, superior to limiting myself to the written word. Surprisingly, even the accompanying facial expressions and body language were easy to recall. Meaning is often contained in how someone says something rather than the words themselves and I felt that fully transcribed notes would be a hindrance rather than an asset.

The first time I listened to each tape I took no notes, but rather sought to relive the interview, as I heard both my own voice and that of the artist. Thereafter, each time I listened to the interview tape I focussed on content, themes, language and syntax, transcribing all pertinent passages, sorting data by artist and themes. As I focussed on the dialogue, playing the tapes over and over, thematic analysis was a simple matter: I began to notice frequently, recurring words and issues.

Analysis of the ten interviews conducted revealed patterns and commonalities, both in what was said and how it was said. Consistent themes began to emerge.

My initial 8 themes were reduced by half, as I was able to combine supplementary themes into 4 core themes. The core themes were Art and the Domestic Sphere for Women, Societal Attitude Toward Art as a Career, Unacknowledged Barriers to Creative Work, and Professionalization. When I had decided on the core themes, further listening provided illustrative and supportive excerpts pertinent to the analysis.

Through this extensive examination, in the context of the larger concept of feminist art practice, hopefully a greater understanding of the education and somewhat tentative professionalization of the female artist has surfaced. For all of the women interviewed this was the first time they had been asked for their thoughts and expressions on the matter of their education and their identity as artists. I consider this to be advantageous to the study: hearing a new voice is always to our advantage.

3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The major limitation of this research is that the selected group of participants comprises a small sample of

only 10 female artists. This size of sample carries with it built in problems of diversity. I was searching for similarities of gender and education, mitigated by age as meaningful category. While I did select participants from variable age groups covering the adult continuum, I did not choose individuals with ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, disability, or any other diversity in mind. The addition of any one of these variables would probably have altered some of the data.

A minor limitation of this study is the impact of confidentiality. At times I had to decline to use an excerpt because it was totally reflective of the identity of the person involved. Berg (1998) points out that mere anonymity is insufficient for confidentiality to be safeguarded (Berg 1998:48-50). I feel very responsible regarding what the women have told me, and even though it is on tape, not all is for public consumption. Most of these women have very easily identifiable public personae, and at times even divulging their employment would reveal clues as to their identity. I consider this a minor limitation in that for the most part it was possible to edit personal information in a manner that allowed for disclosure of feelings and thoughts without violating confidentiality.

The other obvious limitation is the fact that I could conduct only one interview within the timeframe available, and it was also not possible to schedule a planned focus group. I do feel that by meeting as a group further insight would have been possible. Further interviews would have made the process easier, as in-depth reflection could have taken place for both the participant and myself. As it was, the participants in particular were limited to a short period of time for reflection. Some of the individuals had perhaps thought about their education and life to a deeper extent than others. This means I must recognize that their experiences and their reality are not only socially constructed, but also psychically constructed within personal timeframes. Bearing this insight on reality in mind the next chapter reviews the previously mentioned core themes as brought out in the interviews and provides analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR –

PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Perception serves as the manifestation of the reality we all seek.

This chapter provides an account of the results of the interviews conducted with 10 practicing female artists from the Thunder Bay area. Detailed, descriptive statements from the participants will be employed to illustrate the main themes discovered through the research. The artists' narratives will be interwoven with my own to produce an illustrative analysis of individual art educational experiences.

People love to tell stories, especially stories involving themselves. We relate numerous kinds of narratives for various reasons, the greatest being to make sense of the larger world and our own personal experiences. Stories help us to produce and reproduce social knowledge, and from this to sort out our own place in society.

It is very compelling to be asked to "tell your story", and this is exactly what my research sought to accomplish. I began my research with my own personal experiences grounded in the world of art education. My hesitancy to address myself as a professional artist

despite years of training needed some sort of explanation or justification. In order to do this I applied further study, not as an artist, but rather as a sociologist. I felt the need to divorce myself from being a practicing artist and to study female artists (people I perceived to be like me) from an amended perspective.

My main goal was to create a coherent, focussed analysis of how ten female artists, within the realm of their own personal circumstances perceived their art education and realized the self-definitive term "professional artist". The participants were asked to give accounts of their lives through an in-depth interview, and to offer me clues to their own socialization, as women and as artists. Special attention was paid to personal feelings about art education, and their ideas on what it means to be a professional artist. I was also particularly interested in how family dynamics fit into the puzzle. The women I interviewed were all grappling with ideas about relationships, self-worth, career, and personal integrity in the context of societal changes in women's roles. As I listened to each woman's self-commentary and integral reflections on her own thoughts and actions, I learned about not only her art education but also her adaptation within her own personal circumstances, especially regarding her

facility to conform to the ideals of artist, wife, mother or daughter.

Semi-structured interviewing was conducted with a basic open-ended set of questions as outlined in an interview guide (Appendix B), utilizing an interactive approach that involved the sharing of personal and social experiences of both the respondents and myself (Esterberg 2002:87). I allowed the respondent and myself the freedom to ask and respond to further questions. Narratives of self and identity were co-constructed by participants and myself within the interviews. In essence I was holding a guided, purposeful conversation with the artist. This method allowed for exploration when required, while lending structure and organization to the "story". The rich, complex data such interviews generated are easily concealed by more conventional means of analysis, yet can be very revealing (Gilbert 1993:137).

It was necessary to listen carefully with an understanding that each woman's "self reflection is not just a personal, subjective act" (Anderson & Jack, 1991: 18). In order to accomplish her reflection and evaluation she uses categories and models derived from a patriarchal "cultural context that has traditionally controlled women's

activities and devalued them" (Anderson & Jack, 1991: 18). The language and meaning women use to describe their experiences is indicative of the perceived conflicting social forces and institutions. Careful listening to the language and the distinct meanings of the significant words women use to describe their experience allows an understanding of how women are revising themselves according to the culture within which they live.

I fully comprehended that others not directly acquainted with the art world or art education might not be cognizant of some of the terms and concepts involved. To facilitate understanding I have included what I feel is a comprehensive literature review involving art and women, as well as women and the art historical canon.

Providing some sort of common ground for other readers proved to be less troublesome than expected. Although most readers do not fully understand what it is to be an artist, all of the participants have other very obvious societal roles and hopefully readers will be able to identify with the artists at this level. Much of what these female artists experience originates in the knowledge of being female. They admit that their lives as mothers, daughters, or wives shape their sensibilities to a great extent.

Doris[2], a young mother, in a long-term relationship, recognized that some female artists have trouble balancing family and art. She identified that *"one of the girls in my class has two kids now and she talks about being a mom and completely forgets about being an artist"*. Doris realizes the difficulties involved in conceding to family responsibilities while trying to practice as an artist. Beatrice, married with 3 children, makes it clear that her *"experience as a woman and a mother influences her art"*. For each of these women art and their other roles in life must mesh, and it is not always an easy fit.

I quickly realized that many of the concerns these artists voiced regarding their family lives resonate in the lives of other women. Many women, circumscribed within a patriarchal society must balance home, career, husband, children and personal fulfillment. Becker (1996) speaks of the anxiety that can be evident in creative women's lives when they are forced to counter or ignore moral precepts they consider essential to their identity. She tells us that:

> because women tend to value their interrelatedness to others most dearly and because they often see themselves responsible for maintaining connections to others through selflessness and caring, situations that present their own needs and desires as foremost

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[2] All of the participants are referred to by pseudonyms. Appendix E contains demographic sketches of each participant artist.

can cause a conflict of moral anxiety (Becker 1999:214).

Artists are born with a consummate need to create, and to create on a constant continuum. Arietti (1976) informs "the creative process is a way of fulfilling the longing or search for a new object or state of experience or existence that is not easily found or attained" (Arietti, 1976: 6). Obviously, with visual art, this longing is manifest not only in the artist but also in the work created. For the artist there is an indefinite, sustained and never completed effort that is formulated at the conscious as well as the unconscious level. While others may feel a need to be sporadically creative, perhaps by doing crafts, artists feel unease, even great discomfort or anxiety when the creative impetus is dissatisfied.

History tells us that artists will suffer all manner of deprivation, in order to produce their art. Many of the artists interviewed spoke of worrying about money and trying to balance all their personal needs. Doris finds she is often asking herself:

> *How am I going to eat? How am I going to go to school? How am I going to afford to buy supplies? You get into things like credit cards all the time because that's the only way you can survive. Having to worry about where you are going to get money and working in a...job...Stressful jobs sap all your energy. You feel like all you have goes*

> *into that.   It makes you sad ... but I can't
> imagine not doing it [art].*

It was not just money that worried these artists. They also were concerned with pleasing husbands, family, employers, and professors.   Personal experience confirms that as I finished my Fine Arts Degree and applied to Graduate School, I fully believed writing would satisfy my need to be creative.   In exchange for my research I was willing to give up the opportunity to create art. At this period in my life there is not enough time, space, energy or resources to do both.   There is little room for creativity in academia, and little time for the intense personal focus that creating advanced art requires.   While writing as a creative outlet is a possibility for me, alas not all writing involves the act of creation.   I began to feel discontented, unfulfilled and permanently ensnared within a small two-dimensional space as I wrote paper after paper, all the time longing and physically needing to move my hands and thoughts in other ways than over the keyboard of my computer.   I was literally trapped by my responsibility to my schooling and all my other demands. Yet I still felt totally obliged to each in turn. I felt that as I had chosen to pursue a graduate degree it was up to me to balance it with everything else in my life.   The

problem was that maintaining equilibrium meant placing more emphasis on the degree and less on my art and family. My feeling of entrapment eased only slightly as I began to carry out my own field research and work my way through this thesis, although the experience substantiated my need to experience creativity in a more holistic manner.

Fulfilling the research meant that I was able to speak to other female artists about their lives and careers, and as I interviewed each in turn, dominant themes seemed to rise up to meet me. The following is a synopsis of each of the 4 main themes, after which they will be discussed in detail.

4.0 MAIN THEMES

1. Art and the domestic sphere for women artists

This theme highlights a resolute individual focus on family and children as well as the continual challenge of retaining and indulging creativity despite barriers. Also brought forward was the idea of the integration of home and art. Each artist felt that art permeated her daily life. As well, there was an obvious recognition of the compromises made in deference to the obligation felt towards other commitments. Many of the artists, during their academic and artistic careers were required to

provide not only emotionally and physically for their families, but also monetarily. Many of their career decisions were made with these parameters in mind.

2. Societal attitude toward art as a career

Family, friends and acquaintances often described an art career as unsuitable for a woman or as a "nice hobby", refusing to see merit in the choice. Family disinterest or lack of understanding also contributed to a deficiency in family support, as well as limited time and money. The female artists also recognized a societal apathy towards art.

3. Unacknowledged barriers to creative work

All of the artists revealed tacit acceptance of "how things are" in life and art education including both general and specific gender bias. Each recounted personal observations of gender bias in their lives, art practice, and education.

4. Professionalization.

Differing ideas of what it means to be a professional artist were considered. The theme examined their ownership of the right to call themselves artists, revealing an unwillingness to own the word *professional*. Few wanted to call themselves professional as they felt it was something they had not fully earned. This suggested that possibly

women are given the idea that they are not intended to participate in the creation of culture.

4.1 ART AND THE DOMESTIC SPHERE FOR WOMEN ARTISTS

Women can never have it all; at least not all at one time. It is impossible to simultaneously be the perfect daughter, mother, wife, or employee. Only the last responsibility in the list involves a monetary compensation. The rest of the jobs must be done, but they must be done for no recompense other than emotional, these jobs must encompass what Luxton (1980) calls a "labour of love" (Luxton 1980:12). This creates a rupture in the female psyche, for society tells us that for the good of all, those primary, family oriented jobs must be a priority, and they must be done with care. Women are indoctrinated with an ethic of care that encompasses and directs the way in which their personal decisions are made (Becker 1996:215). Despite having divergent or additional personal wants and needs these women artists stoically remained linked to the family and all it entails.

Many of the women interviewed made it clear that their career choice was at no time considered a priority within the family and remained secondary to that of their husband

or partner. One artist, Alice, middle-aged with 3 children and a part-time job supplied an estimation of her career.

> *It's not a career in the way I would like it to be because you need quiet - I didn't have it. You need space - I didn't have it. You need support-emotional and financial to be [an artist]-and I feel guilty because I had a little bit of that and I feel because I had the financial support I should have done much, much more that I did. Ideally when you marry someone, right at the beginning it should have been 'I value your career and we are going to make this a priority also.' and then that never happened. The priority was my husband finishing his career. I have a semi-career, not what I wanted.*

Not receiving fair division of family spatial assets was evident. While this artist, Beatrice, married with 3 children and a full-time job spoke about room to work, there is also the issue of fair consideration in other areas, offered as part of the family contract.

> *I have lived my whole artistic life without even a room and I always knew that was detrimental. I always knew I needed more than I was getting.*

Clearly the wife feels an obligation and a need to provide for the family on many levels: financial, emotional and physical. A career also requires all of these as an investment and so must be balanced within the family unit. Women's obligation to family and the responsibility she feels for all aspects of the family well-being is

monumental.   Marie spoke of trying to provide financially by starting her own small business.

> *I had my own small business and that was almost disastrous for my art.   I had to give up the business.*

Bonnie also exhibited how an outside job affects her creative life.

> *Now I spend more of my life focussed on work and my art just gets dropped to the side.   You get caught up in so many other things.*

The artist's own feelings, wants, and needs are often put away or put on hold to wait for a more opportune time. The paid work that women engage in, although gaining more and more importance in the monetary stability of the family must always be delicately balanced with the unpaid work necessary for its emotional and physical well being (Eichler 1997:36; Luxton 1980:188).   Each of the women interviewed put their families first.   None put the needs of the family in jeopardy to focus on a career as an artist.   This did not seem to change if they trained before they were married or after.   The family unit remained the primary beneficiary of their endeavours.

Where then can the drives and desires of an artist take root and grow?   Cathy, married with 2 children and

working part-time, summed up her coping skills as being able to:

> *Keep a part of your life for you. Art was mine. It wasn't anything that I gave to my children or my husband or anyone. It was my very own thing.*

Another, Doris, young, with a new baby and in a long-term relationship aptly illustrated how primary the interest of the family unit truly is.

> *You've got to nurture your kids first and then nurture your art. Yourself gets put by the wayside. I think that comes with it.*

Elaine, one of the older artists, divorced, with 3 children described how limiting this was:

> *I would go so far [with my art] and then I'd draw back. I would go so far and draw back. It was because of my feeling that these other people in my life came first, and then if I had time, I can do the other.*

It is easy to perceive how conflicted and strained the artist feels by acceding to the constant demands of other chores and responsibilities, at the expense of the art. They have chosen to spend time, money and effort to train for a career in art. Fran, re-married with three children and a full-time job explained:

> *The rest of my life has taken over and shoved my art career to the side--not only because of time, but also money.*

The issue of self-worth as an artist is evident. Alice expressed:

> *I wish early on I could have been valued as an artist. I wish I had done this early enough to make a significant monetary contribution to the family. If I have this gift then I was meant to use it. Feeling valuable...just feeling I could do something besides stay at home and have children.*

Family often tolerates the artist while not encouraging the efforts involved in the production of the art. Marie, married with no children and a full-time job spoke about her family and friends.

> *They humour me. I think my husband is still waiting for me to become rich and famous. There are select few people who understand the necessity of supporting artists. I simply winnow away the ones who are not good for me. It takes so little to be supportive, and those who are supportive become your network of colleagues.*

Most of the artists interviewed expressed such thoughts. They realized their own importance within the family, and made secondary the importance of keeping their own interests and abilities alive. These artists are certainly not looking for entertainment; rather they are fulfilling a need to create, often in various ways that are not disruptive to the family and are in fact beneficial.

They do not abandon their art but choose instead to integrate it into their everyday life. Many of the women spoke of using their art in every aspect of their existence. They employed their talents in all of the mundane tasks necessary in the everyday world as well as

using their housekeeping skills as inspiration and motivation for artwork. Decorating, cooking, gardening, sewing, indeed all of their housekeeping, as well as their feelings regarding their personal situation became an artistic outlet of sorts as well as a fertile source of artistic practice and technique. Elaine explained:

> *I used my art in raising the family. Making their clothes, dreaming up costumes, decorating, painting, cooking... I felt creative so it was all a part of living and I enjoyed that.*

Marie spoke of the coping skills necessary to accomplish the artwork:

> *My art has evolved in order to complete my projects ... in order to do work. I have designed my work to be portable. Can I store it? Can I carry it? I have designed my artwork on my own body.*

For these women, there is a belief that art is a way of being; a way of knowing that cannot be discounted or removed from their lives. Beatrice described it very concisely.

> *I think my artistic life has allowed me to be imaginative about how I live my life. During one of the hardest financial difficulties we ever went through I created a sculpture piece I called Abundance. So I created something that was the opposite of what I was experiencing - almost like an offering or a prayer.*

Despite employing various coping methods to deal with the conflict of family and career, each of the women

recognized that they had to choose one path or another. Although each of the women chose creation rather than recreation, for the most part, family and friends envision their interest in art as that of a dilettante, especially if they are married with children and other responsibilities. Inevitably the strength of personal obligation to family was acknowledged by each of these artists and the primacy of the family unit accepted.

The majority of the artists held 3 jobs. They had their responsibilities at home, their job to earn a steady income, and their career as an artist. The juggling of these endeavours certainly creates a specialized environment. The potency associated with the type of knowledge this environment generates cannot be understated. A woman's world engenders a woman's knowledge and this knowledge is every bit as legitimate as what is considered to be conventional. If the concept of being female is valid then the concept of particular female knowledge, rising from their intercourse in the public sphere and the private sphere of the family is just as valid. Becker (1996) asks:

> What might it mean to leave home as an artist? What does it mean to return? Apart from women artists having to make their peace within the sociological contingencies of society and being female, they also need to find their place within the art historical

family, even if all they do, at every step, is refuse and refute what has come before, what was said before, what form of materials were used before (Becker 1996:194).

4.2 SOCIETAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS ART AS A CAREER CHOICE

When asked why they chose to become artists many of the women were nonplussed at first, almost embarrassed, as though they had never thought to ask themselves this question. For many of these women the designation of artist had happened very slowly, course by course, shoehorned into their already busy lives, or accidentally through an odd coincidence.

One artist Susan, married with 4 children described her accidental entrance into the serious study of art as totally inadvertent.

> *I had taken two years of university before I knew I could study art. It was part of me that was a given and it was such a relief to figure out finally that I could be taking art instead of all this other stuff.*

Another artist, Alice, spoke about her difficulty in even calling herself an artist.

> *It is the hardest thing to think of yourself as an artist. Someone else says you're an artist and then it's okay. You can't announce it yourself. Someone else needs to have already said it.*

There is a challenge in thinking of oneself as an artist when everyone around you is telling you what a "nice little hobby" art is. These exact words echoed again and again in the interviews. Virtually every one of the women interviewed had at one time, either by parents, husband, other family or acquaintances, been told that art was not a valid career choice for a woman and was encouraged to pursue other areas. Cathy described how:

> *It emphasized the idea that my parents gave me that art was a hobby – an accomplishment for a woman – certainly not a career for a woman.*

Elaine explained that although she was trained to make art her career, her parents insisted she take commercial art for advertising, when what she really wanted to do was be an illustrator. For her parents this was not something that would help her get a job.

> *I wasn't keen on making a career in it [advertising] as such, although I did take all the commercial advertising art at Art College. I did want to be an illustrator... I really wanted to take drawing and painting at school.*

Yet many of the younger artists told me that their parents and family had not stood in their way or tried to talk them out of taking art at university. Bonnie unmarried with no children and a fulltime job, made it clear that her parents were "very supportive" and "went

along with my decision", although later to support herself, Bonnie did take another professional degree. Similar educational circumstances pertain to Susan. It would appear that even when parents and family acknowledge the right of the artist to make her own decisions regarding school, there are still whispering echoes of the "get a real job" mentality affecting their decisions.

When women do embrace the term of artist for themselves, others often tell them that it might not be such a good career choice. Tracy another of the older artists, married with one child, recalled being told that:

> *Even women don't buy art by women. They buy art by men.*

Lippard (1995) makes reference to this occurrence explaining that:

> when women venture from their own confirmed tastes into foreign realms where they must be cautious about opinion and actions, her insecurity is likely to lead to the classic docility of the middle-class audience, so is receptive to what 'experts' tell it to think about the arts (Lippard 1995:132).

Obvious gender bias was highlighted in the notion of the *female hobby artist,* a term often applied to female artists. The term is meant to keep women in a separate

category, practicing "low" art rather than producing "high art". Susan stated:

> *I felt some of the professors helped the male artists more. They tended to feel that the male artists were going to get ahead and the female artists were going to marry and were doing it as a hobby.*

Fran relates how different studying art at university was from the unsatisfying hobbies that she pursued before in her search for needed stimulation.

> *When you are doing a hobby you are following patterns and things like that, and following somebody else's way. I needed to study somewhere where there were other artists to be with and better people to teach me...the freedom to create.*

Prodded by a need for further challenge, more encouragement and superior instruction in technique, some of the artists felt the need to move from craft or hobby to artist. These artists like Fran who stated "*everything I did helped and led me to where I am today... all the housework, the crafts, whatever...*" recognized how their creativity hinged on their experiences. While her children were growing up Cathy realized that "*the focus on family created things she needed to express*".

This idea of personal history led to an exploration of the differences in age cohorts. Some artists told how ageism affected their education. Alice explained:

> If you are older, and I was an older student, you're doing this as a 'hobby' or 'it's too late for you'. I don't like any of that message but it's there.

Tracy confirmed that she also felt there was a bias against women of "a certain age".

> There was definitely an age bias. Professors felt that older women were there because of an "empty nest".

4.3 UNACKNOWLEDGED BARRIERS TO CREATIVE WORK

I observed a tacit acceptance of "how things are" in life, as well as in the practice of art for women. Many of the artists reported barriers to their creative work including gender bias, both explicit and implied, lack of appropriate emotional and financial support, as well as a lack of resources within the community. All of these and other minor barriers were well observed and acknowledged by the women, yet they rarely openly challenged their existence, choosing instead to accept "how things are".

Within the classroom, both blatant and implied gender bias was reported, and when asked about their reactions to it Doris gave a characteristic answer.

It's upsetting, but you become so accustomed to it. You see it in literature, in art, in politics, in society in general. It's almost like you're angry, but it's that little numbing kind of anger that it's just to be expected.

Alice explained how she felt within the classroom when she was the only female in the class.

I felt frozen out and as far as the technical aspect went, I was probably doing better than most of them [the male artists].

Keeping their anger to themselves seemed to be the classic method of dealing with these types of problems. None of them wanted to appear to be the hysterical woman. They only wanted to study art and be accepted as an artist. None of the artists thought of themselves as feminists, and only one spoke of dealing with the label. Marie mentioned her belief that:

I got into Graduate School making feminist art but it didn't really click. I didn't see it as a great struggle. None of my instructors were feminist. It was not even an issue.

When questioned about her experiences in Graduate School she went on to state that:

There was a pressure to perform as a female artist, and I had no experience at that. I had to defend myself as a female artist. I perceived many of the women artists were far more aggressive than they had to be. For me, I noticed that women were looking to women's work for inspiration and so I began to look there too. I began to work with fabric...

Ironically, much of the gender bias in the classroom resulted from female professors. Doris stated:

> *I find a lot of time with the female professors they focus on the male artists and then even in the class the men are given... are paid more attention to. I find that even the male models are treated better than the female models. Exceptions are made for male students and they focus on mostly male artists and you think that women would try to avoid that.*

Doris seemed confused, even uncomfortable when she admitted this. When questioned whether others in the class felt as she did Doris went on to say:

> *Everyone noticed it; even the male students noticed it but they laughed about it, and they knew they could push the boundaries more than we could. That they could get away with things being late or their work not being complete or making a mess in the studios...just simple little things like that. But these things hinge on responsibility and someone else ... mother... has always been there to temper their responsibility.*

I felt that this clearly showed how dependent we all are on the status quo. It would seem that even the female professors are reluctant to leave a societal role at home and feel they must bring the private role of mother or caregiver into the classroom.

It was also interesting to me how much these women artists were taught about other women artists. I noted responses that echoed my own university experience as well as those of every other female artist interviewed. They

spoke of the necessity of personal research, as well as the inspiration and confidence that resulted from knowledge of these female artists. Tracy reported:

> *I remember researching my own stuff [about female artists]. It made me realize that I could do something not really expected of me.*

Many told be about the lack of recognition for female artists. Bonnie's answer was typical.

> *There were so many more males than females. I think it would have been a good idea to be presented with more female artists and to focus on it.*

The tolerance level exhibited was great. Whatever was being taught in the program was accepted and learned, and if more information on female artists or artistic practice was needed, they sought it out themselves. Tracy recalled how female artists were presented to her.

> *They were presented as something of an oddity. I was smart enough to judge this as a product of their times, yet exceptional women were somehow considered masculine...dangerous.*

The artists also recognized the lack of female role models. The positive impact of being provided with female role models was evident in Cathy's answer.

> *I feel more of a sense of inspiration because I can relate to them more. It influences me in a way that gives me more confidence in my art.*

Knowledge of female artists and art practice was also an issue that Beatrice put plainly.

> *My experience of women artists is women that I know. There is a different sensibility when it's done by a woman. It resonates with me but I never have asked myself why.*

Other reactions told of the subject of female artists being hardly touched on at all during their education. This was a chronic criticism of the educational system, and yet it seemed that the artists merely took it for granted. Fran clarified that:

> *[It was] just barely addressed, not studied as though they were any great force or influence at all.*

Another aspect of this problem is the art historical practice to represent women, as *women*, rather than as *artists*. Doris pointed out that in the classroom:

> *There was more discussion of women in art as the object. The content as opposed to the artist.*

For each of these women as well as myself it was easy to see women in art as object. Renditions of women, often idealized, are evident in much of what you study at art school and this fact can make it difficult to see oneself as an artist. I believe that this was partly due to the way women are illustrated, but also because only on rare

occasions do they see a woman as an artist. Alice related how difficult it was to find a female role model within the available texts:

> *There wasn't a lot of exposure mainly because they weren't in the art history texts. The history books are all about the male. Now they are just starting to mention women who didn't make it before. If it was addressed in history before it was about women using the domestic or the crafty things in art.*

Bonnie expressed the male reaction to the lack of women in art history.

> *I think the guys didn't question this [the lack of women] but as a woman you would just have to go ahead and do your own research.*

Doing their own research seems to be how many of the women addressed the problem of not being able to find themselves in the art history narrative. Cathy spoke easily on the lack of female role models.

> *I must say if you had gone through the program you would really wonder if there were any female artists. You would think what the heck am I doing here? When I studied female artists on my own I was angry. Part of me thought it doesn't make a lot of sense. There has got to be someone else out there.*

While many of the women felt that gender bias in the classroom was not overt, they definitely felt a difference in their learning experience, especially regarding methods of practice. Several of the artists noted that male

professors expected female artists to practice art using the same methods and sensibilities as themselves. For example size of work was often in question, establishing big as better and equating small with insignificant rather than intimate. This is not to say that all women create art that is small in size but rather that size is closely linked to the intended viewpoint. Also voiced was the estimation of women's art with regard to the emotional aspects. Bonnie made it clear that:

> *Some [male] professors put more emphasis into being heard and pushing for certain things. Maybe women's art is more emotional and men's art is less personal and kind of mechanical. Maybe that's easier to sell.*

Chicago makes reference to the differing values placed on male and female art.

> In art-making men often are very intellectual, involved with systems, concepts, and ideas and they see these as an appropriate basis for art. Women, however, are brought up with a different orientation, toward feeling and away from abstract thought. Therefore women often approach art-making more directly and see it as a vehicle of feeling. But art language as it exists today excludes a direct content of feeling orientation. Therefore women's work is often totally misperceived. ... The mechanism of misperceptions is based upon the perception of art according to values introduced and imposed by the male in a society that does not value female feelings (Chicago 2000 (1972): 294).

Chicago further explains that this difference can cause women to react in either of two ways. Either the woman artist seeks to become more like the male, or accepts the lesser designation of "lady artist" (Chicago 2000 (1972): 295). This is a recognition that the female artist is not only dealing with the art-making but also with her social status as well.

Lippard (1995) points out that since the "1950s and 1960s women artists who were housewives took care to hide it when showing work" (Lippard 1995:64). This was because "women were considered 'part-time artists' if they were married, worked elsewhere or had a child" (Lippard 1995:64). She goes on to clarify that within art schools another version of the "taboo" was the avoidance or banning "of 'female techniques' like sewing, weaving, knitting, ceramics" or "even the use of pastel colours and delicate line" (Lippard 1995:64).

This taboo seems to still exist in today's classrooms. The males in my classes were not cautioned to avoid the "decorative" or told never to shop at the "craft" store. While these types of comments directly influenced my assessment of my own aesthetic and practice, instead of totally capitulating to an alien aesthetic, I promptly shopped at the craft store and created work that satisfied

my own sense of aesthetic. I cannot describe whether my way of working is "male" or "female" but I feel that the opportunity should exist to produce "high art" from "craft" materials. Whatever the professor's intent in making these sorts of comments, the art I made was successful aesthetically as well as being well grounded in theory.

The title of this thesis *Painting Like a Housewife* is also an example of this type of gender bias. Susan recounted an incident that happened recently. Her professor, during a third year class, accused Susan, a housewife as well as a painter of "painting like housewife". Susan admitted she was:

> *confused by the comment. I was stunned. I had no idea what she meant by that and when I expressed this to her she hesitated and then said, "Oh, you paint a little here and there". I knew what she was really talking about. She felt that I was somehow not a real artist because I was a housewife.*

Comments and attitudes like this do not help; rather they hinder the female artist from growing. Would it make any more sense to tell a welder taking an art course that he or she paints like a welder? No, of course not. The other roles a person has in society do not prevent a person from being an artist, but attitudes about these roles certainly can affect self-perception.

There were other areas of gender bias, some more blatant than others. The actual issue of gender within the class dynamics was of concern to some artists. Beatrice felt that there was little respect for women, especially young women in the classroom.

> *I felt there were times when the young female students were not respected.... a definite gender bias by the instructors. I observed it several times in the classroom. I thought that was really unnecessary.*

When questioned how others reacted, or if the others supported this view, she said "Yes, except for Beatrice". There is an undeniable power dynamic in the classroom that can make students afraid to speak their mind, or defend another. The professor is the gatekeeper, and if you desire the education you must follow in his or her direction.

Beatrice and other artists were dismayed at the female image put forth in the classroom, feeling that models should come in all shapes and sizes, clothed and unclothed. I remember as an art student being bored with drawing the stick figure female nude, and feeling that any other body type would be fascinating as well as inclusive. The issue is two-fold. The inclusion of other body types ground the drawing in reality, rather than emphasizing an "ideal" body type. Beatrice explained:

I did not appreciate that most of the life models were young girls. That bothered me. I thought we were reinforcing an ideal of female beauty that I don't agree with.

How we view the body is always a potent question and the artistic objectification of the body, literally summarizing female beauty into one neat universal little package is trite and uninspiring. As a female artist it is easy to adopt an aesthetic detachment to the nude because that is what is clearly expected of those who create or even view art in our culture, even though the relationship of artist and model is often sexualized. Within the classroom there still exists both masculine and feminine viewpoints recognizable as social categories formed through changing social experiences (Vogel 1991:42). The social categories are imposed from outside ourselves, but must be experienced subjectively as we seek validation of who we are.

Clearly in a patriarchal culture women must adopt the masculine viewpoint while producing or viewing images merely because this is the dominant viewpoint. This does not mean that women artists must respond to these images in the exact same manner as the masculine. Yet there is a bias in western culture towards fetishizing the female body

and this carries with it a type of gendered looking that is resistant to change (Pollack 1996:6).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, according to Betterton (2002):

> The fusion of the sexual and the artistic in ideologies of art production clearly created problems for a woman artist. Painting from the female model formed part of the definition of what it meant to be an artist, but at the same time it had come to signify a sexualized relation. For a woman to become a serious artist then, a transgression of contemporary ideal of femininity was implied: yet if she kept to the 'safer' subjects of domestic scenes, flower painting or landscapes, she risked relegation to the secondary status of 'woman artist' (Betterton 2002:177).

It is possible for a woman artist trained in the same tradition as the masculine artist not only to deal with the same subject differently, but also to accomplish a distinct outcome derived from her own experience. This is the course of action most of the women I interviewed recognized. They were interested in working with the nude in more ways than were offered or expected. The artists wanted representations of the body indicative of all body types, and Beatrice, Cathy and Susan reported being very bored and unchallenged with the continual reliance on *"young, skinny girls"*. The professors did at times seek to fulfil the wish for diverse body types, however societal standards of body image often made it difficult to obtain anyone other than these young women. Many potential models

do not feel comfortable enough with their body image to become a life model.

Further, these women artists have become so used to painting and drawing the female form, as well as being exposed to innumerable historical and classic renditions of it, that the objectification of the female form has become the usual consideration rather than the female as an artist. Pollack (1999) makes mention of the phenomenon as female artists and art historians routinely refer to "the nude", ignoring the exposure and vulnerability inherent in the artwork or the pose (Pollack 1999:299).

4.4 PROFESSIONALIZATION

In our culture those who manipulate things are of a lesser social status than those who manipulate ideas or symbols (Schmidt 2000:89). When a job cannot be completely spelled out by relying on a formulaic list of detailed instructions but relies instead on the ability to create (within a structured discipline), it must by default be the job for a professional: the person who manipulates ideas and symbols. Preparing to become a professional is fundamentally different from preparing to become a non-professional because of the infinite list of possibilities that could be involved in the job (Schmidt 2000:37). Thus

it is important for professionals to be groomed for all eventualities.

As there is no way to list or even teach all the possibilities, ideology must be at the centre of a professional's education. Potential employers expect the professional to be able to act in their best interest rather than follow a set list of rules and eventualities, relying on ideology as the guiding factor (Schmidt 2000:16). Ideology works on two levels. It both directs decisions and disseminates itself through its use. For work that requires a major input of creative decision-making or choices, ideology is the major component of the education.

The problem with any definition of a professional is that artists fit into both categories. They manipulate *things* in order to create another *thing* representing their own personal manipulation of *ideas and symbols*. Unfettered creativity, the nemesis of the ideal professional is a necessary fundamental for the artist. The artist is a professional with total creative license. Considered in this manner, the profession of artist is very potent.

When asked whether they considered themselves a professional very few of the women interviewed immediately owned the term. Many of the artists were hesitant in

accepting the title and felt, like Cathy that it would be "pretentious" to call oneself a professional without societal accord. Just as many believed as Fran put it, that they "were not there yet". Most hedged and wavered, arguing with themselves and needing to be reminded of their years of training. I quickly realized that it was easy for me to observe the talent of these women and view them as professionals, but it was similarly hard for them, as it was for me, to recognize and grasp the belief of personal professionalism.

It is puzzling why engineers or teachers quickly take advantage of the designation of professional, but artists rarely do. Other professionals upgrade their skills on a continual basis in order to obtain a better salary or more recognition or 'professional development'. Artists rarely do this, preferring to upgrade their skills for what could be termed creative curiosity. In truth, there is little monetary or social basis for an artist to upgrade his or her skills except for personal benefit. As most artists are self-employed, there is rarely any corporate ladder for an artist to scale.

In other professions there are registrations in professional societies or qualifying exams to speak to the rest of society of professional status. For artists, while

there is a qualifying test (a portfolio) needed to enter art education, there is no registration or exam at the end of the study. This leaves the professional artist to define themselves as professional or not, and the basis they use to make this definition is uncertain.

Perhaps the real reason the title of 'professional' seems foreign to most artists may be the difficulty all artists, male and female, encounter in the world of commerce. Artists rarely have the opportunity to pursue art exclusively as a career. The artists interviewed pointed out that their lives are always fragmented by the need to have an income to support themselves as well as their art. All of these problems and ideas come into play for the artist seeking some definition of their practice.

There were differing ideas of just what it means to be a professional artist. One artist, Fran, was convinced that money was key to the identification of a professional artist.

> *I guess a professional artist to me is someone that lives off their work, that sells their art and they completely sustain themselves through selling art.*

Still another artist, Marie, was adamant that:

> *A professional artist is a working artist whether you are making money or not. That said; I consider myself an artist first, and then a professional.*

While these two opposing ideas must come together within the psyche of the female artist in order for her to recognize herself as a true professional, there are other important considerations to be made. Cathy found it hard to even describe art as a profession, and brought forth the added dimension of age.

> *I don't think of it so much as a profession, it being a calling or something... For me it's hard to be older and young at art.*

Indeed, age did seem to make a difference in how the artists reacted to accepting themselves as professional. One of the younger artists, Doris, describes her summation of a professional.

> *In my mind a professional artist is someone who does artwork for themselves not just to make money or do what the society wants.*

The older woman artist brings a knowledge missing from the vocabulary of the younger ones. The older artist knows from experience not only how difficult it is to make a living as an artist, but also the difficulties involved in keeping the total family, as well as herself on an even keel. Beatrice made this comment.

> *Everyone in the family has had to pay a price for the choices I've made. It affects everybody. But they also know that it is a good portion of my happiness and well-being.*

Elaine clarified that the two aspects, creating for self, and creating for a market, could be integrated as she gave her description of a professional artist.

> *A professional artist is someone with integrity. They do what they need to do without caring about what other people think. They do their creating. They are not creating for a market. Although at times in your life you need to do that to make money. When people say what do you do? I say I'm an artist: I have to... the government thinks I am. They want a piece of the pie.*

Some artists had their own philosophy of life based on the role that art has played in their lives. Marie hints that art is not so much a professional career as it is an undertaking.

> *I think it's a hard road. Like it's a road you want to travel on but the rewards are not there and to choose that for your whole life, your whole entire life...*

Beatrice expressed that due to the fullness of her life it was impossible for her to define herself by only one title. As she said:

> *I want to think of myself as a person. I am an artist but it is not "the" definition of who or what I am.*

Yet all of these artists, young or old, recognize the remarkable force art has been and continues to be in their lives.

There was one artist who acknowledged that as a neophyte professional it was possible to combine paid employment with art. Fran discovered recently that as she began to believe herself more a professional:

> *I began to consider art to be in everything that I do. Even at work. So work can be art. I began to document my work on an intense basis. The documentation became part of my artwork.*

Some of the artists teach art, some sell art materials; others involve themselves in community projects and promote a philosophy that introduces others to art in their own lives. Still others have jobs that do not lend themselves to any involvement with art and so have one less outlet for creativity. One artist, Cathy, had a different idea and remarked that:

> *Because my job is flexible I am able to make art when I need to. Time wise I know that I can change my schedule to make room for my art.*

Personally, I have always required a lot of flexibility in my life. I need outside work that makes slimmer demands on my time. I am lucky enough to be able to often choose to make less money by taking part-time work, or contract work because the freedom is worth more than money to me. The only thing better would be to be able to make art all day long and actually be paid a living wage for it.

While success at fitting everything into my life is not my highest ambition, hooks (2001, 1995) explains very well how limiting it can be to find the time to do everything that women feel needs to be done.

> Despite feminist thinking and practice, women continue to feel conflicted about the allocation of time, energy, engagement, and passion. Though important, it is not overly reassuring that some of us have managed to fit everything into the schedule. Because of this, we now know that making everything fit is no guarantee that we will mature as artists and thinkers. Some of us fear that all of this tightly controlled scheduling is also constricting and limiting our imaginations, shutting down our dreams and visions, so that we enter a different psychic imprisonment. No longer bound by sexist, racist or class we remain bound by limitations on our imaginations (hooks 2000: 1995:636-637).

Time is elastic but it is not infinite. There is always some sort of sacrifice to be made.

The artists often made notable comments regarding their professionalization. Marie gives a portrayal of her life, present and future.

> *I've got a good life. I do. As I get older I think I have a great thing to do for my whole life. I think I live the kind of life that others are probably envious about. I live in my own time.*

Bonnie saw herself as a professional artist, and because she also has a second profession she believed that:

> *Being an artist is a personal thing so it's not always something you want other people to know*

about you. I don't always tell people I am an artist. It depends on who I am speaking to.

Personal definition as an artist was something that many of the women chose to do only on specific occasions or with specific people. Cathy recalled that she only felt comfortable with the description of professional artist when her *"work was in a show"*, or *"with particular people"*. Other artists expressed the same sentiment. Fran remarked that she *"chose her moment"* and it *"depended on the company"*. Alice clarified this idea by saying that *"society judges artists differently"*. The women realized that some people were, as Elaine said *"just not interested in you as an artist"* and so they kept any discussion of art out of these relationships.

The women kept their art to themselves when they needed to avoid confrontation, or possibly boring others. Bonnie felt that circumstances *"definitely affected"* whether she referred to herself as a professional artist. She felt it was *" all about the other person"*, that it *"depended on their interests"* and *"that a lot of people were simply not interested"*.

Marie was a classic example of an artist taking the feelings and thoughts of others into consideration, as well

as exhibiting personal reticence. When asked whether she referred to herself as a professional artist she said:

> *I have no problem with it anymore. I can handle the questions. I was just shy in the beginning. I was afraid of making other people feel stupid.*

Two of the artists chose to describe themselves only as "*an artist*" feeling either as Susan did that they "*didn't care about the professional part*" or Tracy that the term was self-evident when one was "*doing serious work*". In general the choices made hinged not only on personal views but also the feelings of others, and therefore exhibited retention of the ethic of care as referred to by Becker (1996).

Beatrice believes, like Tracy, that professionalization hinges more on personal commitment than on a societal designation.

> *Professionalization is all about commitment. I always ask 'What are you currently working on?' It shocked me to realize that some people are content without that creative drive. All artists have a passion. It's beyond 'I have learned how to do this and I can do it'. It's a passion and a deep belief in the power of the art form.*

In many ways female art students are lucky. Professional training in the arts is still clearly designed for male students despite the number of female students enrolled. Female artists, as we have already seen, are

considered deviant to the patriarchal canon and because of this find it not only possible, but indeed necessary to study art as an outsider and this can result in a wider view than a male artist. Cathy told me that in art school you learn how the "*game*" works. She went on to ask:

> *Why are we not talking about these people [women artists]? Not only are we not talking about them in any meaningful way we are just repeating the same things that have been said about them for years instead of taking a new look at them and seeing them through a more balanced look.*

As socialization is a huge part of any type of schooling, education always includes a hidden curriculum of attitudes and values, embracing the governing ideology; an ideology of the status quo built into the system within both the classroom and examinations (Schmidt 2000:32, 152). Those who do not totally identify with the ideology behind the curriculum are consequently somewhat detached from it. This generates something of a challenge. Conformity to what the faculty is telling you is required if you desire the prescribed education, yet being an artist is also profoundly reliant on personal creativity as well as individuality. Consequently the uncommitted or the undisciplined, or those not willing to sacrifice their own individuality do not make the grade. Those who do succeed learn to play the game. Cathy summed it up:

In art school you learn how the game works. You know you can do "it" well. You can do "it" over and over again or you can risk failure by doing something different.

The "game" Cathy is referring to is the production of work that satisfies the curriculum and the professor's expectations but does not satisfy the self. These art students know that they must carefully balance their creativity and individuality with conformity and because of this are often lost and confused upon graduation from university, with no clear avenue of pursuit. I personally know that I felt this way. I used my classes to build technique, conforming rather than challenging, and keeping a great portion of my individuality and creativity to myself.

Unlike professionals in other walks of life, professional artists are most often self-employed, and their function is to address and sometimes criticize social, moral and political beliefs. In order to do this they must develop an independent viewpoint. Clearly the designation of professional artist differs from that of other professionals. It is a social "no man's land". The artist is at once part of society and a social critic.

From the artists' narratives I identified independent creativity accompanied by serious pursuit as a key factor

in their concept of professionalization. This was illustrated by Cathy who felt that a professional artist had a "*focus, was driven and confident in their work*". Doris plainly stated "*a professional artist makes work for themselves*".

This coincides with the feelings of many of the women interviewed. Most felt that society, not a qualifying test, was another key determinant in the designation of professional artist. They felt that in order to become a professional artist their work needed to be accepted into the social dialogue and this acceptance included monetary rewards. Alice related her opinion that a professional artist was someone who "*makes a portion of their living at it*". "*Someone who sells their work*" was how Susan described the professional. Obviously, these artists would like to have opportunities to sell and show their work. They were dismayed at the lack of forum in Northwestern Ontario for their art. With few venues for showing, there are reduced opportunities to make money, and if money is part of success for an artist, then this contributes to a feeling of disjuncture with the rest of the art world. Many of the women artists I interviewed were trapped by their own circumstances. Due to family commitments it was

impossible for them to move closer to a better art market.

Elaine told me that previously in her life:

> *Especially in southern Ontario I could do that*
> *[sell and show my work]. Lots of places. We used*
> *to load the car with everybody's work. Drive*
> *over to London. Take it all out and then*
> *somebody would go and pick up the rejects. There*
> *were places all over that it was easy to drive to*
> *and that was great. It's impossible here.*

Upon graduation it was found that other problems often began to surface. While most of the artists felt their education was intended as universal, when they graduated they realized that frequently their art practice addressed issues that were not universal or gender-free, and they were recognized as women artists not merely as artists. They were quick to identify gender as a large part of their continued practice even though they might not be creating feminist work. Alice described it this way:

> *Imagine two people looking at a piece of art with*
> *a signature on it. People make assumptions about*
> *it depending on whether they think it's male or*
> *female. I really do think they value it more if*
> *they think it's a male doing it.*

Quite a few of the artists believed that society valued men's art more than woman's art. They felt that this estimation affected how it was made and how it was viewed. Elaine made it clear that:

> *Women signed their names with just their initial,*
> *because there was a gender bias. If they knew it*

was a woman they wouldn't want to buy it or show it.

Another of the artists, Marie, expressed gendered practice in this way:

> *Because of your background you learn in different ways. You accept information in different ways. When you are put in new situations you accept, apply or deny from that experience.*

Bonnie explained how her whole experience of art tempers how she makes art, and how people view female art.

> *I think when people view art gender definitely has some kind of impact. Of course I'm going to have a different experience because I'm a woman, not only in the art that I make and in the methods of making that art but just in the whole experience of school.*

The simplest most succinct explanation I heard came from Elaine:

> *I am not a man so I don't know how a man thinks or does.*

This explanation speaks to women, but more crucially, it clarifies to everyone how simple it can be to explain difference. Smith (1990) tells us "we begin from the site of our experience, with the ways in which we actually exist, and explore the world from where we are (Smith 1990: 200). This is what I have endeavoured to do in this

research, and what each of these female artists instinctively continue to do in their own art practice.

The last chapter brings together an overview of the participants' narratives, a discussion on future research and concluding remarks.

CHAPTER FIVE - CONCLUSION

From conception to design, art is usually the endeavor to create rational order from chaos. Sometimes just the opposite ensues - chaos from rational order. Either way it seeks integrity and affirms creativity.

The particular focus of my thesis involves three main areas of investigation pertaining to 10 female artists from the Thunder Bay area. My examination entailed their perception of their art education, their views on being an artist, as well as how they envision the concept of "professional". The general topic of women in art as artist rather than object is relatively new. It has only been a few decades that feminism has made it possible for women to be practicing artists and therefore much of the research entails art historical data rather than the perspectives of the artists themselves. My investigation concerns the ways in which these women envision themselves as artists and implement this role into their lives. Among the themes explored pertaining directly to these artists were the domestic sphere and art, societal attitudes toward art as a career, unacknowledged barriers to creative work, and professionalization.

It is apparent from their narratives that the participant artists definitely considered the curriculum of their art education to be shaped by a patriarchal outlook, and within this schema their identity as a female artist was somehow questionable. Many found it difficult to identify with the plethora of male artists contained in the art historical canon. They expressed a need for more female role models to facilitate their education, as well as recognition of their own personal ways of working. The artists recognized gender as an abiding variable in the equation of education and real life.

The various roles the artists filled in society were discussed and brought forward the knowledge that for these women, divorcing themselves from other aspects of their lives was impossible. Integration of the role of artist was a necessity, while continuing in other key roles such as mother, daughter, wife or employee. Context was the deciding factor in how they referred to themselves, although the role of family facilitator was never abandoned, merely sublimated.

Uncertainties regarding their right to call themselves artists become evident. This is of great importance because the view of self as artist affects the art created,

and indeed affects whether the artist continues to make art professionally or becomes enduringly plagued by self-doubt.

The participants referred to conflicting messages in academia and society at large concerning the position of women in the world of art, and the suitability of art as a career. Regarding their art education, male-defined elitism assumes that male-designed educational priorities, curricula, values and social rewards apply just as suitably to women, and women believe in this alleged universality of not only education, but also the benefits associated with its acquisition (Rich 1979). This type of occurrence created confusion for the artists interviewed when their experiences in academia differed from those of the males in their classes.

As the participants of the study discussed their estimation of the term "professional artist" there were definite similarities, as well as some differences. Each of the women had no difficulty in referring to themselves as an artist. Many of them did find that the added term "professional" posed a problem. There were individual understandings of the term, but as a general rule the artists felt that a professional artist either made a portion of their living from their art, or quite the

opposite, made their art as a statement of their individualism.

This study provided me with a vital first step towards an understanding of female artistic professionalization, and now that I have acquired the groundwork relevant to gender in art education it would be provident to focus more closely on the aspect of professionalization. In future research it would be fundamental to once again study a group of female artists, gathering greater specifics on their road to professionalization. I would like to question them regarding their ability to show their work, their coping skills in doing so, as well as any innovative ways they may have found to build venues for their work (e.g. the internet, artists' groups etc.). Problems they may have encountered along the way would also be enlightening.

To avoid some of the limitations inherent in this research I would like to interview a larger group, involve female artists from other areas, as well as include artists from various ethnic backgrounds or of differing abilities.

I regret not being able to arrange a satisfactory schedule for a focus group, as this would certainly be the next step in my research. With a focus group it would be possible to implement a discussion centred around the

participants emerging or continuing professionalization, personal experiences, as well as the art related topics germane to the issue of female art education made evident during the interview process.

In conclusion the great similarities I found between female artists of all ages made this examination fascinating. For my part it was rewarding to conduct interviews that each of the artists felt beneficial and satisfying. An added benefit was the discovery of small bits of myself within the feelings and experiences of these women as it served to verify my suggestion that others must have had experiences comparable to mine.

As an artist I cannot wait for the ideal time or the ideal place to make art. I must find the space and time within myself, for that is where it truly exists. I must stop listening to others and listen to the quiet whisper within my own head.

APPENDIX A - TAKING A DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPHOT

Date:
Place:
Time:

[questions regarding background biography - also serve as quick reference]

Participant's Name:

Birth Date: if offered

Birth Place: if offered

Residence Pattern:

Marital Status and History:

Married/ when:

Divorced/ when:

Remarried/ when:

Children:
(ages and gender)
Barriers/ Facility to work: were children, family, a restraint or help?

Education: History, Experiences - positive/negative:

Highest level:

Emphasis/specialty:

Where studied:

Professional career:

APPENDIX B - SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

[possible questions for example only]

Would you describe yourself as an artist? Why/Why not?

How would you describe (define) a professional artist?

Do you consider yourself a professional artist?

Why do you or why don't you describe yourself this way?

Do certain circumstances affect whether or not you refer to yourself as a professional artist? If so what type and why?

Have you spent any part of your life focussed on other areas of life, (such as children or career or other pursuits)?

Why did you decide to study art?

What was your goal in pursuing art education?

Upon reflection what or who influenced you the most during your education? In what way did they/it influence you?

What things or people influenced you after you left school?

In addition to school have there been other major influences that have shaped your decision to be an artist?

What type of activities serves to sustain your self-image as an artist?

Do you belong to any artist's groups?

Please describe your involvement.

Why do you or don't you belong to artists' groups?

How does your participation in these groups influence you?

Which artists of particular interest did you study in school?

What was it about them that appealed to you?

At any level did you study about female artists in school? If so who?

How was their work presented?

Did this influence you? If so how?

How focussed or intensely was the gender of the artists you studied addressed? Was the question of gender ever addressed and if so how?

How did the question apply to art history and studio classes? Was there a difference?

If you never studied women artists in school have you investigated them on your own?

How did you feel about what you learned?

Was any gender bias evident in either what you studied on your own or in your formal education?

If so, did this practice receive support from professors, teachers, and the rest of the students?

Did you find that others (male and female) felt similarly or differently than you?

Do you feel gender is relevant to the experience of being an artist or how an artist's work is viewed?

Why or why not?

Do you have a place (room or studio) to practice your art? Where do you make art?

Are you able to combine your art and your job? If so how?

Do your family support your artistic career? How about other colleagues, at work or elsewhere? If so how?

Does your family support your artistic career? Is this situation similar for your peers?

How has the rest of your "life" affected your artistic career (eg. Time, space, money)?

APPENDIX C - COVER LETTERS - INTERVIEWS

Dear Participant

    For my Master of Arts degree thesis I am studying the art educational experiences of female artists.

    A portion of my research will consist of a collection of interviews conducted with practicing female artists intended to investigate their thoughts, recollections and experiences. The interviews will be followed by a focus group where participants will have the opportunity to participate in a group discussion. The interviews and focus group will provide me with valuable information unavailable in any other way. With your permission, both the interviews and focus group will be tape-recorded.

    All of the information provided will remain confidential and your anonymity will be protected. No personal names will be used and all material will be stored in safe, secure place. You may change your mind at any time during the research and if so, all interview materials pertinent to yourself will be returned to you upon your request. Upon completion of the research the final thesis will be available from myself, the Chancellor Patterson Library at Lakehead University or from the National Library of Canada.

    If you agree to participate please sign the attached consent form. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Patricia Lamminmaki

APPENDIX D - CONSENT FORM - INTERVIEWS

My signature on this form indicates that I am willing to participate in the research project *Painting Like a Housewife*, conducted by Patricia Lamminmaki, MA candidate, Department of Sociology, Lakehead University. My signature also indicates that I fully understand the following:

I may withdraw from the study at any time and all pertinent interview materials will be returned to me.

My anonymity will be protected.

There is no risk of harm to myself from participation.

All verbal information provided by me will be held in confidence. The written documents and materials provided by me will be returned upon completion of the research project.

Upon completion of the study I may access the final thesis through the library at Lakehead University or the National Library of Canada.

_____

Participant's Name

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   Date

Appendix E – DEMOGRAPHIC SKETCHES OF PARTICIPANT ARTISTS

Within this research all participants are referred to with the use of pseudonyms to maintain their personal anonymity. Please note that the description of Degrees/Diplomas covers the bare minimum of data. The majority of the artists have also taken many other courses and workshops in the visual arts, often studying with internationally recognized artists. Many have been involved in teaching art as well. Most of the artists have shown on their own as well as part of a group. In order to maintain anonymity I have only documented their continued, serious involvement in showing their work.

Alice
Age: 53
Birthplace: Lethbridge, Alberta.
Degrees/Diplomas: B.A. - French, H.B.F.A. - Visuals Arts.
Work has shown in numerous venues and galleries.
Marital Status: Married, 2 children

Beatrice
Age: 47
Birthplace: Port Arthur, Ontario.
Degrees/Diplomas: College Diplomas – Drama, Clown, Poetry, Spoken word. Masters course in Mask-making. Numerous University courses in Visual Arts. Published author, playwright, director. Visual arts works shown in numerous venues and galleries.
Marital Status: Married, 3 children.

Cathy
Age: 53
Birthplace: Sudbury, Ontario.
Degrees/Diplomas: B.Ed., H.B.F.A. – Visual Arts.
Work has shown in numerous venues and galleries.
Marital Status: Married, 2 children.

Doris
Age: 23
Birthplace: Thunder Bay, Ontario.
Degrees/Diplomas: H.B.F.A. – Visual Arts.
Work has shown in numerous venues and galleries.
Marital Status: Long-term relationship, 1 child.

Elaine
Age: 75
Birthplace: Edmonton, Alberta.
Degrees/Diplomas: Art College Degree in Advertising
Work has shown in numerous venues and galleries.
Marital Status: Divorced, 3 children.

Fran
Age: 49
Birthplace: Fort William, Ontario.
Degrees/Diplomas: H.B.F.A., Work has shown in various venues and galleries.
Marital Status: Divorced, Remarried, 3 children.

Marie
Age: 43
Birthplace: Nipigon, Ontario.
Degrees/Diplomas: H.B.F.A. - Visual Arts, M.A. - Visual Arts. Work has shown in numerous venues and galleries.
Marital Status: Married, no children.

Susan
Age: 59
Birthplace: Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.
Degrees/Diplomas: B.A. (B.Ed.), H.B.F.A. - Visual Arts.
Work has shown in numerous venues and galleries.
Marital Status: Married, 4 children.

Bonnie
Age: 27
Birthplace: Thunder Bay, Ontario.
Degrees/Diplomas: H.B.F.A. - Visual Arts, B.ED. Work has shown in numerous venues and galleries.
Marital Status: Unmarried, no children.

Tracy
Age: 70
Birthplace: Plymouth, England
Degrees/Diplomas: Teaching Degree, B.F.A. - Printmaking, B.F.A. - Art History. Work has shown in numerous venues and galleries.
Marital Status: Married, 1 child.

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