Mindfulness & drawing

Mindfulness and drawing

A visual poetic inquiry into the representation of mindful drawing experiences

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This thesis is submitted to Auckland University of Technology
in partial fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

Studies investigating mindful creativity suggest that art making practices may be approached through meditative methods, cultivating greater present moment awareness and minimising self-judgment. This thesis addresses three questions:

What drawing strategies and methods might facilitate the pursuit of mindfulness?
What contingencies and conditions of practice need to be taken into account when engaging with mindful drawing?
What benefits can be derived from mindful drawing?

In the study, I suggest that a creative practice such as drawing can offer multiple ways to experience mindfulness.

Positioned as an Art-based inquiry, the study moves through four phases. First, the researcher engaged with self-practice and reflection to consider and collate a series of mindful drawing activities. Five non-professional drawers undertook the same series of activities and recorded reflections on their embodied experiences in the second phase. The third phase involved the researcher's thematic analysis and poetic inquiry into data collected from these reflections, interview transcripts, and mindful drawing outcomes. The fourth phase involved the researcher's artistic contemplation of the data and personal experiences. This led to the generation of a body of mindful drawings and poetic texts. These physical artefacts, as artistic syntheses, sought to express the essence of a mindful drawing experience.[1]

The study found that the implementation of a variety of simple drawing activities allowed mindfulness to be increased, because a new relationship to drawing was experienced through an engaging practice. Techniques such as reducing physical control, minimising or obscuring the observation of marks, and activities that were enjoyable, allowed aesthetic judgment to be minimised and 'present moment' awareness to be felt more fully. Through the cultivation of deep seeing, awareness of tactile sensations, and activities that enabled attention to be fully paid to the activity, mindful drawing appeared to offer an engaging and multisensory 'present moment' experience.

1 Due to potential Covid-19 limitations, the body of artistic practice emanating from the study has been presented as a digital portfolio where work constitutes an interplay between image and text to communicate the nature of the researcher's embodied, mindful experience.

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Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly stated nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Eleanor Louise Gannon
29th April 2022

Ethics approval and consent

This research received approval from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on the 25th of November 2019, for a period of three years until the 25th of November 2022.[2]

Ethics Approval Number: 19/423

All research was conducted in keeping with the regulations and guidelines of the approval.

2 The study's Ethics Approval Letter and Participant Information sheet are available as Appendices 1 and 2.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction to the research

Through practical experimentation, reflection and interviewing, this thesis examines how drawing can be used as a method to increase mindfulness. The main findings from mindful drawing experiences are represented through a visual poetic inquiry (Faulkner, 2019).

In this thesis, I explore mindful drawing by using and reflecting upon simple, intentional, present moment focused action. Given that Kabat-Zinn (2003) and Grant et al. (2004) suggest that the practice of mindful presence may invite the cultivation of awareness and attention, the aim of the study has been to understand participants' and my own experiences of mindful drawing when attention is focused on the present moment.

The dual study provides multiple mindful drawing experiences that through representation and reflection enable greater insights into present-moment focused mark making. Employing both thematic analysis and poetic inquiry, the project utilises a mixed method approach of data analysis and representation that affords the study multiple perspectives from which to engage with the research findings. Thematic analysis of qualitative data allows key themes and patterns to be identified, promoting reflection and the construction of the final analysis report. Poetic inquiry offers an analytical method for engaging with the essence of, and nuances within data (Rhoades, 2016). In their paring, a resulting, holistic understanding may offer a space for emotional engagement that allows data to be viewed more vibrantly (Sjollema and Bilotta, 2017).

Some individuals may believe themselves unable to draw due to previously held-beliefs, which may preclude engagement with a drawing practice. Because Willats (2004) notes that most adults believe that they cannot draw, the study recruited participants who self-identified as a having some prior experience with a mindfulness practice and considered themselves a 'beginner drawer'. This criteria was employed because the study aimed to help a greater range of adults to engage more easily with a mindful drawing practice, especially those who might feel intimidated making marks without any technical proficiency or formal training. By exploring the cultivation of a mindful mindset, the study seeks to understand if mindfulness may be used to encourage greater awareness of existing beliefs and offer opportunities to creatively reflect upon drawing as a form of mindful awareness. While certain drawing activities may help to cultivate mindfulness, Barry (2014) argues that a daily drawing practice is rare after childhood and, once discarded, may continue to remain inaccessible. Accordingly, the research develops and reflects upon drawing exercises that offer structure and frameworks to guide mindful engagements. Given that the research occurred during Covid-19 lockdowns, approaches were cognisant of people's time constraints, the availability of simple materials, appropriate scales, and clarity of instructions. McNiff (2015) suggests that introducing simple structures may support the development of a sense of direction to help support initial practice. Kent and Steward (2008) posit that such structures, while creating restraints, might also offer potentials to view new perspectives. Robinson (2011) also encourages formal constraints as a tool for creativity, suggesting that they can constitute a framework for creation.

While drawing as a method to cultivate mindfulness has been previously explored (Grant et al., 2004; Greenhalgh, 2020; Montarou, 2013), an identifiable gap in the field is addressed by multiple experiences of mindful drawing that utilise a range of drawing activities to consider strategies and conditions of practice that may enable mindful awareness. As such, the thesis provides a framework for considering a range of possible activities (accompanied by instructions and visual examples), and the experiences of both the researcher's reflective practice and participatory reflection on practice represented in poetic form. The study provides potential benefits for the field of mindfulness and creative mindfulness.

Employing Art-based inquiry, the study proposes new dimensions of understanding (Owton, 2017) through multi-perspective reflections on experiences and insights of mindful drawing practice. Hervey (2000) also notes that Art-based research can offer potentials for resonantly presenting personal experiences.

Research question

The thesis addresses three questions:

What drawing strategies and methods might facilitate the pursuit of mindfulness?
What contingencies and conditions of practice need to be taken into account when engaging with mindful drawing?
What benefits can be derived from mindful drawing?

Addressing the research question through artistic practice

Guided by this question, the research offers insights into the experience of mindful drawing through reflections on simple drawing activities. In the study, I use the word 'drawing' to describe a mindfully aware process of mark-making that can be differentiated from the pursuit of visual realism that has been conventionally understood as naturalistic representations of likeness (Greenhalgh, 2020). Thus, drawing experiments in the study were not concerned with representational precision, or replication.

Reflecting on themes that emerged from the data, in the final phase of the study, I have created a digital portfolio of drawings and poetic texts that may help to increase understanding of mindful drawing experiences.

Researcher's stance and experiential base

Given the distinctive nature of this study, it is useful to provide a brief positioning of myself as the researcher and explain why and how the project surfaced. Richardson (2002) suggests that the researcher and lived-self are inextricably linked and, as such, my artistic perspective shapes my perceptions and impacts how I conduct a study. Griffiths suggests that in artistically oriented inquiries, the self is inseparable from the study, "because the person creating, responding to, and working on, developing or evaluating performances, artefacts and practices is central to those activities" (2010, p. 185). In adopting an artistic research paradigm, I am led by the need to generate knowledge (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011) and meaning (Eisner, 1981) through direct experience. Accordingly, I approach knowledge rationally *and* poetically, drawing themes and reflections through processes of practice and reflection on practice.

Contributing experience

Throughout my years as a professional photographer, I have cultivated a way of looking at the world that requires precise focus and concentration. However, in 2009, in my Master of Art and Design degree, I shifted this approach and began to consider how one might artistically interpret and communicate more abstract ideas. In a practice-led thesis, I photographically considered the ethos of Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory, in Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*. In the study, I employed magnification and photo manipulation of intricate botanical elements recorded in cemeteries, to create visual representations of ideas (Figure 1.1).[3] Through this process, I became aware of how looking closely at a subject can cultivate greater awareness and appreciation.

Mindfulness

I approach mindfulness from a Western context (see Chapter 2); one that is separate from religious connotations. Prior to the study, my primary engagement with mindfulness had been through a regular yoga practice. As a contemplative mindfulness practice (Wenger, 2015), yoga invites curiosity through the opportunity to witness the thoughts and feelings that arise throughout a physical practice (Russell, 2015). I also engaged, albeit less frequently, with formal breathing meditation practices, where I experienced a mix between vipassana,[4] loving-kindness,[5] and mindfulness of sound.[6] Having a variety of practices has allowed me to select approaches appropriate to my daily schedule. For me, mindfulness has been a *way of being* in the world. Everyday activities such as washing up and listening in conversation provide a space for informal practice as greater attention is paid to the situation (Kabat-Zinn, 2013), and moment-to-moment awareness is cultivated. While I have found traditional forms of mindfulness meditation, such as watching the breath, to be helpful in cultivating present moment awareness, I experience physical practices like yoga as more grounding and successful in sustaining awareness. These experiences have led me to question whether a creative mindfulness practice might offer a similar experience.

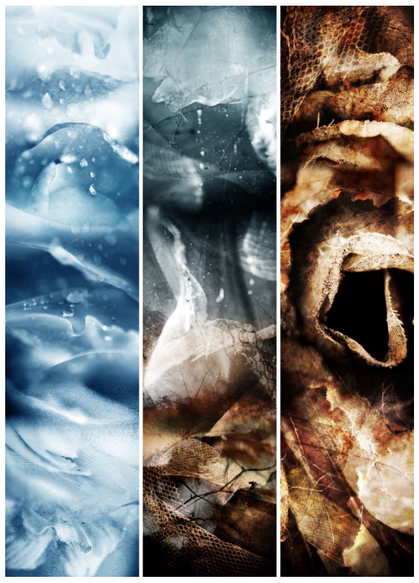


Figure 1.1. Images emanating from the study, depicting Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell (Gannon, E. October, 2009).

3 The study considered the internal contradictions in both Dante's literary spaces and the cemetery as they related to waiting, permanence, decay, temporality and transition. Thus, in the inquiry, the cemetery was conceived of as an oxymoron, that suggested "both a beginning and an end; growth and decay; a place of closure and a place of transition" (Gannon, 2009, p. 49).

4 Vipassana is the pali term for insight meditation. Vi loosely translates as a distinct approach and passana as seeing. Together the words suggest a way of looking with a certain clarity (Gunaratana, 2011). The breath is used as a focus for present moment awareness.

5 Using specific words to extend kindness to others during a meditation (Hanson, 2009).

6 Germer (2009) proposes that keeping surrounding sounds as the focus of awareness may be useful in mindfulness practice.

Poetic thinking
Although I had previously used a form of erasure poetry (Faulkner, 2019) as a method of art creation, I was unaware of its potential as a qualitative research tool. However, in 2019 after participating in a research poetry workshop at the *Design for Health Symposium,*[7] I became interested in how poetic inquiry might operate as both an analysis and a representational tool when seeking to understand and communicate a study's findings.

Drawing
As a visual artist, I have explored a diverse array of media, but I did not consider myself a 'competent' drawer at the outset of the project. My pre-study drawing experience can be contained within a short poem:

drawing experience
limited to school art class
judgmental space
art was graded
without explanation why
no drawing technical skills taught
yet judged on ability to draw
disheartened

It was my experience with an informal public life drawing session in October 2018 that crystalised the focus of the research. I anticipated that drawing a live model would be an enjoyable activity, but what transpired was an unexpectedly uncomfortable experience. I found myself facing self-criticism on the placement of every mark. I began to ask myself why I experienced such internal negative judgment when I had chosen to take part in the activity. Reflecting on this incident, I wrote the following poem:

life drawing session
this will be fun!
a friendly space
tucked away in a corner
excited to start
the model appears

marks are made
instant chatter
incessant judgmental thoughts
this is bad, you can't draw
you should leave

shouting. ringing. stinging.
deep breath
commit to carrying on
draw but make it small
minimise overwhelm

even with a masters degree
permission to try
and no one watching
enormous mental hurdles
old art class judgments

Faced with mind chatter, despite enthusiasm and openness to the drawing experience, I questioned how I might quieten the distracting noise of self-judgment over the marks I had made (Figure 1.2). Four months prior to writing an application to the Ph.D. programme, this experience became a catalyst to a proposed inquiry. Within my yoga practice, I noticed how much gentler I was with myself when faced with judgment surrounding adeptness. This led me to wonder if mindfulness might offer something useful in alleviating drawing judgment, thereby facilitating a more peaceful drawing experience. I was aware that Kabat-Zinn (2013) had suggested that cultivating greater awareness through any activity may change into a meditation of sorts, which may lead to increased understanding and perception.

Figure 1.2. A drawing completed during a life-drawing session (Gannon, E. October, 2018).

7 The Design for Health Symposium was held in Auckland on September 19th–20th, 2019. See https://goodhealthdesign.com/symposium/designforhealth

Definition of terms

In this study, I use words in specific ways. However, I am aware that word use can change between discourse communities, so the following definitions of key terms may prove helpful:

Accessibility
I use the term accessibility to describe the quality of being easily approachable or accessible. This term is free from certain connotations associated within the field of design, where accessibility can refer to the characteristic that artefacts, services, or facilities have, that enable them to be independently used by people with a variety of disabilities.

Attention
The state of being engaged or immersed in an experience. In this study, attention is focused on the mindful drawing practice that unfolds in the present moment.

Awareness
Adopting Brown and Ryan's (2003) definition, I use 'awareness' to describe consciousness and the observation of the body's internal sensations, thoughts, and external stimuli. Thus, being aware of events may occur without them being the main focus of one's attention. In mindfulness literature, awareness is often referred to as attention focused on the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). While I acknowledge other considerations of awareness in the literature, including Csikszentmihalyi's (1990), theory of flow, Merleau-Ponty's (1964) work on phenomenology, Riva and Waterworth's (2003) discussions of presence, and Douglass and Moustakas' (1985) consideration of immersion, in this study awareness is related specifically to that state of mindfulness.

Consciousness
Consciousness describes the state of awareness of, and attention to, one's experiences with regards to thoughts, feelings and sensations. Adopting Brown and Ryan's (2003) definition, I propose that to be fully conscious is to be fully aware of one's inner and outer experiences in the present moment. Here, both awareness and attention are incorporated into consciousness and are interlinked.

Creativity
While I acknowledge wide debate around the definition of creativity (Torrance & Hall, 1980; Runco, 1996; Parkhurst, 1999; Glück et al., 2002; Csikszentmihalyi, 2013), in this thesis I define it in characterological terms as an openness to new experiences (Maslow, 1993). Maslow (1993) suggests that a creative person "is all there, totally immersed, fascinated and absorbed in the present, in the current situation, in the here-now, with the matter-in-hand" (p. 59). This focus on the 'here-now' parallels Langer's (2005) definition of mindful creativity in which awareness is given to involvement in the process.

Creative mindfulness
Adopting Gabora and Unrau's (2019) definition, in this study I use the term creative mindfulness to describe a creative activity undertaken with mindful awareness, and I suggest that through one's engagement with a creative activity, mindfulness may be increased.

Judgment
I use the term judgment to describe forming an opinion based on the quality or nature of an experience. Within a mindfulness context, judgments can refer to critical assessments that may be accepted without question, unless they are more deeply examined.

Meditation
Meditation describes an extended practice of focusing the mind. Traditionally in Buddhist and Hindu cultures, this refers to breathing meditations where focus on the breath serves as the focus for sustained attention (Langer & Ngnoumen, 2017). During meditation, thoughts are released and awareness is refocused to the initial object or field of focus. I use formal meditation to describe a state that requires the intentional halting of external activities by adopting stillness, with no purpose other than to be fully present in each moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2014b). 'Informal meditation' describes an intentional focus of attention to the present moment in which any moment-to-moment experience may become a focus for mindfulness practice (Germer, 2009).

Mindfulness
I use mindfulness to describe a state where there is awareness of attention on the present moment that occurs in non-judgment and openness. In this definition I bring together Kabat-Zinn's (2013) scientific context of mindfulness with Neff's (2003) concept of compassion and Langer's (1997) ideas relating to novelty and openness.

Mindfulness practice
This describes a process of engaging with an activity mindfully, regularly, out of habit or through specific customs. Kabat-Zinn, (2014b) suggests that the intention to remain present and focused on the moment may be considered a practice.

Practice
Practice refers to the commitment of being present in each moment to develop mindful awareness. Thus, in this study, practice does not refer to a process of improvement through ongoing trial in the pursuit of aesthetically enhanced outcomes.

Thesis components

This thesis contains two interconnected components: a written exegesis and a digital portfolio of visual, poetic texts.

The portfolio

The portfolio *Essences* presents 26 mindful drawings completed by the researcher after Phase 3 of the study had been completed. Part A comprises of 16 of the researcher's mindful drawings. These works were paired with 16 poems selected from the study's research findings. Positioned adjacent to each other, the poems and drawings constitute the researcher's artistic reflection on what was generated *inside* the research. As such, they create a physical residue; a map of seeing the diverse experiences of mindful drawing practices. Part B contains 10 mindful drawings I completed as a conclusion to the study. Each of these drawings is accompanied by a new poem that I created *following* each drawing experience. Given the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on the availability and accessibility of physical sites (for what was intended to be a physical exhibition), it was decided to present the drawings and poetry in a digital space. The rationale for, and implications of, this decision are discussed in Chapter 5.

The exegesis

This written exegesis contextualises the portfolio.[8] In navigating the specifics of the study, it consists of five chapters and a conclusion.

The first chapter introduces the research topic and the researcher's stance. It also offers definitions of terms and a discussion of the rationale and significance of the study.

The second chapter presents an overview and critique of literature relevant to the inquiry. It discusses the specific concepts related to mindfulness, creative mindfulness, drawing, mindful drawing, poetic inquiry, and visual poetic inquiry.

Chapter three contains a discussion of the research design supporting the study. It also considers and critiques specific practice-led and reflexive methods utilised within the inquiry. The phases of the research are also discussed, including mindful drawing practice, reflective note-taking, critical dialogue, participants' practice, thematic and poetic analysis and synthesis through visual poetic inquiry.

The fourth chapter focuses on the collection and analysis of the data. It discusses the specific drawing activities undertaken by participants, then considers both the researcher's and participant's experiences through thematic analysis and poetic inquiry.

Chapter five considers the final portfolio of mindful drawings and associated poetic writing, that forms the artistic reflection on the thesis.

Finally, the exegesis' conclusion offers a synopsis of the research, a discussion on the impact of Covid-19 on the inquiry, a reflection on the research contributions, and suggestions for further research.[9]

8 Berridge (2007) notes that in Art-based research, an exegesis relates the creative artwork to the context that surrounds its production. Within doctoral research, Scrivener (2000) proposes a process of reflection-in-action and practice that can be made explicit in exegetical writing that "draws upon theory, knowledge, records of designing and analysis" (p. 14).

9 The exegesis is written without the use of gendered, personal pronouns. This approach has been adopted in an effort to elevate ideas beyond associations with binary framings of masculine and feminine.

Rationale and significance of the research

Rationale

The rationale underpinning this research has arisen from a developing debate about the potential of creative mindfulness (Gabora & Unrau, 2019; Walsh, 2016) and expansive discussions surrounding drawing as a method to prompt mindfulness (Grant et al., 2004; Greenhalgh, 2020; Montarou, 2013).

Given that this study spanned a period of heightened social anxiety,[10] its intention was to offer a reconceptualisation of drawing as something potentially useful to individuals who might seek mindful engagements to increase awareness of the present moment.

The study also seeks to address levels of judgment and frustration people may experience when engaging in drawing practices. Specifically, it acknowledges Anning and Ring's (2004) observation that existing judgments concerning drawing ability may inhibit a practice. Judgment experienced when drawing can make it difficult to sustain mindful awareness upon both the subject and drawing practice (Greenhalgh, 2020).

10 I am referring here to the Covid-19 global pandemic that was first identified in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December 2019. The pandemic triggered acute social, educational, economic and personal disruption internationally, including the most pervasive global recession since the Great Depression (Gopinath, 2020). The outbreak and its variants also resulted in substantial changes in behaviour. Significantly, education and research projects in many countries temporarily shifted from physical to online environments (Li & Lalani, 2020). The pandemic also impacted markedly on people's mental health (Luo et al., 2020; Santomauro et al., 2021), increasing depression, anxiety and risk factors for family violence (New Zealand Ministry of Social Development, 2020). At the time of submitting this thesis, the pandemic continues.

Significance

The thesis proposes three significant contributions.

Broadening conceptions of drawing
Firstly, the study contributes to how we might understand the role of mindfulness in drawing practice (Greenhalgh, 2020). Considering the paucity of research connecting drawing processes to mindfulness, the study offers new insights into processes that engage mindful, present-focused mark-making, through which higher stages of awareness may be accessed (Grey, 2001). It also contributes new insights into present moment focused action that seeks to find pleasure and contentment in the present (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Relationships between drawing and mindfulness
The study also demonstrates how a creative mindfulness practice may be adopted to cultivate present moment awareness. Findings from analysed data may assist individuals interested in considering relationships between drawing and mindfulness practice. The results provide insights into the kinds of drawing activities that may enable mindfulness to occur through reflections on the embodied experiences of research participants. The study suggests that mindful drawing may provide a means for adults with established anxieties and limiting beliefs about their drawing capabilities, to overcome them, draw more frequently and with higher levels of joy.

The nature of visual, poetic inquiry
Finally, through its use of a dialogic relationship between drawing and multiple poetic structures, the study expands ways that data representation may be considered. Thus, the project offers new insights into Art-based methods for representing qualitative research findings through the synthesis of the visual and poetic modes of inquiry.

Chapter 2

Overview of related literature

Mindfulness

Mindfulness has been a subject of rising interest in recent research due to its capacity to cultivate present moment awareness. With practice, greater awareness of attention may offer advantages to peoples' health and overall wellbeing. In this chapter, I contextualise the thesis project by reviewing literature associated with three fields of discourse. First, I consider research concerned with the history and definitions of mindfulness. This is followed by a discussion of literature relating to associations between creativity, drawing and mindfulness. Finally, I review literature concerned with the nature and use of poetic inquiry in research.

History and definitions of mindfulness

In simple terms, mindfulness may be described as moment-by-moment awareness (Germer, 2016a). Other definitions associate mindfulness with present moment awareness and attention without judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, 2014b), drawing novel distinctions (Langer, 1997; Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000), direct experience and acceptance of inner experiences within the mind and body[11] (Bishop et al., 2004; Franklin, 2014), a form of self-care (Allen, 2014) and a way to restore ourselves (Nhat Hanh, 1987). Santorelli (1999) suggests that mindfulness provides a tool for compassion through the willingness to see ourselves just as we are.

Gilbert (2010) suggests that the practice of compassion allows us to notice and manage inner sensations, thoughts and feelings with greater acceptance and non-judgment. Gilbert also proposes that through understanding our own experiences with compassion, an improvement in emotional wellbeing for the self and humanity may develop. Neff (2003) argues that self-compassion is comprised of self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness, and that viewing the self without judgment can inspire transformation. Salzberg (2011) suggests that by minimising judgment we can become more compassionate and potentially live lives of greater connection.

In this present study, I suggest that with a more compassionate perspective, we may remain present to whatever arises without seeking change. In adopting a mindful attitude, we may begin to see our world just as it is by practising acceptance, allowing for the release of judgment and a reconnection to inner peacefulness. In this regard, I agree with Tolle (2009) who suggests that by turning attention to the present moment, to the 'Now', a presence is felt that creates an overall sense of peace.

Mindfulness as a concept is relatively new in a Western context, but it has a long history in many other parts of the world. While mindfulness practices have 2500-year-old roots[12] in Buddhism,[13] they are also found in many of the main religious and spiritual traditions and have been adjusted to fit more secular contexts (Rappaport & Kalmanowitz, 2014; Shapiro & Carlson, 2017). While mindfulness may be a core element of religions and practices such as Buddhism, Taoism and yoga, it can also be found in Native American wisdom or in alternative texts by Emerson or Thoreau (Kabat-Zinn, 2014b). Kabat-Zinn's (2013) development of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme introduced mindfulness meditation to mainstream scientific contexts and pioneered a new field within health-related industries, where it has been used to help patients to manage stress, pain and illness. MBSR uses mindfulness meditation training to teach people how to embrace and live a healthier life (Kabat-Zinn, 2014a). Mindfulness-based treatments have also gained significant attention within scientific clinical psychology (Baer, 2011), and mindfulness has become an applied tool in psychotherapy (Germer et al., 2016b). Over the past 40 years, Rappaport (2014b) has noted benefits such as reduced stress and depression that assist in improving health and well-being. In the past two decades, there has been an increase in clinical evidence that supports meditation and mindfulness methods and practices. Some of these methods include Mindfulness-Based Play-Family Therapy (MBPFT; Higgins-Klein, 2013), Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT; Segal et al., 2012), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT; Hayes et al., 2011), Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Therapy (MB-EAT; Kristeller & Wolever, 2011) and Dialectic Behaviour Therapy (DBT; Linehan, 1993). While a wide range of studies has shown health benefits from adopting mindfulness-based practices (Jang et al., 2016; Kabat-Zinn et al., 1992; Peterson, 2014), mindfulness also influences other fields, including education and business, technology and government (Kabat-Zinn, 2013).

11 Events Bishop et al. (2004) refer to as thoughts, feelings and sensations.

12 'Mindfulness' is an English translation of 'sati', from the Pali language of Buddhist psychology 2500 years ago.

13 Kabat-Zinn (2013) notes that mindfulness has been referred to as the core of Buddhist meditation.

Mindfulness without meditation

While mindfulness is a fundamental component of certain Eastern practices, it may also be viewed from a social-cognitive perspective. Mindfulness literature comprises and emanates from two separate but interconnected concepts (Pirson et al., 2018). First, from traditions such as Buddhism wherein non-judgmental moment-to-moment awareness of the present experience is practised (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2013), and second, from Western scientific literature that is concerned with cognitive flexibility and may be described as social-cognitive mindfulness (Langer, 2014). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) suggests that a reinvention of learning to control consciousness may be required because wisdom of the past may lose its effectiveness in contemporary society without an original cultural context. While many Eastern practices focus on tools to gain a state of mindful awareness through meditative practices that regulate the mind and body, (For example, sitting meditations and attention to one's breath) Langer and Ngnoumen (2017) offer a Western concept of 'mindfulness without meditation.' This non-meditative approach provides a psychological framework free from spiritual thought and practices. Langer (1997) proposes three characteristics of a mindful approach: "the continuous creation of new categories,[14] openness to new information, and an implicit awareness of more than one perspective" (p. 4). Langer also suggests that openness in the form of novelty and variability offers further opportunities to cultivate a mindful attitude that may help guard against mindlessness. Langer and Ngnoumen (2017) describe mindlessness as being trapped by old distinctions and behaviours that impede new information and they relate this condition to living life on autopilot.

Shapiro and Carlson (2017) suggest that mindful psychology offers a new paradigm[15] from which to consider psychological well-being. By focusing non-judgmental attention on the 'contents of consciousness,'[16] they argue that we may observe how thoughts are transient and constantly changing. Shapiro and Carlson suggest that these sensations may be reperceived as stories, allowing us to disconnect and cultivate a greater tolerance of unpleasant sensations. They further suggest that reperceiving allows a detachment from thoughts, and with this a shift in perspective may occur. They also propose that unwanted emotional states may no longer dominate when they are reperceived as merely information. This change in perspective, they suggest, may lead to having clearer awareness, developing a detachment to judgment and, ultimately, resulting in a state of inner peace.

In this thesis, I define mindfulness as a state where there is awareness of attention on the present moment that occurs in the context of non-judgment and openness. In this definition, I am bringing together Kabat-Zinn's (2013) scientific context of mindfulness, Neff's (2003) concept of compassion and Langer's (1997) ideas relating to novelty and openness. This expanded definition may support a more relevant description of creative practices. I adopt a predominantly secular, Western social-cognitive perspective of mindfulness within the project. I suggest that an informal mindfulness practice that is free from religious connotations may allow for wider applications and be better suited to secular Western temperaments.

Formal and informal mindfulness practices

Many mindfulness practices are based on early Buddhist meditation traditions and may be considered 'formal' practice. Formal mindfulness is a kind of continual introspection that allows for the development of attention in noticing the contents of the mind. Conversely, 'informal' mindfulness practices may involve attention to any mental event in our everyday lives. Mindfully making tea (Nhat Hanh, 1987), mindful walking (Peterson, 2015) and mindful eating (MB-EAT; Kristeller & Jordan, 2018) all provide opportunities to practice informal, present-moment awareness. Langer (2005) suggests that a person does not need to have years of meditation or a change in their state of consciousness to increase mindful awareness. Langer proposes that by noticing new information, people develop the capacity to shift their thinking and mindfulness can arise. Hassed (2014) suggests that expanding the classification of mindfulness to include more informal practices allows for a wider variety of methods from which Germer (2009) suggests individuals may select to best suit their needs.

In this section, I have explored mindfulness's definition and situated the research within a secular, Western social-cognitive perspective. I have reviewed instances where informal practices have been considered mindfulness practices and I have considered literature that proposes non-meditative approaches as potentially mindful. I will now address the advantages and challenges to people adopting a mindfulness practice.

14 Langer (2016) explains categories as previously set judgments: "in dealing with the world rationally, we hold it constant, by means of categories formed in the past" (p. 114).

15 Shapiro and Carlson (2017) suggest that there is considerable opportunity for mindfulness to be included within Western psychology and health, and they propose that such inclusion can result in a new psychotherapy model.

16 Thoughts, judgments, emotions and sensations felt in the body (Shapiro & Carlson, 2017).

Critique of mindfuness

Focusing attention on the mindful drawing practice that unfolds in the present moment requires sensitivity to experience through the cultivation of awareness. Awareness on the present moment while drawing with non-judgment and openness may be an unfamiliar territory for an individual who is not accustomed to an informal mindfulness practice such as drawing. In concluding this section, it is useful to consider both the advantages and challenges of being mindful, especially in regards to a mindful drawing practice.

Advantages

With a small change in mindset towards a more present moment attitude, evidence suggests that people may experience positive impacts on their health (Langer & Ngnoumen, 2017; Shapiro et al., 2016). If consistently developed, increased insight and understanding may occur, resulting in a stronger, more steady way of living (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). In this regard, Santorelli (1999) suggests that mindfulness is both illuminating and restorative so long as we remain open to its potential for transformation. Semple et al. (2019) suggest that mindfulness allows for greater fulfilment in life because learning self-acceptance may liberate us from oppressive thoughts and feelings. By facing unpleasant inner experiences with kindness, Nhat Hanh (2010) argues that we might create a healthier, more nurturing energy. Through the mindful observation of unpleasant feelings, Nhat Hanh also suggests we may come to understand more about ourselves and humanity.

Challenges

In recent years there has been increased criticism of mindfulness because of the number of publications claiming a connection between mindfulness and improved health. Walsh (2016) notes that this focus diminishes the accountability of external factors, such as society and the wider world, and how they contribute to individual stress. Walsh suggests that if there is no examination of stress-related external effectors, this absence "tacitly reinforces the social system within which one practices" (p. 162). Hart (2015) argues that there may be inconsistent and inflated evidence used to support the benefits of mindfulness.

Rosenbaum and Magid (2016) raise concerns with the assumption that mindfulness can be removed from its Buddhist context and Purser (2019) extends this idea, claiming that mindfulness has "been stripped of the teachings on ethics that accompanied it" (para. 4). Purser goes further, suggesting that "anything that offers success in our unjust society without trying to change it, is not revolutionary – it just helps people cope" (para. 3). Purser and Loy (2013, p. 1) explain how the secularisation of mindfulness, or "McMindfulness," allows its applications in wider sectors through its repackaging into a more acceptable self-help practice. They suggest that with its more comprehensive application, mindfulness may be commodified. In this regard, Walsh (2016) argues that marketers may pick and choose the benefits from the research to suit customers, because such decisions result in increased financial profits. Hart (2015) and North (2014) also note that 'mindfulness' has become a marketing phrase, an unstable concept outside of Buddhist concepts that they argue can be easily fashioned into alternative capitalist, self-help devices.

Adopting a mindfulness practice can give rise to negative emotions which may impinge on the quality of one's experience. Shapiro and Carlson (2017) argue that training the mind to increase present moment attention so that awareness is not on autopilot,[17] is challenging and requires intentional and persistent cultivation. Schlosser et al. (2019) note an increase in the coverage of unpleasant psychological encounters in relation to a meditation practice, ranging from anxiety to aggravation of clinical symptoms and incidents of extreme struggles

17 Not being aware of the truth of the present moment, living life only being influenced by unconscious biases (Shapiro & Carlson, 2017).

such as psychosis. However, while self-observation of unpleasant emotions may be difficult for some, Broderick and Jennings (2012) suggest that practising mindfulness in the face of powerful sensations may re-establish stability. This may allow more resilience towards unpleasant feelings that could elicit an outward emotional reaction. Kabat-Zinn (2013) suggests that emotional distress may feel less potent with a more robust attitude towards unwanted experiences. They also suggest that believing mindfulness will provide an immediate solution may also result in disheartenment when practitioners discover that consistent effort is required. However, approaching one's practice with an open attitude and a little scepticism may be a useful way to attain long-term value. In fact, Gunaratana (2011) suggests that one should not expect anything, but instead allow meditation to take one to wherever it moves. Progress, Gunaratana suggests, will eventually occur when one releases expectations and becomes open to whatever transpires in the experience.

While mindfulness practices such as MBSR have been studied and successfully implemented within Western health applications, Shapiro and Carlson (2017) note purists' concerns with separating mindfulness from established Buddhist origins. They observe some discussion around how a secular treatment of mindfulness has led to a dilution of its potentials. While it may be beneficial to teachers and therapists to have a basic understanding of Buddhist psychology and philosophy to help deepen their understanding, if the secularisation of mindfulness allows it to have wider applications that benefit more people, Shapiro and Carlson believe that it should be utilised.

Existing literature suggests that mindfulness practice is a process of noticing[18] what already exists in the present moment and allowing it to be. In this regard, this research project does not suggest mindful drawing as a treatment for illness or anxiety or as a form of therapy. Building on Kabat-Zinn's thinking, I propose that it is through observing everything that is already accepted within ourselves, that which is "already beautiful, already whole by virtue of our being human" (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. xxxvii), that mindfulness may be experienced. With the benefits of connecting back to ourselves, evident in many of the studies reviewed here, I am proposing that it is worth exploring mindful practices as a means of addressing the conditions of living in a faster-paced, modern world.

18 An exploratory awareness concerning the observation of the continuous stream of inner experience (Bishop et al., 2004).

Creativity, drawing and mindfulness

This study aims to understand how creative practice can be being utilised to facilitate mindful awareness. In this section I will explore the importance of creativity and its relationship to mindfulness. Here I provide a review of drawing theory and practice literature and I will discuss drawing as an experience which has the ability to enable mindful engagement, openness, novelty and play.

Creative mindfulness

The creativity-mindfulness partnership has been explored in a number of creative activities. The MBSR[19] programme was adapted by Monti et al. (2006) to develop Mindfulness-Based Art Therapy (MBAT[20]). This eight week group therapy programme integrated mindfulness meditations and art therapy practices and examined how a mindful art practice could help to improve cancer patients' psychological well-being. A branch of MBSR was recently formed by Slom (2020) as Mindfulness-Based Self-Expression (MBSE).[21] This programme offers an amalgamation of art experience and conventional mindfulness practices to increase present moment awareness. Within an MBAT program, Peterson (2015) created a mindful framework[22] to combine outdoor walking with photography and collage making. Prior to this, in 2014, Peterson had explored how Mindful Exploration of Art Materials (MEAM) may provide a creative investigation that enables one to experience mindfulness. In 2014, Rappaport (2014a) developed Focusing-Orientated Arts Therapy (FOAT[23]) as a mindfulness-based approach and four years later Peary (2018) described how a mindfulness pedagogy may be applied to the writing process to focus attention on the present. These programmes represent a range of ways that mindfulness has recently been applied to creative practices, and its flexibility offers opportunities for a range of new approaches to emerge.

The term *mindful creativity* has been adopted by several scholars to suggest a creative practice that is approached through an introspective or meditative method (Byrne, 2017; Capurso et al., 2014; Dhiman, 2012; Grant et al., 2004; Haller, 2015; Hilburn-Arnold, 2020; Krueger, 2017; Langer, 2005; Rothouse, 2018). Gabora and Unrau (2019) explain how 'creative mindfulness'[24] may produce a cycle of mindfulness and creativity, whereby becoming more creative leads to becoming more mindful, and vice versa. In concord with this hypothesis, Dhiman (2012) suggests that mindfulness may allow for meaningful engagement and creativity, and Rappaport (2014b) proposes that this may occur by cultivating awareness and connection with life's creative rhythm. Sokmen and Watters (2016) take a similar stance, suggesting that the art making process may be explored as a self-soothing activity that helps us relate to our 'sensory being'. The activity of art making is sensory due to its physical and kinaesthetic qualities (Sokmen & Watters, 2016). Langer (2005) suggests that creativity and mindfulness may go hand in hand and views creative expression as a valuable source of investigation for mindful thinking. Therefore, the position I adopt in this thesis is that, because mindfulness may allow for meaningful engagement and creativity, a drawing activity undertaken with a mindful awareness may be considered a mindfulness practice.

19 Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (Kabat-Zinn, 2014a)

20 MBAT relates to having fully present attention with non-judgment, whilst taking creative action (Jones Callahan, 2016).

21 MBSE is not a form of arts therapy and does not seek a specific outcome (Slom, 2020).

22 A framework that may encourage mindful attention (Peterson, 2015).

23 The foundational principles of FOAT work to establish mindfulness. They are: presence, grounding, felt sense, focused attitude, clinical sensitivity, listening and reflection (Rappaport, 2014a).

24 An engagement with creativity that enriches mindfulness (Gabora & Unrau, 2019).

Definitions of drawing

Drawing may be difficult to define (Simpson, 1992; Owens, 2013), extremely varied (Taylor, 2008) and have diverse purposes (Betti & Sale, 1992). It can be described as both a private and provisional art form (Owens, 2013) and as culturally significant public image making (Anning, 1997). There is an extensive history of drawing in Western culture that includes, but is not limited to, applications such as planning, representing vision or imagination and generating transformation (Taylor, 2008). Owens (2013) suggests that drawing may be considered experimental and open-ended, and both Owens and Garner (2008) believe that as an abstract tool, drawing may be employed during the creative process to investigate and adapt ideas. While drawing may be used for inventive meandering (Betti & Sale, 1992) or as a way to visually express ideas or deliberations (Ching, 1990), it may also be considered as a stand-alone art form (Rawson, 1969), as a fluid and impermanent process (Owens, 2013) or as a goal in its own right (Davidson, 2011). Drawing marks may demonstrate different technical skills ranging from doodling (Maclagan, 2014) and childhood scribbles (Kellogg, 1970; Willats, 2004) to the production of a complex process of decision-making (Germer & Neeser, 2010) or demonstrating artistic genius (Owens, 2013). Given such diverse attributions, Petherbridge (2008) argues that to define drawing invites frustration, given that it is an act, an idea of sign, a symbol, a signifier and conceptual diagram and, simultaneously, a medium, a process and a technique.

In this study, minimal attention is given to the aesthetics of the marks made. I find helpful Sawdon's (2005) definition of drawing as a process that employs "lines and marks on a surface, especially one made with a pencil or pen. A record of a toll moving across a surface. A verb and a noun" (p. 71). Using such a definition, drawing may be regarded as a process residue, similar to footprints left behind in sand (Godfrey, 1990). Accordingly, I am also attracted to Hill's (1966) definition of a drawing as a communicated experience in that it "acts as a means of enlarging vision leading toward an apprehension of feelings, emotions, perceptions, that can be arrested from experience in no other way" (p. 17). Hill also suggests that drawing is seeing and offers a method for inhabiting experience. Similarly, Franck (1979) describes how each mark signifies the quality of awareness from seeing with full attention. I am also encouraged by Malbert's (2015) suggestion that drawing may enable one to experience self-discovery, similar to mindful awareness, it may uncover information about how an individual perceives the world.

The process of mindful drawing

Because of their visual nature, drawings are often judged on their aesthetics and technical skill. Drawings may be representational, demonstrating 'visual realism' (Anning & Ring, 2004), high levels of visual accuracy[25] (Cohen & Bennett, 1997) or a perceived sense of realism[26] (Langer, 1957). In this research, I use drawing to describe a mindfully aware[27] process of mark making that doesn't ultimately seek realistic accuracy or exact replication. Conversely, I use the term 'representational drawing' to describe drawing that seeks, through the application of technical skills, to represent what is seen in a manner closely aligned to the form of the object studied. With the release from accuracy or exact representation and a focus on the experience, mindful drawing[28] offers many mark making possibilities.

Within the MBSE programme, Slom (2020) explains that drawing is predominantly used because of its potential to illustrate an understanding of the present moment. MBSE implements abstract drawing because of its focus on the process and non-judgmental experimentation. The programme does not pursue the achievement of a final, representational outcome. In *Mindfulness and the Art of Drawing* (2020), Greenhalgh explains how drawing is an intrinsic meditative process that may cultivate a stronger connection to ourselves and our surroundings. Greenhalgh describes this process as being as automatic as breathing. Similarly, Montarou (2013) describes how croquis drawing[29] uses Eastern meditation practices to attain greater present moment awareness. The croquis drawing process requires focused attention (that is separated from meaning) to be paid to the subjects' form, shade and contour. Montarou (2013) explains how with practice, a drawer may disable the analytic process[30] so that "the brain ceases to perceive the body – as it usually does – as separate from its surroundings" (p. 5). With this disabling, focus is paid more fully to the drawing process. Montarou suggests that this focused mind state may offer a method for increased consciousness.

Franck (1993) encourages us to scribble down details and not be concerned with proportion or exact likeness, because these details will arrange themselves with practice. By letting go of aesthetics and technical concerns, and focusing instead on the experience of mark making, we can begin to reframe our definition of what drawing is. Although not adopting the same position, it is interesting to note that Berger (2008) asserts that a drawing made of an object presents an object-being-looked-at and not the object, and it is the experience of 'being-looked-at' that is drawn. However, of more direct use to this thesis is Allen's assertion that drawing offers a method of connection to the energy of an object being drawn, because "drawing is energy made visible" (Allen, 1995, p. 23).

Because it encourages novelty, drawing mindfully may be considered a mindful treatment and a method to increase mindfulness (Grant et al., 2004). Jones Callahan (2016) suggests that the physical embodied practice of drawing teaches us to see what is really there, creating a heightened relationship with the senses that allows us to see from a fresh, unedited perspective. The author suggests that through practice, we may develop an eye-hand link that provides a mindful relationship in action to create a connection to the drawn object, including the object's inner and outer worlds. Within this drawing process, a connection is a crucial component that creates a 'Mindful Art Practice' or 'meditation in action' (Jones Callahan, 2016, p. 40). Interestingly, Pallasmaa (2009) also describes an eye-hand-mind union, whereby lived experience is recorded.

25 Visual accuracy refers to minimal deletion of visual details (Cohen & Bennett, 1997).

26 A style of drawing where the similarity to the original subject is so detailed, a viewer may believe it to be a copy.

27 Kabat-Zinn (2013) suggests that awareness is a synonym of mindfulness, a knowing larger than thought that is closer in relation to wisdom. Awareness may be cultivated by paying attention on purpose. In this regard, through mindful drawing, experiments that facilitate simple, intentional and present moment focused drawing action, I seek to develop a state of increased awareness.

28 I refer to mindful drawing as an awareness to marks being made in the present moment, with non-judgment and openness.

29 Croquis refers to the first sketch made during a drawing session (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2017). It is traditionally considered an imprecise preliminary step that may ultimately be referred back to when creating more refined works, but it may also be considered a final work in its own right.

30 Montarou (2013) refers to a subsequent 'mindful void', allowing an instinctive "non-focal vision" (p. 8) examination of the drawing subject.

Pallasmaa also proposes that by participating in seeing, we may learn more about our inner and outer worlds. Franck (1993) defines seeing/drawing as meditation in action, and this is a process in which drawing may be considered 'a Way of meditation' or prayer. According to Franck, seeing/drawing is a state where seeing and drawing fuse into one undivided act. By fully focusing attention on a drawing subject, one begins to see more fully, regaining the innocence of sight to reveal the fullness of life. Franck states, "It is more than drawing pictures; it is a meditation-in-action on That Which Matters, a veritable breakthrough, an awakening from the years of nonseeing" (p. xii). In this thesis I use 'seeing' to mean more than what is processed through sight. It may be understood as a kind of awakened attentiveness to what is encountered. Franck suggests that seeing and feelings are expressed through handmade marks that constitute an 'eye-heart-hand reflex.' Franck suggests that for a Western spirit (one that is not experienced with stationary seated meditation), drawing may be considered a way to experience meditation in action.

In this research, I align with Nicolaïdes' (1969) assertion that growth is not determined by the quality of a drawing itself, but rather by the greater awareness one might gain of the life surrounding us. In order to cultivate a focused state of awareness during the experience of drawing (as contrasted to the pursuit of aesthetic qualities) I am proposing that an open and playful attitude may be required.

Mindful engagement

Mindfulness is not concerned with emptying the mind of all thoughts but with releasing attachment to one's thoughts. Tolle (2009) suggests that when one rises above thought, one can still employ the thinking mind more attentively and efficiently. By switching between mind and no-mind[31] Tolle argues that we may still use thinking for practical purposes, but we are released from incessant internal dialogue. Langer (2005) suggests that learning to think mindfully allows us to overcome obstructions to the development of our creative selves, and that through creative expression, the opportunity to explore different methods for thinking mindfully may be realised. Similarly, Luttrell et al. (2014) suggest that openness and detailed thinking may encourage mindful engagement within an activity. Thus, mindful engagement allows for both mind and no-mind states within drawing activities. This distinction is important because many traditional or formal mindfulness practices suggest a releasing of intricate thinking to facilitate greater present moment awareness (Bishop et al., 2004).

31 'No-mind', according to Tolle (2009), describes consciousness without thought or a place of inner stillness.

Openness, novelty and play

Engaging in a creative activity requires an open attitude in order to navigate the uncertain nature of creativity. Langer (2005) speculates that although we may believe that applying rules to a creative activity allows for easier navigation, we may obscure enjoyment through the mindless attention to minutiae, thereby obscuring the totality. Maslen and Southern (2011) note that human beings are complex and when they make drawings these works may display both vulnerability and 'imperfection'. The authors argue that by reframing mistakes and imperfections as integral elements of the drawing process, one can cultivate an attitude of openness.

Barry (2014) posits the idea of reuniting a person with drawing that lies dormant as opposed to teaching them to draw. This reunion Barry suggests, allows a person to return to a mark that resides at the foundation of drawing. Maclagan (2014) notes that many modern artists have revisited this elementary mark making to reclaim a freedom and vitality that may have escaped from more refined methods. In this regard, Langer (2005) encourages us to create whatever we like (including additions of extra limbs and heads), as it is the mindful engagement with a new activity that may be energising and fulfilling in itself. Consequently, there may be a return to a childlike expression, where qualities such as play and spontaneousness may once again be experienced (McNiff, 1998b). Mindful engagement is one of the ways in which such freedom of expression may be embraced (Rogers, 1993).

Penman (2015) describes how the 'Being' mode offers the perspective of curiosity, where novelty and exploration of the unknown are encouraged. Penman (2015) suggests that conscious choice or 'Being' mode, is akin to switching off autopilot by encouraging full conscious awareness. Thus, the Being mode refers to living in the present moment, or what Kabat-Zinn (2013) describes as being rather than constantly doing. Penman suggests that by adopting conscious choice in creative activities, intuition, luck and alternative techniques for thinking and working may be possible. Through 'playful recreation' (Langer, 2014) and liberating creativity from limiting definitions of what constitutes art (Cameron, 2016), both researchers suggest that we may become bolder in our explorations due to the safer, non-judgmental space play provides. Preceding their proposition, Allen (1995) also suggested that drawing may be considered a playful activity whereby one may experience different energies, including a connection to the drawn subject.

In 1919, the Staatliches Bauhaus began offering art students a preliminary course that sought to encourage the abandonment of convention and the attainment of natural self-confidence. Developed significantly by Albers and Itten, this programme encouraged engagement with a range of art mediums (including wood, stone, clay and textiles) and sought to elevate individual sensitivity to materials, texture, color, and natural form.

By remaining open to new categories throughout the research, I aim to avoid rigidity through mindless engagement (Luttrell et al., 2014). I am aware that James (2013) proposes that creative engagement may provide a novel and accessible way to remain playful. Accordingly, the research project investigates drawing exercises that differ from rule bound 'how-to' guides that may limit the scope for mistakes, spontaneity and the unexpected. Franck (1973) explains that 'how-to' books reduce subjects to the simplest of shapes, so that a horse may be more easily drawn, but the author warns that the process denies one the opportunity to discover the real shape of the horse. Similarly, Gombrich (1977) describes 'tricks' that create monotonous methods in 'how to draw' books, which may lead to conditioned learning and stifled imagination and spontaneity in drawing.

While there is existing discussion surrounding drawing as a method to encourage mindfulness (Grant et al., 2004; Greenhalgh, 2020; Montarou, 2013), there is little existing research that specifically considers a range of drawing activities and contextualises these by reflections on practice articulated through both thematic analysis and poetic, Arts based inquiry. In this regard, this research offers a more expansive and holistic representation of how mindfulness is engaged with, and experienced, through drawing practices.

In this section, I have considered literature relating to the idea that drawing may be associated with experience rather than a technical pursuit of replication. Much of this writing suggests that being process-orientated towards mark making may allow for mindful awareness. I will now address the advantages and challenges in initiating and maintaining a drawing practice.

Maintaining a drawing practice

Adopting a mindful drawing practice that cultivates mindful awareness with non-judgment and openness, that is free from traditional associations relating to technical accuracy, poses certain challenges. It is therefore, worthwhile to discuss the advantages and disadvantages to adopting a drawing practice as a method for cultivating mindfulness.

Advantages

Semple et al. (2019) propose that drawing offers a physical, impermanent artefact and memory aid. They suggest that similar to how the breath serves as an anchor for attention in meditation practice, the drawing process may provide an anchor to focus awareness. Isis (2014) notes that the expressive arts offer us a means to use all of our senses to experience our nature in each present moment. As such, creativity is not reserved for talented individuals because every person can be mindfully creative.

Kabat-Zinn (2014b) argues that there is value in doing something with no obvious progression and meditation provides a purposeful and efficient activity where self-improvement is not the goal. By not striving to reach a certain destination, one may be free to recognise where one is right now. Langer (2014) suggests that being process-orientated may refine our beliefs, allowing for an increased felt improvement, while a focus only on outcome-orientation may remove the joy from daily life.[32] In this regard, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) suggests that "When experience is intrinsically rewarding, life is justified in the present, instead of being held hostage to a hypothetical future gain" (p. 69). This may be likened to walking mindfully where Nhat Hanh (2011) encourages us to appreciate every step, knowing we have already reached our destination.

Torreano (2007) proposes that with help, we may discover the capacity to draw with improved openness and experience, allowing previously held assumptions about 'not being able to draw' to be released. Anning (1999) notes how children who fall short of perceived technical skills can come to believe that they cannot draw and subsequently give up, even though drawing may be considered a distinctive method of depiction, similar to that of speech or writing. Torreano (2007) also proposes that mindful awareness while drawing may occur when we release attachments to 'preferred' results and simply observe what is happening.

32 The awareness that every outcome follows a process (Langer, 2014).

Challenges

Maynard (2005) notes that if judgment related to technical ability and aesthetics isn't suspended, drawing can prove to be uncomfortable and awkward. This may result in many children abandoning drawing altogether because their images do not match those shown by the outside world and media. Owens (2013) also observes that educational settings may stress an adherence to challenging technical standards, which may impact attitudes to drawing. Anning and Ring (2004) also suggest that many adults may avoid drawing freely because of previously established judgments upon their drawing competency. In mitigating against such concerns, Langer (2005) suggests that it may be possible to engage more creativity when self-judgment is halted, but overcoming evaluation may prove difficult. In 1997 Langer also proposed that thinking may be more versatile when there is less preference given to certain approaches or techniques. In concord with this argument, Kabat-Zinn (2013) has suggested that present moment awareness may occur by simply observing what is happening and releasing attachments to obtaining pre-imagined results.

The possibility of unlimited potentials can increase hesitation and implementing a structure to limit choice may help to activate a positive engagement with drawing (Kent & Steward, 2008). While scaffolding may be seen as restricting, these researchers suggest that creativity may be enabled when unseen opportunities are revealed through the implementation of specific structures. In this regard, structures such as size, time duration and tools, as well as specific drawing activities, have been considered in this research project.

Poetic inquiry

Given that this thesis is concerned with the researcher's creative engagement with poetic inquiry and its potential for reflecting on and representing the experience of people who engage with mindfulness-oriented drawing practices, it is useful to review the literature relating to the method. In this section, I consider definitions of poetry; I then review pertinent literature relating to poetic inquiry, specifically material concerned with how poetic inquiry may be used to engage with research data. In concluding the section, I discuss literature pertaining to the relationship between poetic inquiry, found poetry and visual poetic inquiry.

History and definitions of poetry

Faulkner (2019) notes that qualitative researchers have begun to investigate the potentials of poetry as a research tool more readily in the past two decades, thereby challenging traditional ideas around research practices. Szto et al. (2005) have demonstrated how poetic inquiry can be employed as a method of data compression, Holmes (2014) discusses it as a method for presenting data, and Furman et al., (2007) have considered how it can be employed as a method for analysis.

Glesne (1997) notes that although poetry may be difficult to classify, it can be an agile and dynamic tool for research because it offers alternative perspectives to how one might study qualitative data. Rhoades (2016) also notes that poetry may offer a contemporary analytical method that provides researchers with a fresh approach to engaging with data. Furman (2006) suggests that "poetry often has the capacity to penetrate experience more deeply than prose (p. 261). Kendall and Murray (2005) note that people may read words more slowly when they are presented in a poetic form. They compare this to our propensity to 'skim read' larger passages of writing. Prendergast et al. (2009) argue that poetry has the potential to alter how we engage with words, and they suggest that when we engage with poetic texts, we are offered an opportunity to contemplate significance and "linger in the language" through breaks and pauses (p. 310). Grisoni (2007) has noted something similar, suggesting that lingering within poetic constructions of language allows for deeper reflection and further insights may be revealed through this. The author also suggests that through the process of crafting poems, the repeated reshaping of each work provides greater opportunities for contemplation.

Grisoni also argues that in the process of distilling experiences, emerging patterns and the 'heart' of an experience may be revealed. This, Mears (2009) suggests, may allow key concepts to be identified. In this regard, poetry may offer methods for discovery (Grisoni, 2007) and an elimination of the unessential, so that experiences may be amplified (Janesick, 2016).

Both McCulliss (2013) and Szto et al. (2005) note that in circumstances where an experience may not be fully communicated through the use of statistics and figures, poetry may reach beyond rationality, offering knowledge that is 'holistic'. In attempting to clarify the meaning of experiences, Rhoades (2016) also suggests that research through poetry can "capture and fix some stable meaning in the face of an otherwise overwhelming sea of information, stimulation, and infinite possibilities" (p. 56). McCulliss (2013) also argues that poetry may enable data to be made more easily relatable to wider audiences because it can be used to decipher complexity and re-present it in simple formats.

As a method of qualitative inquiry and Art-based research (ABR; Faulkner, 2018), poetry offers a distinctive method for research that encourages creativity (Janesick, 2016; Richardson, 1999). In this study, I use poetry as data, as a way of representing data, and as a tool for inquiry.

Poetic inquiry

Poetic inquiry uses poetic techniques to sort, investigate and provide data representation (Faulkner, 2018; Galvin & Prendergast, 2016; Prendergast, 2009a). Thus, Leavy (2015) describes poetic inquiry as a qualitative, Art-based research method. McCulliss (2013) notes that poetic inquiry has been used increasingly within qualitative research because of its ability to reveal the core of human experience. Vincent (2018) offers an overview of literature related to poetic inquiry across several arenas, demonstrating how its use can be traced back almost 70 years. This review notes instances of methodological use emanating from disciplines as diverse as health care, anthropology, sociology, and education. Vincent argues that finding connections between expression and understanding lies at the core of poetic inquiry and proposes that there are multiple ways to execute a poetic inquiry.

Prendergast (2009b), in considering the term poetic inquiry, lists 40 associated terms, including poetic representation, data poetry, research poetry, narrative poetry,[33] transcript poems and field note poetry. The author identifies three distinct categories of poetic inquiry:

Literature-voiced poems are texts that are "written from, or in response to, works of literature/theory in a discipline or field" (2009b, p. 545). These may also be poems about poetry and/or the inquiry itself.

Conversely, researcher-voiced poems normally use as their source, "field notes, journal entries, or reflective/creative/autobiographical/autoethnographical writing" (p. 545).

On the other hand, participant-voiced poems "are written from interview transcripts or solicited directly from participants" (p. 545). This noted, Prendergast suggests that in certain instances, when employing an action research model participant-voiced poems may be co-created with the researcher, so the voices in such poems may be singular or multiple.

33 Prendergast (2009b) likens poetic inquiry to narrative inquiry because it endeavours to communicate a participant's lived experiences by using poetry to create a richer experience than what might be communicated through the use of standard text (Furman, 2006). The term 'narrative' in a social research context, relates to a wide range of research subjects, inquiry methods, analysis and theory. Narrative inquiry focuses on the narration of people's stories in order to gain a deeper understanding of a lived experience or event (Squire et al., 2013).

Glesne (1997) describes how a poetic transcript may be viewed as a science and literary combination that allows the researcher opportunities to explore diverse, critical concepts. Glesne argues that this flexible space allows for more experimentation when engaging with the data, and this can result in richer potentials. McCulliss (2013) argues that poetic inquiry allows researchers to observe data and analysis from compassionate and creative viewpoints, enhancing and promoting understanding. Leggo (2008) suggests that writing poetry enables a way of knowing or viewing the world differently; in research poetry has helped expand both the nature of academic writing and what it means to be a researcher. Leggo also proposes that through poetry, an alternative approach can be employed that adds "the voices of participants to the research and provides different ways to try and understand others' perspectives and experiences" (p. 52). Prendergast (2009) goes further in suggesting that "poetic inquiry is a way of knowing through poetic language and devices [including] metaphor, lyric, rhythm, imagery, emotion, attention, wide-awakeness, opening to the world, and self-revelation" (p. 562).

Given the assertions of these researchers, this thesis proposes that poetic inquiry may offer a rich perspective from which to explore a mindfulness practice.

Data as poetry

When data is offered as poetry, Pithouse-Morgan et al. (2014) suggest that "an evolving, provisional, polyvocal understanding" (p. 159) can occur. Richardson (1997) explains how poetry moves beyond usual sociological texts because it includes rhythm and reconstruction of speech, resulting in words that feel alive. Richardson argues that both the rational and corporal may be moved due to intentionally arranged methods including "line length, meter, cadence, speed, alliteration, assonance, connotation, rhyme and off-rhyme, variation, and repetition" (Richardson, 1997, p. 143). Furman (2006) argues that because research poetry comprises of 'quasipoetic forms', it does not need to observe traditional composition. This is because poetic inquiry can offer embodied speech that may resonate viscerally, allowing one to connect with the written experience more fully.

Found poetry

In this study, I use the term 'found poetry' to encompass three types of poetic representation:

> Poetry created using words from my own reflections (researcher-voiced poems that draw on data in field notes and journal entries);
> Poetry created from participants' transcripts and private journals, and,
> Poetry created from contextual sources (literature-voiced poems).

Prendergast (2006) notes that found poetry has an established history where writers create new work from existing texts. Prendergast argues that through the rearrangement, restructuring and editing of existing texts down to their essence, experiences can be simplified and presented in poetic form.

Butler-Kisber explains the process as:

> ... the rearrangement of words, phrases and sometimes whole passages that are taken from other sources and reframed as poetry by changes in spacing and/or lines (and consequently meaning), or by altering the text by additions and/or deletions. The resulting poem can be defined as 'treated' (changed in a profound and systematic manner) or 'untreated' (conserving virtually the same order, syntax and meaning as in the original. (2011, p. 96)

Janesick (2016) suggests that found data poetry may guide future research by identifying ideas and potential theories. By presenting an additional perspective to view and present data, the author suggests that found poetry may offer a sensitive and insightful method to understand the experience.

This study takes Prendergast's (2006) and Butler-Kisber's (2011) proposal that there is potential for new, insightful information that may emerge from poetic approaches to existing texts, and uses it to argue the appropriateness of a method for analysis and data representation.

Visual poetic inquiry

Although poetic inquiry is traditionally presented as text-based poems, Prendergast (2009b) notes that it is occasionally displayed and distributed with art or visual images. Here, an interplay between image and text may offer new viewpoints through which one might engage with poetry that provides a more holistic, empathic understanding of an experience.

Weber (2008) argues that visual images may allow greater awareness of the familiar, thereby converting it into the extraordinary. By allowing an audience to view research from both a literal and metaphorical perspective, Weber argues that "the visual disarms or bypasses the purely intellectual, leading to a more authentic and complete glimpse of what a particular experience is like or of what people think and feel" (p. 46). Thomas (2007) describes such work as 'visual poetic inquiry', a method for representing experience and knowledge while simultaneously creating a space for reflection.

An example of this appears in a 2019 study by Lahman et al., where 'photo' or 'visual poetry' was explored as a method of poetic representation. In the research poem *Perceived Protection*, the lines "locked out / locked in" (p. 203) were accompanied by the photograph of a lock, positioned adjacent to the text. The authors suggested that the picture added an enriching addition to the poem of "concrete and metaphorical comparisons for abstract ideas" (Lahman et al., 2019, p. 211), and they argued that such a method might allow for the development of the poem's core insight through visual representation.

In a related inquiry, Richard and Lahman (2015) discuss 'graphic portrait representation' or 'graphic portraits'. Here, photographs are used alongside research poetry representing participants' quotations. The authors suggest that "representation serves as a visual form used to evoke certain feelings and thoughts about subject matter that normally would not be included in traditional representations" (Richard & Lahman, 2015, p. 16). Similarly, Owton (2017) suggests that specific, felt experiences and sensations can be induced by visual images. Describing a mixed method approach to exploring the interaction between narrative poetry and artistic impression, Owton supports alternative approaches to 'knowing' and 'seeing' through a fused narrative. Owton further suggests that combining visual material and poetry may stimulate reflexivity, potentially widening the data's reach.

In 2016, Maarhuis and Sameshima used a combination of poetic inquiry, photography, poetry, collage, and video in their research project and found that the combination of methods enriched the study. Similarly, Faulkner (2019) created a 'photo-essay' and collage poetry that combined the research's photographs, audio, and video recordings. In discussing this combination, Faulkner explains how elements of subtlety may be added when describing an "embodied experience" (p. 95). Pindyck (2018) has also explored the interplay of juxtaposing visuals with poetry to create 'visual-verbal' poetries that allow "disparate elements to provoke new senses" (p. 63). Pindyck experimented with combining poetry forms such as haikus with visual images to stir new considerations within their study. This combination of media (such as pairing or integrating poems with collage), Owton (2017) suggests, may add dimensions of understanding. Significantly, Schoone (2015) experimented with using lino and cardboard prints to represent found text to create a tangible means of expressing insights. Using the slower process of making prints by hand, Schoone suggests that the prolonged time spent making afforded an opportunity to dwell upon the text, which uncovered additional levels of meaning.

A number of other researchers have explored the potential of combining poetic inquiry with imagery. Two others of interest to this study are Pithouse-Morgan et al. who in 2014 chose to project their draft poems to 'hear' them more deeply. The idea of increasing resonance inside poetic inquiry through engagement with imagery, Glesne (2010) has also argued, may utilise playfulness to elevate the potential for creativity and innovation.

Research into relationships between imagery and poetic inquiry has significantly influenced this study, and the studies discussed here serve to contextualise the portfolio *Essences* that is submitted as part of this thesis. In creating this work, I have found useful Prendergast (2009b) and Weber's (2008) assertions that poetic interplays between image and text can convert the ordinary to the extraordinary and, through this, offer new richly communicated perspectives of experience. From this basis, I concur with Thomas (2007), Richard and Lahman (2015), Maarhuis and Sameshima (2016) and Owton's (2017) assertions that visual poetic inquiry as a method can richly represent experience and knowledge while simultaneously creating a space for inner reflection. However, the study extends their work because it demonstrates how visual poetic inquiry can be applied to understanding experiences of mindful drawing. Also helpful is Faulkner's (2019) observation that when describing embodied research, combinations of poetic inquiry and imagery can enable the addition of subtlety. This feature is given tangible form in the nuanced synergies between writing and mindful drawing evident in the portfolio 'Essences'. This body of work extends Faulkner's proposition because it makes evident how such relationships might be applied. Finally, because I tend to dwell for extended periods on data, I have found Schoone's (2015) suggestion that prolonged time spent when representing found text may lead to additional levels of revelation and meaning. In relation to this claim, the thesis contributes a concrete example of how insight may surface through poetic synergies between image and text and how, by varying ones approaches, deeper and more resonant insights may be gained.

Critique of poetic inquiry

Poetic inquiry offers a distinctive research method that challenges traditional concepts surrounding qualitative research practices. With its potential to use poetry as data, as a mode on inquiry and as a form of representation, it offers a variety of processes and outcomes. Poetic inquiry's potential to reflect on and represent individuals' experiences surfaces both advantages and challenges.

Advantages

While some positivist researchers may see poetic inquiry as unusual, in this study it complements Stringer's (2007) thematic analysis of qualitative data. When used in addition to formal processes like categorising, coding and analysing key experiences, poetic inquiry has offered an alternative way of treating data where the researcher locates the essence of an idea through non-analytical means. McCulliss (2013) suggests that multiple understandings of a felt experience may be discovered through an Art-based inquiry and poetry offers a method of representing a person's experience. Thus, poetic inquiry may enable a researcher to meet key qualitative objectives while providing valued conciseness. Faulkner (2019) argues that the synthesis of data through poetic inquiry can be straightforward in its approach and may afford an increase in multiple perspectives for analysis, because it allows inconsistencies to be revealed. In this regard, Faulkner suggests that poetic inquiry may be used to attain rigor.

In artistic research, with its emphasis on the generation of meaning over truth-finding (Eisner, 1981; Wood, 2000), priority is placed on how meaning might be effectively communicated. Richardson (1997) suggests that "poetry gives us a greater chance of vicariously experiencing the self-reflexive and transformative process of self-creation than do standard transcriptions" (p. 143). Richardson argues that this may contribute to the variety of perspectives taken when interpreting data while simultaneously enriching potentials for discovery in the research. Glesne (2010) proposes that the *process* of crafting poems is of greater significance than a single result because it is the process of creating poetry that provides space for deeper reflection on the data. Glesne also suggests that poetic inquiry has the potential to impact a researcher's life meaningfully. Richardson (1997) argues that poetic representation has more potential for a reader to be absorbed in their own interpretations of both the researcher and participants' experiences. Richardson also suggests that in poetic inquiries knowledge may be "metaphored and experienced as prismatic, partial, and positioned, rather than singular, total, and univocal" (p. 143).

In a study where subtle insights may be a challenge to rationalise, employing the arts may offer a method to magnify and communicate understanding. Furman (2006) appears to appreciate this point, arguing that reducing an experience through a traditional method may fail to offer insight into human experience. Building on this assertion, McCulliss (2013) suggests that a researcher may discover patterns across multiple data texts due to the creative contemplation made possible through the process of poetic inquiry. This idea may be related to Lincoln and Denzin's (2004) argument that due to the specific perspective of the researcher, "understanding is always incomplete, partial, and situated" (p. 17). Given an acceptance of subjective situatedness, Owton (2017) suggests that engaging with poetry may enhance the depth of an inquiry because it engages processes of feeling, experiencing, remembering, thinking and reflecting to involve oneself directly with the data.

Like Richardson (1997), Rhoades (2016) also suggests that the potential impact of research may be more far reaching when it employs the communicative resonances of the arts. Blasko and Merski (1998) and Nugent et al. (2011) propose that the nature of a poem may encourage involvement with those who self-identify as uncreative. By extension, McCulliss (2013) argues that poetic text may allow viewers an opportunity to feel the research experience on a deeper level, and this may lead to greater levels of 'empathetic understanding'.

Challenges

Given that poetic inquiry and poetic dissemination hold some currency in contemporary considerations of qualitative research, it is also useful to consider challenges inherent in the approach.

First, while poetry may offer a rich method for conducting qualitative research through expressive arts (Furman, 2006), it may also be criticised for being incapable of revealing insights when compared to more conventional forms of qualitative data analysis. As an extension of this, poetic inquiry is difficult to evaluate and may not reveal a singular outcome.

Second, McCulliss (2013) observes that research rigor may be more complicated to support, evaluate and validate when using a poetic method. The scientific community may also challenge outcomes. McCulliss notes that "poetry is not generalizable in the statistical sense of the world, but generalizable in that it helps stimulate an empathetic understanding in the reader" (p. 89). While validity may be a usual

marker for evaluating qualitative data, Prendergast et al. (2009) suggest that it is not helpful to use such terms because they suggest positivist concepts that are not applicable. These researchers suggest using alternative vocabulary such as tangibility, congruence or authenticity to evaluate poetic representation. Savin-Baden and Wimpenny (2014) explain how within Art-based research, authenticity is a key value because the "work and research must be intertwined and mutually shaping, so there is a sense of integrity about the art and the research" (p. 2). Szto et al. (2005) use the concept of 'faithfulness' to describe accurate data, specifically avoiding reliability because of its association with a positivist paradigm. In this regard, Leggo (2008) suggests that it may be helpful to frame "the poet as a human scientist" (p. 165) and understand poetry as something that generates "textual spaces that invite and create ways of knowing and becoming in the world" (p. 167).

As an extension of this, one is reminded again that artistic research does not emanate from a positivist paradigm (Klein, 2010; Steagall & Ings, 2018) and its primary concern is with the generation of meaning rather than the positing of truth claims (Eisner, 1981; Wood, 2000).

Third, in poetic inquiries, analysed data may not be replicable because of the approach's intuitive nature (Poindexter, 2002). But, Furman et al. (2007) suggest that poetic inquiry is not intended to create universal, objective results, instead they suggest that it can offer a multiperspective, energetic interaction between participants and researcher. The researchers propose that the data's legitimacy rests on the researcher's skill in being "unconsciously self-reflexive and truthful about their responses to the material and to the degree that this is possible that the 'findings' will be strengthened" (Furman et al., 2007, p. 312). However, assessing poetic inquiry poses a challenge because of its subjectivity.

Fourth, there is some discussion about the nature of 'quality writing' in poetic inquiry. Piirto (2002) argues that an undergraduate minor in the field should be a prerequisite for conducting Art-based qualitative research. While this may offer a researcher prior experience crafting poetry, Leggo (2008) suggests that the craft of poetry may be learned[34] and proposes that "we are all poets, but sadly many of us have lost our confidence as poets" (p. 170). In evaluating 'quality' in poetic writing, Lahman et al. (2011) propose the term 'good enough poetry' to encourage researchers' poetic development and potential. Similarly, when asking if a poem is assessed as 'good,' Leggo (2008) suggests that it is more helpful to ask "What is a poem good for?" (p. 169).

Fifth, McCulliss (2013) notes that applying poetic inquiry to a large amount of data takes a significant amount of time due to the repeated process of poem crafting, re-reading, reflection and data analysis. Because of this, Furman et al. (2007) suggest that working with larger numbers of participants poses a challenge, and the researcher should carefully consider how they will address remaining afloat in the ever-increasing sea of words.

Sixth, in poetic inquiries, multiple meanings may be interpreted when the participant and researcher are united with the viewer to create understanding. When meanings are perceived differently between researchers (Ely et al., 1997), this may create divergent views of an experience (Kendall & Murray, 2005). Pithouse-Morgan et al. (2014) explain that it is not possible to dictate the specific meaning that another person should take away from a poem, and thus, multiple viewpoints may be created. The researchers encourage engagement with many perspectives because they believe that this process may facilitate increasing self-knowledge. Similarly, Glesne (1997) suggests that co-creating meanings is more important than reaching a single, definite answer. Owton (2013) and Sparkes and Douglas (2007) agree with this point, suggesting that reading and interpreting within a poetic inquiry may encourage the emergence of numerous understandings, and readers should be willing to embrace unique interpretations of data and remain open to learning being transferred into their personal worlds. McCulliss (2013) points out that researchers bring their own biases to a study; in a poetic inquiry these will have a direct impact on findings. A poem made from a participant's transcript by a researcher may be different to the poem the participant (or another researcher) creates using the same words. Mears (2009) explains that different poems may result from alternative 'word reduction' selections and text choices. However, poetic inquiry acknowledges that participants have multiple accounts and ways of expressing an experience and the approach is not concerned with presenting one definitive account of an experience.

Finally, while Leavy (2015) states that the impact of visual material cannot be underrated in its potential to question ideas and create change to dated labels, it is important not to prioritise visual impact over a faithful representation of an experience. In this regard, Furman et al. (2007) observe that researchers who are Art-based must remain conscious of the potential for aesthetic criteria to hinder their ability to accurately represent a participant's experience. While visual material may be selected because of its ability to communicate an idea, like poetry, it is subjective and open to varied interpretation (Leavy, 2015). Accordingly, Phoenix (2010) suggests that researchers using visual devices must remain focused on communicating understanding of the essence of the experience.

34 Leggo (2008) suggests that learning to craft poetry is akin to learning to use statistical research methods in that "each approach assumes that the researcher will learn the tools, strategies, and language to conduct valuable and defensible research" (p. 170).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have offered an overview of literature impacting or contextualising the research. Because this thesis constitutes an artistic inquiry, it is impossible to comprehensively scope the diverse realms of knowledge that shape what are often protean research journeys (Mortensen Steagall, 2019; Sinfield, 2020; Ventling, 2017). However, because this thesis brings together the realms of mindfulness, drawing and artistic/poetic inquiry, the chapter was divided into three sections.

In the first, I considered literature relating to the history and definitions of mindfulness. This was followed by a review of material relating to the relationship between mindfulness and meditation, its formal and informal practices and, finally, a consideration of current critiques relating to mindfulness.

The second section reviewed literature relating to relationships between creativity, drawing and mindfulness. Beginning with a consideration of the nature of drawing, I then discussed writing relating specifically to the process of mindful drawing, mindful engagement and related considerations of openness, novelty and play. This section concluded with a discussion of adopted positions relating to the maintenance of a drawing practice.

The final section considered the nature and use of poetic inquiry in research. Here I reviewed literature relating to data as poetry, the nature and application of found poetry, and visual poetic inquiry. I concluded the section with a consideration of literature relating to the advantages and challenges posed by poetic inquiry, noting its unique nature and its position outside of a positivist research paradigm.

Having now discussed the literature impacting on the thesis study, it is useful to now consider the research design underpinning the project.

Chapter 3

Research design

Research paradigm

This chapter considers the research design employed in the study. Positioned paradigmatically as an Art-based inquiry, the project utilised a mixed method approach supported by a range of methods applied in four phases.

Research paradigm

A paradigm is a perspective, a way of looking that underpins an inquiry, that provides researchers with a template for investigation. Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) state that the paradigm "sets down the intent, motivation and expectations for the research" (p. 2).[35]

Paradigmatically, the research assumes that certain art practices can enhance investigation to establish insights and reach new conclusions. Savin-Baden and Wimpenny (2014) suggest that such an orientation may constitute an Art-based inquiry. They define Art-based inquiry as "the use of the artistic process, the making and doing of art as a means of understanding experience" (p. 7). Such a study enables researchers to know "firsthand as practitioners" (McNiff, 2013, p. 111) what is "acquired through sensory and emotional perception [and is thus] sensual and physically embodied knowledge" (Klein, 2010, p. 6). Hervey (2000) notes that an artistic inquiry may include the collection and analysis of data, as well as providing a presentation of conclusions.

Thus, the thesis accepts the variable, subjective reality of post-positivism through an Art-based paradigm, and therefore it declines the objective reality of positivist theory. O'Leary (2004) explains how post-positivist research may be intuitive and holistic and creative practice may offer a valid method of understanding experience. Klein (2010) notes that artistic inquiries may not lead to "secure and universally valid knowledge" (p. 5) because epistemologically artistic research offers an alternative method of knowledge creation from propositional knowledge. This mode of knowing Vaage (2019) suggests, is a kind of embodied wisdom,[36] in that it contains intuitive[37] and rational methods, where outcomes may have the capacity to transcend words through an open and explorative approach. Borgdorff (2012) suggests that ontologically, artistic research can be differentiated from scientific, historical or social 'truths' given that "artistic research is ontologically, epistemologically, and methodologically an open undertaking" (p. 225). Borgdorff also notes that "in research where artistic practice serves as both a method and an epistemological resource, the performative and immanent perspectives merge together" (p. 17). Chappell and Barone (2011) observe that in Art-based research, 'truths' may be comprised of numerous varieties and viewed as "fluid, fragmentary, and even conflicting" (p. 275). With a focus on the research seeking insight rather than facts, such an approach may reveal small subtleties contained within human experiences.

35 UNESCO defines research as "any creative systematic activity undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this knowledge to devise new applications" (OECD, 2008, p. 463).

36 Borgdorff (2012) notes how embodied knowledge may be communicated through Art-based research and uses the terms 'practice-led' and 'practice-based' to describe artistic research.

37 Sullivan (2010) argues that "Seeing and sensing is the basis for compiling thematic patterns of evidence from which meaning is made vivid" (p. 56).

Art-based inquiry

Eisner (1981) describes an Art-based approach as being more interested in meaning generation than locating truth, given that "truth implies singularity and monopoly [whereas] meaning implies relativism and diversity" (p. 9). In adopting this approach, the study attempts to expand current understandings of the human experience of mindful drawing.

Accordingly, the study engages a process through which complicated and subtle forces are detailed and made explicit through artistic presentations (Barone & Eisner, 2011). Sullivan (2010) notes that Art-based practices were first established and "grounded in the aesthetics of art and language, as hybrid and artistic practices, and as an embodied cultural practice" (p. 55). In 2006, the author proposed that artistic practices provide alternative perspectives for both the representation and the consideration of human experiences. Leavy (2015) suggests that an Art-based inquiry can encourage discourse that contributes towards increased understanding.

Knowles and Cole (2008) propose the following components of Art-based research: a commitment to the creation of a specific art form/s that assists the inquiry process; methodological integrity by disclosing the inquiry process; a flexible, creative inquiry process; evidence of the researcher's presence; evidence of strong reflexive elements; the potential to reach an audience; and the potential to involve and engage an audience (p. 61).

There are a number of terms currently used to describe art related inquiries, including Art-based research (Barone & Eisner, 2011; Leavy, 2020), arts-informed (Cole & Knowles, 2008), A/r/t/ography (Leggo & Irwin, 2013) and artistic research (Borgdorff, 2012; Klein, 2010). In using the term Art-based inquiry, I am drawing on Barone and Eisner's (2011) definition because the study employs artistic presentation and thinking, including visual, poetic and mindful expressions of thought, to explore and understand the essence of experience. In this study the term Art-based inquiry has been chosen because of its ability to encompass both researcher and artist, and thereby "merge their scholar-self with their artist-self" using a "holistic, integrated perspective" (Leavy, 2015, p. 3). Leavy notes that Art-based researchers are allowed to create their own research tools in order to approach research questions more effectively. Similarly, Eisner (1993) observes that representation requires innovation, given that experience cannot be directly transferrable. As such, an Art-based inquiry can result in unexpected outcomes that only develop through the process.

Leavy (2015) suggests that such inquiry offers a means by which to communicate with people in cerebral and visceral ways that encourage emotional impact.

In this study I employ reflexive, artistic processes to understand the relationships between drawing and mindfulness. Leavy (2015) suggests that Art-based practices may encourage important conversations and insights, fostering a more sensitive reaction due to their ability to impact in intuitive and emotional ways. In this regard, the inquiry is not concerned with finding definitive truth or being replicable, but with offering insights into creative tools through which mindfulness might be experienced and understood. In the study, I conceive myself as an inquiring artist who engages with states of mindfulness and people's experiences of mindfulness. I accept that "art is a mode of perception" and "artistic research is the mode of a process" (Klein, 2010, p. 4). Here "artistic experience is an active, constructive and aisthetic process in which mode and substance are fused inseparably" (p. 4). In *Being and Time* (1962), Heidegger discusses 'aisthesis' as a pre-Socratic Greek term that was related to the process of revealing and concealing ('alethia'). Here, epistemologically, physical sensory perception was presumed to be knowledge. As the researcher I understand that my engagement with action and reflection involves both observation and a state of inherent 'knowing' realised through physical sensory perception.

Like Borgdorff (2012), I understand that in Art-based research embodied knowledge may be tacit practical knowledge or a form of sensory 'knowing-how'.[38] Polanyi (1983) introduced the term tacit knowledge to describe implicit or experiential knowledge in that "we can know more than we can tell" (p. 4). Grisoni (2007) notes that tacit knowledge is rooted in practice, and with increased proficiency may be challenging to explain because "once assimilated, [it] is usually taken for granted" (p. 343), as feelings about a pursuit are internalised. Borgdorff (2012) suggests that the tacit 'knowing' embodied within art knowledge may allow for diverse possibilities of further perspectives and experiences.

38 Schön (1983) offers the term 'knowing-in-action' to describe certain activities and conclusions that may be reached through instinct, allowing attained skills to be internalised.

Methodology

Methodology refers to the framework that underpins an inquiry and enables an effective investigation through the selection of appropriate research methods. While paradigmatically the study is situated as an Art-based inquiry, methodologically it is realised through a mixed method approach.

Reflective practice and participatory reflection on practice

In the study, a mixed method approach combines an Art-based inquiry with practice-based research, that branches into a dual study. This encompasses reflective practice (the artist's practice components) and participatory reflection on practice (the participant's practice components).

The artist's reflective practice may be likened to Schön's reflective practice paradigm wherein the practitioner operates as the researcher. In this regard, my artistic practice (that comprised mindful drawing) was the study's primary focus. Schön (1983) offers the term 'knowing-in-action' to describe certain activities and conclusions that may be reached through intuition. This phenomenon allows attained skills to be internalised. Schön argues that knowing may be tacit and contained within action that occurs through reiterations of practice. Polanyi (1983) introduced the term tacit knowing to describe the use of implicit or experiential knowledge. Grisoni (2007, p. 343) notes that such knowledge is rooted in practice, and with increased proficiency it can be challenging to explain because "once assimilated, [it] is usually taken for granted", as feelings about a pursuit are internalised. Borgdorff (2012) suggests that the tacit 'knowing' embodied within art knowledge may allow for diverse perspectives and experiences.

In the study, participatory reflection on practice involves participants communicating their experience of mindful drawing. This occurs through recording their experiences in private journals at the conclusion of each drawing, and through reflection on practice conducted in an audio-recorded interview. Through this reflective process, understandings of certain events are made explicit.

Thus, the study comprises both external, participant action and reflection and internal mindful inquiry. While we see reflective practice evident in how the study unfolds through certain phases, the final part of the project involves the researcher's reflection and an artistic synthesis of self-reflection and participants' experiences (see Figure 3.1). This later phase was more concerned with understanding and communicating the experience. In overview, the thesis employs a fluidly reflective framework to explain personal experience and the "articulation of the non-propositional forms of knowledge and experience in and through the creation of art" (Borgdorff, 2012, p. 122).

Research structure

Phase 1: Constituted an investigation into practical and contextual knowledge relating to drawing practices. In this phase, I also engaged with my own practice and self-reflection to produce a series of mindful drawing activities. During this process, I became embodied in the experience and recorded my reflections following each drawing activity.

Phase 2: Involved the trialling of mindful drawing procedures. Here five participants undertook and reflected their individual mindful drawing practices. Their experiences were collected through interviews, reflective notetaking and the physical outcomes of their mindful drawing.

Phase 3: Consists of the researcher's thematic analysis of, and poetic inquiry into, participants' experiences. Here, significant themes were identified and reflected upon.

Phase 4: Entails the researcher's artistic synthesising through a process of generating mindful drawing and reflecting poetically on the experience. The drawings responded to both the researcher's self-inquiry and findings emanating from participants' engagements with the exercises.

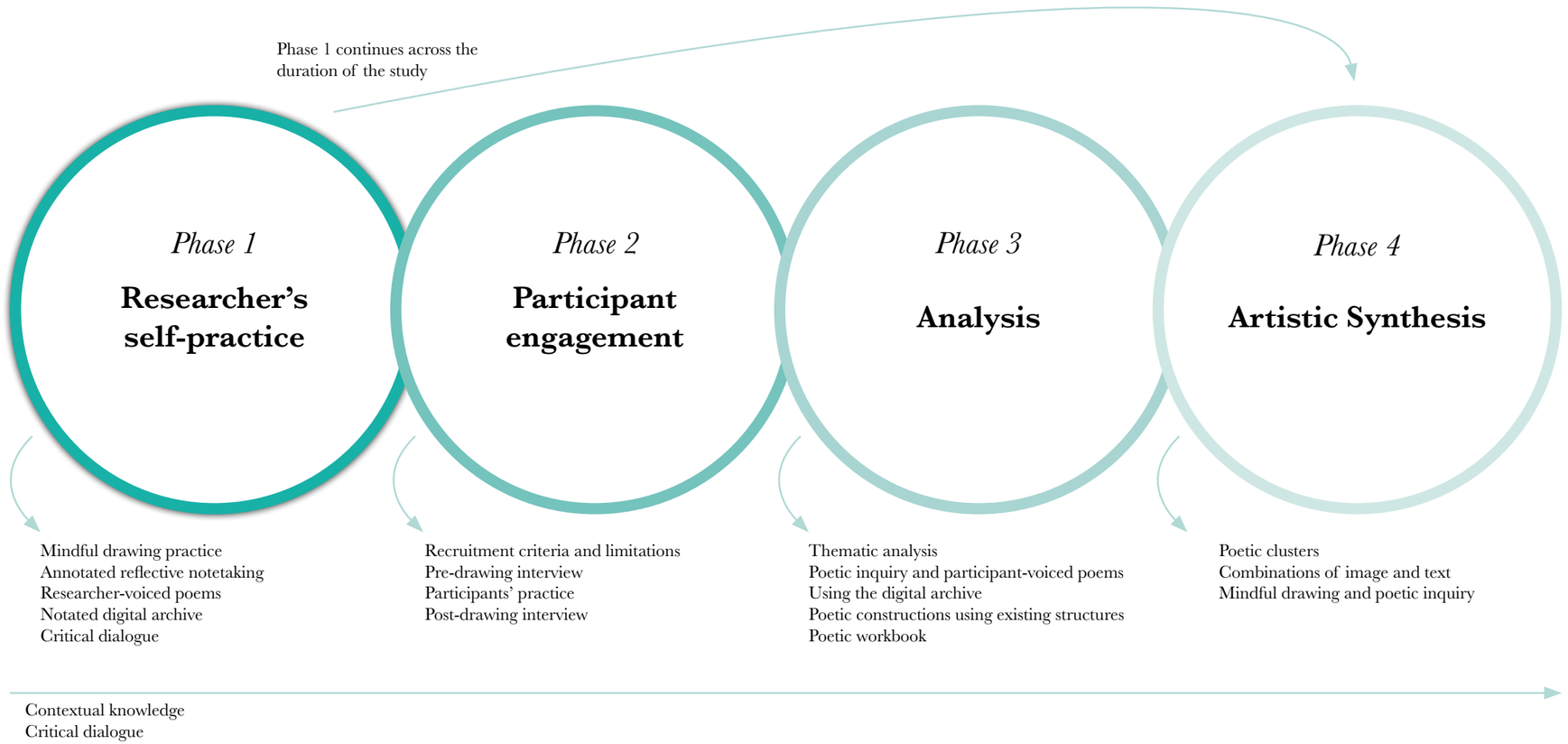


Figure 3.1. Diagram showing phases involved in the study and their associated methods.

Tangibility and limitations

Given the research's methodological approach, I appreciate that the study contains several limitations.

Subjectivity
Firstly, I acknowledge that I hold particular perspectives and judgments towards drawing and mindfulness that originate from a Western perspective. Borgdorff (2012) suggests that an art practice is considered reflexive due to it being ingrained with the researcher's past experiences, beliefs and perceptions. Prior (2013) also notes that personal, social, intellectual and practical forms of knowledge "contain deeply individualistic understandings of a subjective nature" (p. 164). Therefore, I accept that my perspective may bias the research process, from collecting and analysing the data to the selection and creation of visual outcomes that speak to the findings. I also acknowledge that I offer a particular perspective that influences the interpretation of the research, and as such, others may arrive at alternative perceptions (Sinner et al., 2006). Additionally, my adoption of a concurrent, regular mindful drawing practice may have altered the perspectives I held at the outset of the study.

Safety
Secondly, there was an assumption that participants would feel comfortable openly and honestly sharing their personal experiences. While Novak (2014) proposes that anonymity may offer researchers a way to safeguard subjects and afford them opportunities to speak more truthfully and without repercussions, safety and honesty are not things one can automatically assume in a study like this. Novak explains that while anonymity may weaken the 'truthfulness' of research findings, it can also encourage freedom to speak openly. This study sought to access and reflect on participant's drawing experiences without focusing attention on binary gender constructs, age or ethnicity. The only known profile was that all participants had some experience of mindfulness and defined themselves as 'beginning' drawers. Because the sample was small there were no possible conclusions that could be drawn relating to gender, age or ethnicity. As a researcher I tend to align my thinking with the tenets of the gender neutrality movement which proposes "that policies, language, and other social institutions should avoid distinguishing roles by what reproductive organs people happen to have, in order to avoid discrimination arising from the impression that there are social roles for which one gender is more suited than the other" [See: https://thenextweb.com/topic/gender-neutrality-4]. Accordingly in this exegesis and the accompanying portfolio, research reporting is consistently gender neutral and emphasis is focused purely on the experience of drawing. To encourage a sense of safety, the participants' Information Sheet (used as part of the university's ethical provisions afforded to the inquiry) noted that pseudonyms would be used in the study, drawings and journals could remain private and participants could withdraw from the study at any point (see Appendix 2). This option relating to privacy was discussed again before the post-drawing interview. While there were few potential risks associated with the research, I was cognisant that participants were engaging with the study during a pandemic and might also experience discomfort due to unwanted sensations that might surface through the mindful drawing process.

Representation
Thirdly, the sample was not representative of a broad cross-section of society. I prioritised the selection of participants who identified as neurotypical, nonvulnerable individuals. These selection criteria were employed because I am not a mental health professional, and the study was not concerned with providing a method of addressing mental health concerns. I was cognisant when selecting participants that Schlosser et al. (2019) note that clinical symptoms may be aggravated by engaging in a meditation practice.

Scale

The sample size was also shaped by the environment in which the research was conducted and was, therefore, significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic health restrictions and resulting lockdowns.[39] Arguably, the study was timely, given the global experience of the pandemic creating increased levels of anxiety due to potential illness, the effects of multiple lockdowns and long periods of isolation. However, strict restrictions precluded a widespread study with a broad sample of participants. As such, the sample was limited to participants who felt comfortable consenting to such research during unprecedented and challenging times. Given that the research was impacted by multiple lockdowns that resulted in long periods of isolation and separation, the concerns of the inquiry were with the depth and resonance of experience. However, like Kalla and Simmons (2020), I was aware that a small sample may offer a detailed consideration of human experience, and as Sjollema and Bilotta (2017) suggest, a small sample may be adequate for a study that is explorative, given that this study opens opportunities for further research and poetic inquiry offers a wide-ranging perspective of experience.

Finally, while validity may be a traditional indicator in qualitative data evaluation, I avoid using the concept within this study. Instead I use the terms 'faithful' (Szto et al., 2005), 'tangible' and 'resonant' (Prendergast et al., 2009) in my discussion of data. Hervey (2000) suggests that it is difficult to apply statistical worth to values such as embodiment, sensation, emotion and the spirit, and Art-based research may more authentically display these values. Guba and Lincoln (1989) employed the term authenticity in their efforts to move away from positivist concepts of trustworthy representation within qualitative research. Given this limitation, I am aware that poetic representations offer no single, definitive outcome and are not replicable. Instead, the research provides a multiperspective presentation of personal experiences and as such I accept that readers may interpret multiple meanings.

Adaptations

The study was designed prior to Covid-19 limitations and initially had been predicated on collecting a greater quantity of participant's experiences and the use of thematic analysis to ascertain findings. However, as conducting face-to-face interviews became impossible across months of the study, I looked to areas within the research where I could progress while working in isolation. I recalled my experience participating in Miller's (2019) research poetry workshop where I saw how poetic inquiry could be implemented as a qualitative research method for analysing and representing data. Encouraged by the positive experience of creating research poetry, I expanded its potential within the study to include visual poetic inquiry for the representation of mindful drawing experiences. As such, the study morphed from its more conventional thematically considered qualitative roots, into a more fluid, poetic study, where interpretative depth was prioritised over participant sample volume.

39 These restrictions took the form of government mandated alert levels (https://covid19. govt.nz/assets/resources/tables/COVID-19-alert-levels-summary.pdf) which made face-to-face interviews, travel and time availability significant issues.

Methods
Phase 1: Researcher's self-practice

Through the adoption of a self-practice, the study adopted the viewpoint of an insider researcher, who also considered participants' perspectives. By situating myself as part of the context being investigated, I sought to offer greater insight by minimising the distance between my personal experience and the interpretations of other's experiences of mindful drawing. During the first phase, mindful drawing activities were identified and considered. Critical reflection on practice was recorded manually and digitally, using annotated reflective notetaking and researcher-voiced poems. I also engaged in dialogue with other researchers. After testing over 200 drawing exercises to ascertain their potentials for mindful awareness, a selection of 15 activities were chosen for participants to try in Phase 2 (see Chapter 4).

Mindful drawing practice[40]

At the outset of the study, I began by experimenting with a diverse range of pen or pencil drawing exercises on paper, seeking to understand the experience of mindfulness. In this phase, I considered issues like duration, speed, physical location and subject matter. In employing a mindful drawing practice, I balanced mindfulness and awareness. Brown and Ryan (2003) define such awareness as "the background 'radar' of consciousness, continually monitoring the inner and outer environment. [Here] one may be aware of stimuli without them being at the center of attention" (p. 822). This awareness of the present moment during the drawing action allowed mindful awareness to occur. Squire et al. (2013) define mindfulness as "the awareness that arises by paying attention on purpose, in the present moment" (p. xxxv).

For a drawing experience to be considered mindful, it must be practised with mindful awareness. As such, I practised mindfulness during every drawing practice. Within Art-based research, Rappaport (2013) suggests that mindful awareness may facilitate understanding of "implicit meaning that emerges through the artistic process" (p. 203). This enables the development of capabilities and an awareness of an experience without one becoming mentally attached. Alexander and Goldstein (2014) suggest that cultivating an open mind may expand awareness Alexander and Goldstein describe open mind as a state of "expanded awareness in which thoughts, feelings, and sensations have space to appear and disappear without our being pulled into generating feelings and thoughts about them" (p. 666). They suggest that during a mindful inquiry process, open mind requires a disengagement with whatever surfaces. In these experiments I explored the potential of simultaneously 'witnessing' and engaging in mindful drawing experiences.

Kabat-Zinn (2013) argues that "awareness is not the same as thinking. It is a complementary form of intelligence, a way of knowing" (p. xxxv). McNiff (1998a) suggests that insights may be intuitively felt in the body and acted upon accordingly, and this results in an awareness that is not analytical.[41] My experience was that there can be an awareness of marks made in the present moment that can subsequently be reflected upon. However, to sustain a mindful state, 'critical thinking' cannot take place while drawing (Figure 3.2 - p. 32).

My mindful drawing practice was influenced by Gunaratana's (2011) suggestion that any useful mindfulness meditation method should be portable, simple and cheap. In this regard, drawing with pen, pencil and paper offered a versatile and immediate process that was economic (Stout, 2014) and available to all (Noble, 2017), even in the adverse conditions that accompanied Covid-19 lockdowns. Building on Krizek's (2012) recommendations, materials were portable and enabled spontaneous experiences with minimal preparation.

40 In the thesis, I refer to drawing action that is concurrently aware of mindfulness as 'mindful drawing'.

41 McNiff's (1998a) assertion may be likened to Hodgkinson et al.'s (2008) description of intuition which they define as "a complex set of inter-related cognitive, affective and somatic processes, in which there is no apparent intrusion of deliberate, rational thought (p. 4).

Figure 3.2. An example of the researcher's mindful drawing practice. Here I was exploring Hodgkinson et al.'s (2008) complex process, in which there was little intrusion of deliberate, critical, rational thought. My sense of non-attachment meant that, instead of pursuing figurative representation that encouraged constant evaluation, I was mindfully dwelling in the moment. Because I translated what my eye traced in pen and disregarded the resulting marks, I was able to pay full attention to each unfolding, present moment (Gannon, E. August, 2019).

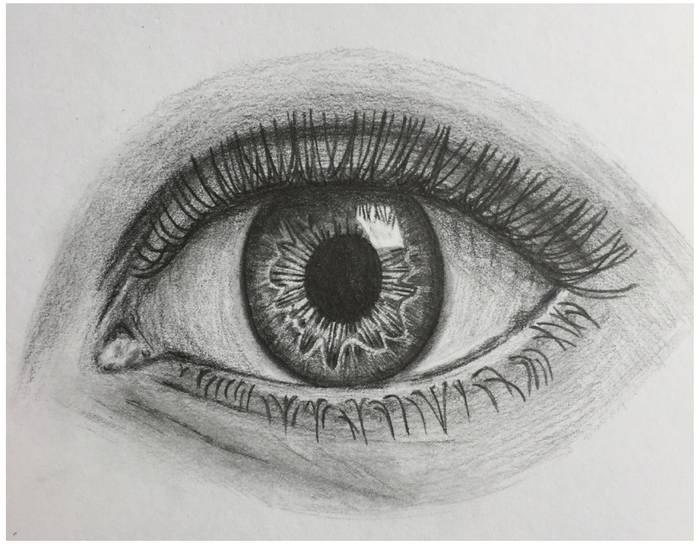


Figure 3.3. The result of following a video tutorial titled 'How to draw hyper-realistic eyes: Step by step' (Nguyen, 2018). The exercise was concerned with teaching techniques that could be applied if one sought an outcome that was an attentive, visual representation of the observed subject (Gannon, E. March, 2020).

Although this research was concerned with mindful drawing activities that did not require representational accuracy, I also explored approaches that were promoted as 'learning how to draw' exercises. This was in order to understand the differences between a mindful drawing activity, where one's focus is on the experience of drawing, and activities designed to increase technical accuracy or realistic representation (Figure 3.3).

I also engaged with right side of the brain drawing exercises. In *Drawing on the right side of the brain*, Edwards (2012) offers techniques that engage particular functions of the brain's right hemisphere so that a greater awareness of a subject's characteristics can be more clearly seen, and a more intuitive way of drawing may be accessed. In particular, I explored Edwards' suggestion that by drawing images upside down, one might perceive details more accurately and experience deeper levels of absorption because judgment has been suspended (Figure 3.4).

While during some of the right side of the brain drawing exercises, I did experience moments of mindful awareness, I felt that the emphasis on improving the drawing technique felt at odds with mindfulness practices. Kabat-Zinn (2014b) suggests that there is value in not trying to improve, and instead one should accept where one is without judgment.

Following reflections on my experiences, I eventually selected 15 drawing activities for trialling in the study. The selection was based on my experience while drawing, when I sensed moment-by-moment awareness (Germer, 2016a), attention without judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, 2014b), direct experience and acceptance of inner experiences within the mind and body (Bishop et al., 2004; Franklin, 2014), a sense of self-care (Allen, 2014) and restoration (Nhat Hanh, 1987). As a consequence, these exercises were also ones where I encountered a state where I was no longer concerned with or anxious about advancing my technical skill.

Figure 3.4. Drawing upside down offered a detachment from judgment due to the brain processing visual information differently. Edwards (2012) suggests that recognised subjects look different when presented upside down and, because the brain is initially perplexed, the alternative approach can support the development of a more intuitive drawing process (Gannon, E. May, 2020).

Annotated reflective notetaking

Following each mindful drawing exercise, I engaged in a process of annotated reflective notetaking, recording my thoughts on A4 paper or in notebooks (Figure 3.5). In this reflection, I paid close attention to the state of mindfulness experienced. Because my thinking was physically recorded, I was able to access it at later times during the inquiry. When employing annotated reflective notetaking, I was engaged in a reflective dialogue with myself about the mindful experience through "recording and reporting … moments of reflection, including intended and unintended consequences and responses to them" (Scrivener, 2000, para. 32). The most pertinent reflections of my drawing experiments were organised digitally in Microsoft OneNote. These reflections contributed to the analysis process in Phase 3 of the study.

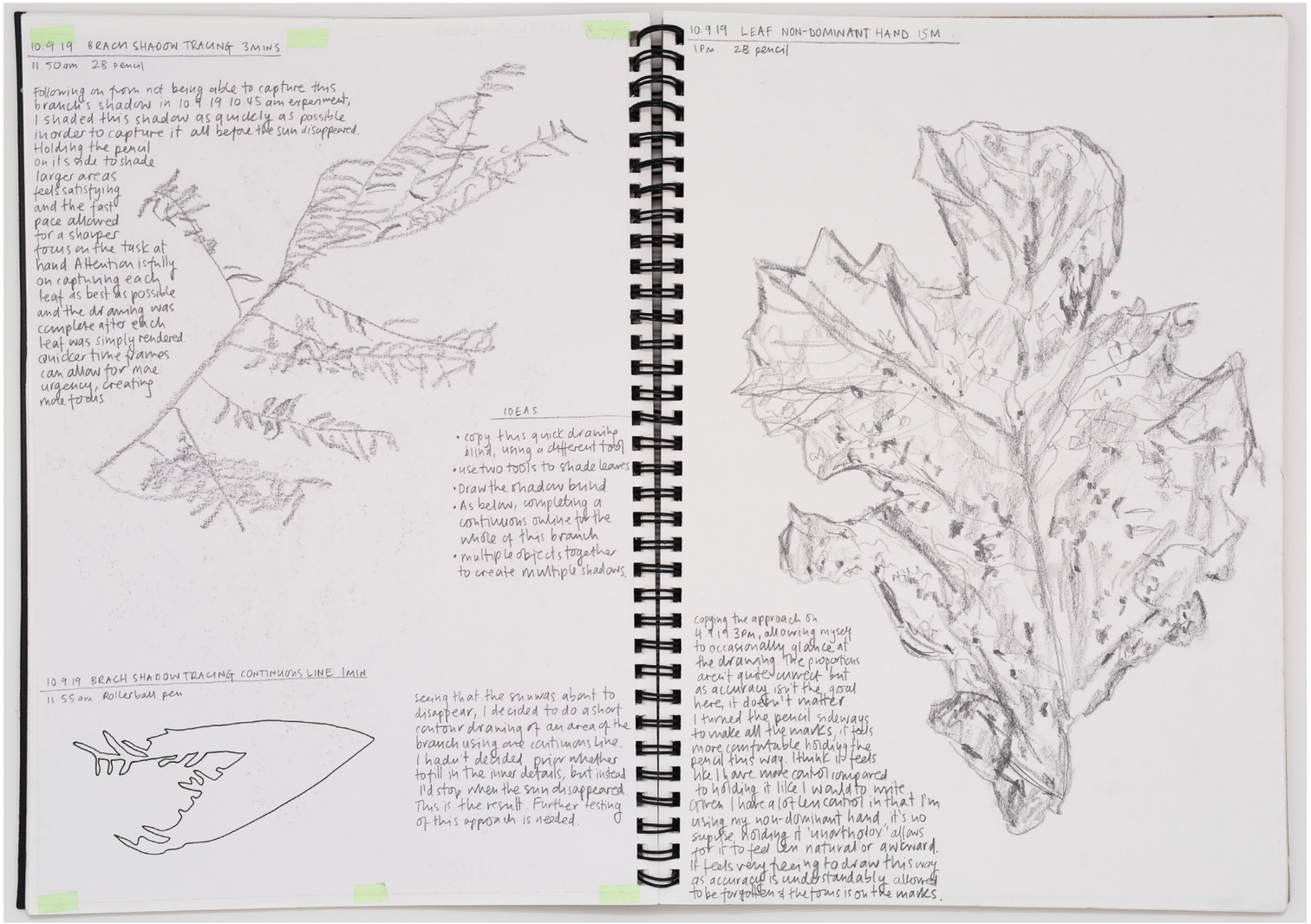


Figure 3.5. Drawing exercises accompanied by annotated reflective writing of diverse mindful approaches (Gannon, E. September, 2019).

Researcher-voiced poems

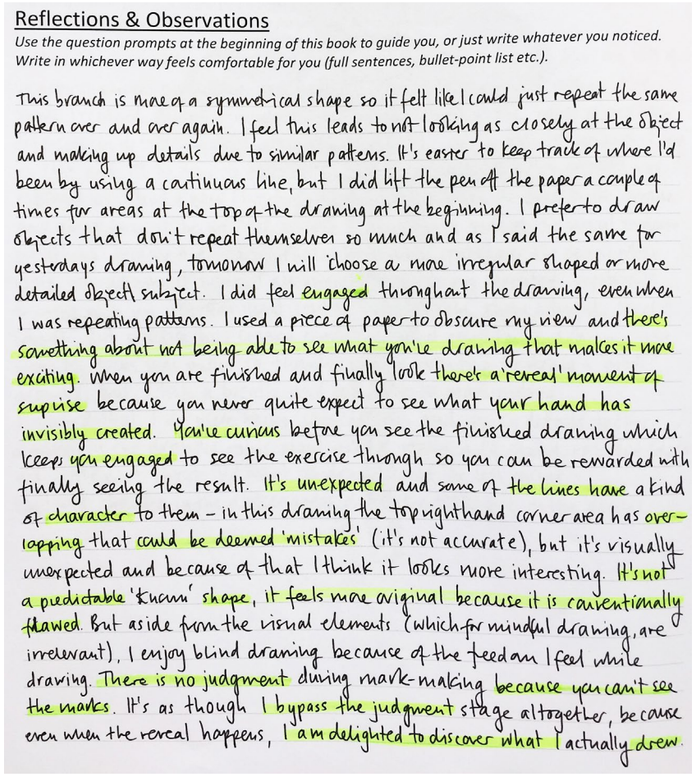
At the conclusion of each drawing, I completed my reflective notetaking and found it useful to further distil my reflections by creating a condensed poetic version of my insights. Employing a method described by Prendergast (2009a) as 'researcher-voiced poetry'[42] I used selected words and phrases from my reflections to clarify my experience. By rereading my thoughts, I was able to identify and extract insights that spoke to the essence of my reflections. Blaikie (2009) explains that the central words and themes of an experience can express the most resonant and frequently occurring imagery. Employing a technique that Poindexter (2002) describes as 'diamond-cutting', I cut away less relevant words, identified key themes, and began to craft a poem (Figures 3.6-7). This method enabled the essence of my experiences to be highlighted and recomposed into a new account of the experience (Janesick, 2016).

After applying Prendergast's method of researcher-voiced poetry to my reflective writing, I also applied the method to bodies of reflective notetaking in my journals. The technique was useful in this first phase because I was still fine-tuning emphases in the study. These researcher-voiced poetic reflections were stored in digital archives for consideration later in my practice. Below is an example:

> overwhelmed by words
> sifting through vast quantities
> enormous task
> faced with a sea
> many combinations
> wading through words
> narrow to a few lines

Here, I articulated my core experience of feeling overwhelmed by the data. While experimenting with this method, I was reminded of Rhoades (2016) suggestion that poetry can offer an additional viewpoint from which to create a firm understanding when one is confronted with "overwhelming seas of information, stimulation, and infinite possibilities" (p. 56). The method was useful because it enabled me to sharpen my thinking around data organisation and analysis processes (Prendergast, 2006).

42 Prendergast (2009a) explains that researcher-voiced poems are created from "field notes, journal entries, or reflective/creative/autobiographical/autoethnographical writing" (p. xxii).



Reflections & Observations

Use the question prompts at the beginning of this book to guide you, or just write whatever you noticed. Write in whichever way feels comfortable for you (full sentences, bullet-point list etc.).

This branch is more of a symmetrical shape so it felt like I could just repeat the same pattern over and over again. I feel this leads to not looking as closely at the object and making up details due to similar patterns. It's easier to keep track of where I'd been by using a continuous line, but I did lift the pen off the paper a couple of times for areas at the top of the drawing at the beginning. I prefer to draw objects that don't repeat themselves so much and as I said the same for yesterdays drawing, tomorrow I will choose a more irregular shaped or more detailed object/subject. I did feel engaged throughout the drawing, even when I was repeating patterns. I used a piece of paper to obscure my view and there's something about not being able to see what you're drawing that makes it more exciting. When you are finished and finally look there's a 'reveal' moment of surprise because you never quite expect to see what your hand has invisibly created. You're curious before you see the finished drawing which keeps you engaged to see the exercise through so you can be rewarded with finally seeing the result. It's unexpected and some of the lines have a kind of character to them – in this drawing the top right hand corner area has over-lapping that could be deemed 'mistakes' (it's not accurate), but it's visually unexpected and because of that I think it looks more interesting. It's not a predictable 'known' shape, it feels more original because it is conventionally flawed. But aside from the visual elements (which for mindful drawing, are irrelevant), I enjoy blind drawing because of the feedback I feel while drawing. There is no judgment during mark-making because you can't see the marks. It's as though I bypass the judgment stage altogether, because even when the reveal happens, I am delighted to discover what I actually drew.

Figure 3.6. Extensive reflections written as notes after conducting a drawing activity. From such text, key words and phrases were selected using a highlighter pen (Gannon, E. September, 2019).

There's
something
about not
being able to
see what you're
drawing that makes
it more exciting.
You're curious,
you're engaged.
There is no judgment.
Because I can't see the marks,
I bypass the judgment.
There's a reveal moment of surprise.
Your hand has invisibly created.
It's unexpected.
It's not a predictable shape.
The lines have character.
Overlapping could be
deemed 'mistakes.'
It feels more original because it
is conventionally flawed.
I am delighted to
discover what
I drew.

Figure 3.7. I rearranged the highlighted words to create a poem. This approach employed creative synthesis to lift certain observations and feelings into an edited reflection on experience. The result was that new relationships between ideas were constructed and the 'essence' of my thinking was elevated (Gannon, E. September, 2019).

Notated digital archive

In designing an organisational structure for the inquiry, I developed a digital archive (using Microsoft OneNote). This enabled me to arrange and distil contextual research and practical outcomes (Figure 3.8). Information included annotated notes from books, journals and images. I was also able to archive live online links to relevant sources. This archive meant that I could rapidly access large amounts of digital information via a search tool.

Keeping a digital record of my artistic practice and outcomes also enabled me to reflect upon the work critically. I detailed specific experiments with photographs and annotated them with descriptions of events and reflections on the process. In written self-dialogue, I raised questions that afforded a space to view work, consider alternative perspectives and pursue further practice. Savin-Baden and Wimpenny (2014) note that within dialogic reflection, the researcher can consider, "the qualities of judgements and possible alternatives for explaining and hypothesising" (p. 62). The digital archive also provided a method for gathering multiple areas of research into one location, using customised folders and labels. This structure enabled me to create an easily searchable repository that I was able to access during periods of exegetical writing.

I also used the program Zotero to organise literature, create a searchable database, archive, and annotate other researchers' thinking, as well as my personal reflections on theory and practice. Drawing on Savin-Baden and Wimpenny's observations of this method, I was able to employ dialogic reflection as digital notes that enabled me to "bring meaning to the surface" and "glean a new or different perspective" (2014, p. 61).

Critical dialogue

Although this phase was concerned largely with information gathering, dialogic archiving, reflection, and experimentation, I also found it useful to stand back at times and discuss what I was discovering with other researchers. This enabled me to overview my experience and present it in an edited form. Other researchers asked me questions and provided a sounding board for ideas and reflection. Through this process I recognised inconsistencies and areas that might require greater clarity of thinking. The process also enabled me to hear my own voice, explore ideas and solve problems (Hatton & Smith, 1995).

While such dialogue frequently took place with small clusters of researchers, it also occurred during my Confirmation of Candidature review in February 2020 and when presenting a peer reviewed paper at the 2019 AAANZ conference in Auckland.[43] In these presentations, I discussed research structures, methods and specific drawing practices that I was considering as exercises for facilitating higher levels of mindful awareness.

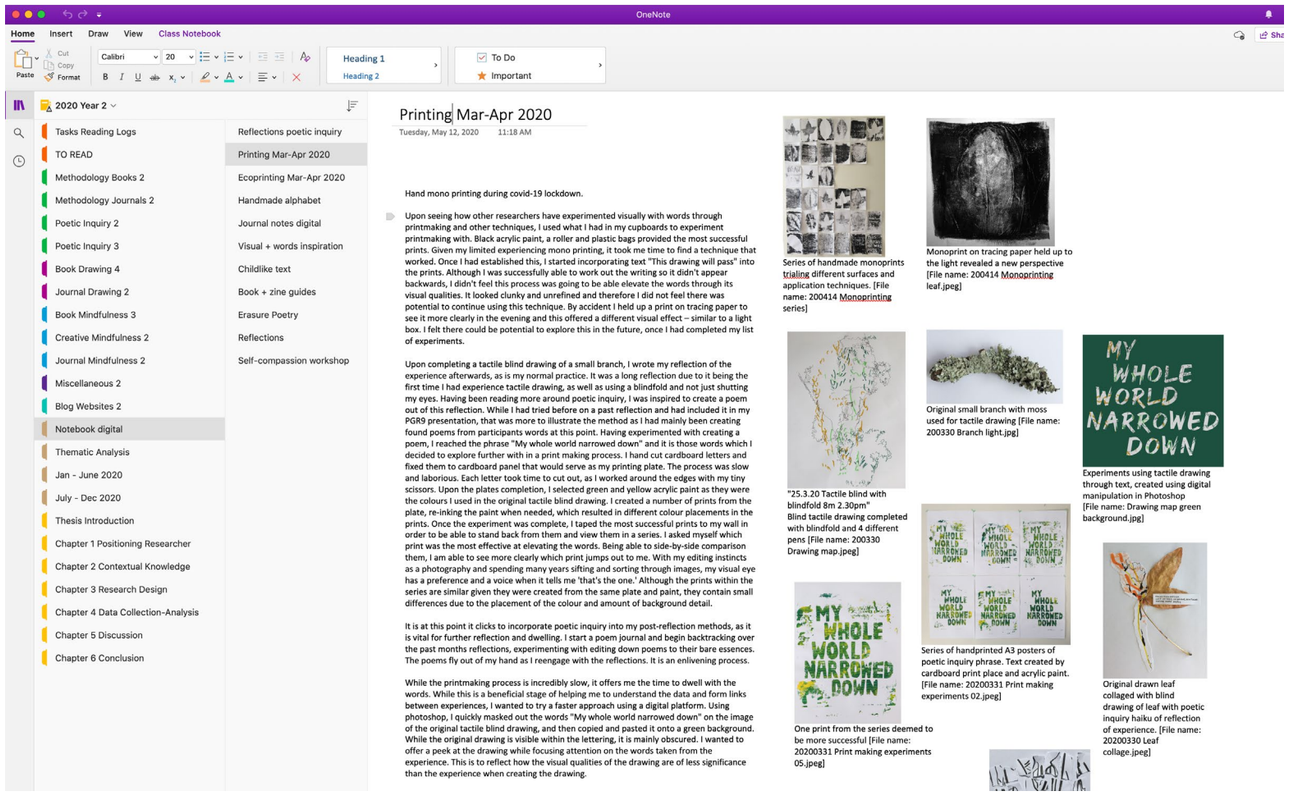


Figure 3.8. Archive entries showing reflective writing accompanying photographs of printmaking experiments (Gannon, E. April, 2020).

43 Ngā Tūtaki – Encounter/s: Agency, Embodiment, Exchange, Ecologies, December 6th, 2019. See https://aaanz.info/aaanz-home/conferences/2019-conference/nga-tutaki-encounter-s-conference-program/

Methods
Phase 2: Participant engagement

In presenting a multi-voiced perspective I was seeking to afford the study richer outcomes, in comparison to a single-voiced experience. In the second phase, five participants were given a selection of 15 drawing activities and were asked to explore their effectiveness as mindful drawing practices. They were also asked to contribute reflective feedback in the form of interviews and journal entries. Participants' involvement included a pre-drawing interview, 14 days of private, mindful drawing practice and reflective notetaking, followed by a post-drawing interview (Figure 3.9).

Participants were introduced to a variety of drawing activities that they might not have experienced before. The study sought to increase confidence through experiences with new methods of mark making so that a previously anxiety-inducing relationship to drawing might be transformed into a potentially enjoyable experience. The experiences of these participants helped to generate knowledge about the *experience* of mindful drawing.

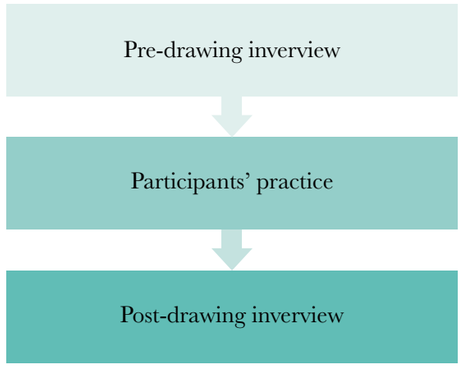


Figure 3.9. Structure of participant engagement in phase 2.

Recruitment criteria and limitations

Participants over the age of 18 were recruited for the study. Because Willats (2004) notes that the majority of adults believe that they are unable to draw, the project sought the perspectives of people who self-identified as 'beginner drawers'. By 'beginner drawer' I am referring to an individual who has not undertaken formal technical drawing education and considers their efforts to be rudimentary and unskilful.

This was because their insights were seen as more applicable than those of proficient drawers who might have developed embedded attitudes and competencies related to representational interpretation and aesthetic refinement. Participants declared themselves as open to the experience of drawing as an alternative mindfulness practice and able to reflect on and articulate their experiences. To ascertain the potential of achieving mindful awareness while drawing, participants needed to have some prior experience with a mindfulness practice, but they did not require formal mindfulness training.

Participants were recruited through industry contacts and by word of mouth. Three of the five participants came through me reaching out to my network of professional contacts who work within wellness-based industries. These individuals were asked to pass on information about the study to other potential participants (see Appendix 2). Upon hearing about the project, interested individuals emailed me requesting more information. I met the fourth participant who expressed interest in taking part, at a wellness event.[44] This person then suggested a colleague who consented to being involved in the study. In early 2020, I was in email contact with 15 potential participants, but most of these withdrew from the study due to the complications resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and its subsequent lockdowns.[45] However, despite the stop-and-start nature of the project, difficulties surrounding face-to-face interviews and ongoing challenges relating to the rearranging of dates and times at short notice, five participants completed this phase of the project.

44 Design for Health Symposium in Auckland on September 19th–20th, 2019. See https://goodhealthdesign.com/symposium/designforhealth

45 The first reported case of Covid-19 in New Zealand was on February 28th, 2020. On March 23rd, 2020, the nation was moved to alert level 3 with immediate effect. A state of emergency was declared in New Zealand on March 25th, 2020, with the country moving into isolation in alert level 4 at 11.59pm. Lockdown periods that prevented face to face interviews occurred between March 23rd – May 12th, 2020; August 12th, 2020 – September 23rd; February 14th, 2021– February 17th; and February 28th – March 6th, 2021 (Strongman et al., 2021) see https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/437359/timeline-the-year-of-covid-19-in-new-zealand.

I was cognisant of the small sample size when initiating this phase of the project. On the other hand, Smith and Osborn (2008) and Boddy (2016) argue that the size of data collected from larger sample sizes may "inhibit meaningful, timely, qualitative analysis" (Boddy, 2016, p. 429). As Boddy notes, non-positivist, qualitative research involves concentration over scale and doesn't seek generalisability, so a smaller scale study may be considered acceptable.

Pre-drawing interview

Pre- and post- drawing interviews were held between Covid-19 lockdowns in a quiet room at Auckland University of Technology, City campus in WE block.[46] These occurred between February and December 2020. The duration of each interview was between 30 and 40 minutes. At the beginning of the pre-interview, participants signed a consent form and a brief discussion was held about any preference they might have regarding privacy of drawings and journals. Participants were able to withdraw their drawings or journals from being included in the study but still preserve their involvement in providing feedback during the interviews. The pre-drawing interview enabled me to gauge pre-existing understandings and experiences related to mindfulness and drawing. It was guided by three initial questions:

What is your experience of mindfulness?
What is your experience of drawing?
Do you think there could be a type of drawing that is more mindful?

Responses were followed by reflective questions.[47] Reflective questioning describes an interview technique where the researcher listens to a participant's response to a question about their experience, then asks a neutrally-worded follow up question based on what they have been told. Lee and Barnett (1994) suggest that there may not be one correct question to ask, so reflective questioning can create "opportunities for respondents to think aloud and construct meaning for themselves" (p. 20). Such questioning afforded me insight into a participant's experience and, if needed, enabled me to pursue clarification. Because individuals can experience mindfulness in different ways, I gained a deeper appreciation of the states of mindful awareness that they experienced using this method. In order to be fully present during a participant's reflections, I audio-recorded the interview. This material was then transcribed verbatim. The transcribed text was later accessed multiple times when I compared insights from other participants and my reflections.

46 With the exception of one participant, who had their final interview conducted via a video conference call due to Covid-19 complications, all other interviews were able to be conducted in person.

47 Reflective questioning uses open-ended questions based on the participant's immediate experience of mindfulness. Follow up questions were designed to elicit additional information or deeper thought.

After the interview, a short pre-briefing was given to participants prior to their private mindful drawing practice. This involved a brief discussion relating to the definition of mindful drawing, the presentation of the 15 exercises, a discussion on where to find drawing subjects and a demonstration of certain activities.

I explained the process of mindful drawing by referring to the instructions and reflections prompt sheet that the participants received (see Appendix 3) and we discussed how one might maintain awareness of mindfulness while engaged in a drawing exercise. Participants were presented with a printout of 15 drawing activities with instructions and tentatively suggested time durations. The activities, which are described in greater detail in Chapter 4, involved:

Blind drawing (drawing while one's eyes are closed),
Colouring in,
Continuous drawing (using a continuous line),
Joining dots,
Monsters (drawing creatures from one's imagination),
Rapid drawing,
Seeing/drawing (drawing with minimal glances made to the paper),
Time lapse (drawing in increasingly shorter increments of time),
Touching nature (touching an object and drawing the tactile experience without looking at one's paper),
Tracing (tracing the shadow outline of an object),
Travelling (drawing repeated patterns across the paper),
Using a bundle of tools,
Using blind layers (drawing multiple layers while one's eyes are closed),
Using your foot (drawing with one's foot instead of one's hand) and
Using your non-dominant hand.

Two additional activities were proposed:
Repeat a past activity (an instruction to repeat a preferred past exercise) and
Invent your own (a request to invent or adapt an existing activity).

By asking participants to select *Repeat a past activity*, I was seeking an indication of an activity that they felt was very effective. My request that participants create or adapt an approach in *Invent your own*, was an attempt to find further examples (and reflections upon them) that participants felt made drawing mindful.

Possible drawing subjects were discussed such as where to find organic subjects to draw from in everyday life. I suggested leaves and twigs could be found within urban environments if the participant didn't have access to a private garden. A few of the activities were demonstrated using pencil and paper. For example, I demonstrated *Seeing/drawing* to show the importance of between keeping the gaze predominantly on the subject and making a quick glance to the paper without making marks, and *Blind drawing* to show how to obscure the marks by holding a sheet of paper above the drawing or turning the body away from the hand.

At the conclusion of the discussion, participants were invited to ask any questions and were then thanked for their involvement. Once participants had departed, I recorded relevant field notes about the interview in Microsoft OneNote.

Participants' practice

Participants' practice involved 14 days of mindful drawing activities and annotated reflective notetaking after each drawing was completed. All drawings were completed in private, in a quiet location of the participant's choosing. The study recommended that activities might take between two and 20 minutes, but each individual decided upon the order and selection of exercises.

Participants were provided with the following drawing materials:

- 16 sheets of A4-sized paper
- 17 drawing activities to select from (see Chapter 4)
- A prompt sheet with instructions and information about journal writing [Appendix 3]
- An A6 lined journal
- An HB pencil (OfficeMax)
- A ball-point pen (Pilot)
- Orange, yellow and blue colouring pencils (Crayola)

While participants were free to choose whatever activities they wanted, I encouraged them to try the *Blind drawing* and *Seeing/drawing* exercises. In my prior experiments, I had consistently experienced disengagement from judgment while undertaking these exercises because the marks made by the pencil were significantly less visible. My observation and thinking was supported by Franck (1979) and Greenhalgh's (2020) assertions that when attention is removed from a mark's aesthetic quality while drawing, judgment may be suspended and greater awareness of the experience may be cultivated.

After completing each of these drawing exercises, participants recorded their experiences in a private journal.[48] This document provided a record of current observations and understandings, experiences of incidents, and the research context (Tuckett & Stewart, 2014). This material later formed the basis of the post-drawing interviews.

Post-drawing interview

A second audio-recorded interview was conducted once participants had completed the 14 days of mindful drawing.[49] Post-drawing interviews took between 45 and 75 minutes and were focused on distilling the experience of the participants' mindful drawing process and their reflections on the effectiveness of the activities they had undertaken. In addition, I was seeking to understand why certain activities had been selected. For this interview, I again employed reflective questioning so that I could access personal feelings, experiences and responses. During these interviews, participants often referred to their journals and drawings when familiarising themselves with their experiences. As with the pre-drawing interviews, audio-recorded data was transcribed so it would be available in the next phase of the inquiry.

Four of the five participants gave me their original drawings, while the last participant emailed photographs of exercises that had been undertaken. All participants consented to the inclusion of their drawings in the study. A selection of the participants' drawings are available in Appendix 4. Three of them gave me their private journals. One participant emailed images of their journal, while the final participant allowed me to photograph their document at the conclusion of their interview.[50] Following each interview, I recorded relevant field notes about the engagement in Microsoft OneNote.

48 Participants were able to treat journals as private or shared documents.

49 One participant had their final interview conducted via a virtual video call due to concerns about not collecting the data. Because the gap between interviews had stretched to five months due to the 2020 March–June Covid-19 lockdowns, a decision was made to conduct their post-drawing interview virtually.

50 This was because they wanted to hold on to their journal for further reflection.

Methods
Phase 3: Analysis

In this research phase, I conducted a thematic analysis and poetic inquiry into participants' transcripts and journals that reflected on their experience of 14 days of mindful drawing. In making this decision I was cognisant of Tuckett and Stewart's (2014) suggestion that using several reflection methods may provide multiple data sources. By adopting a mixed method approach to analysis, the study engaged a form of triangulation.[51]

Thematic analysis

Initially, I considered data using a thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a qualitative method that can be applied to interview data when one is seeking to identify key themes and patterns. They offer six stages for thematic analysis which provided a framework for initial coding and analysis procedures within the study:

Data familiarisation
Initial codes formation
Theme investigation
Review of themes
Determining themes, and
Report of analysis.

Data familiarisation
In the first step, I assembled data gathered from the interview sessions (including audio recordings and transcripts, participants' drawings and journals, and my field notes recorded after interview sessions). After each interview was completed, I transcribed recordings of the interviews and participants' personal journals verbatim. I then reviewed my field notes from the interviews and relistened to the audio recordings to identify initial codes and potential themes. Additional field notes containing preliminary observations were recorded in Microsoft OneNote. Through repeated re-engagement with the data, I sought out significant insights and related repetitions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

51 Triangulation uses a variety of methods and perspectives in order to obtain elements of data that can be verified against each other (Hartwig, 2014).

Initial codes formation
Having reviewed the data, I began using coding[52] methods (Bhattacharya, 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2013) that enabled me to identify themes and discern meaning. During the initial coding, I studied the raw data to familiarise myself and gain an understanding of the nature of what was being expressed. Specific code words were created comprised of both the researcher's perspective and specific expressions (in-vivo) used by participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I used both deductive[53] and inductive[54] methods of analysis to create the codes. I created a list of predetermined codes and using the deductive coding approach colour coded the Microsoft Word[55] transcript documents accordingly. Skjott Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019) suggest that beginning with a list of predetermined codes may focus concentration on the most significant aspects of the study. In this study, the deductive codes selected were identified in terms of their alignment with the study's research goals (Saldaña, 2013). Using an inductive coding approach, I created a line-by-line code analysis (Furman, 2006) in the margins of each transcript. This produced a list of emergent codes (Saldaña, 2013) that were then organised within Microsoft OneNote. This allowed data to be arranged side-by-side for comparison. Once line-by-line codes for each participant were created, they were compared against all participants in an effort to identify patterns and emerging themes. To check for consistency of the findings the codes were compared multiple times across all participants and with the field notes that were made during the coding process.

52 Data that is divided into smaller units is commonly referred to as codes (Bhattacharya, 2017).

53 Codes are created before the coding phase in order to help create support to the process. Skjott Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019) explain how this support can help focus coding on relevant topics that are pertinent to the study's literature.

54 Bhattacharya (2017) describes how, in inductive analysis, there is an ascension of progression from the initial data.

55 Skjott Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019) suggest that with a smaller sample of data, colour coding may be completed using both paper and pen and Word software. Within Microsoft Word, data can be copied and pasted into new documents, allowing easy organisation and navigation. While specific qualitative data software may offer a deeper engagement and more efficient navigation for larger data sets, Skjott Linneberg and Korsgaard suggest that it may lack insightful critical concentration and strength due to the generation of excessive codes and the automated nature of the software. They suggest that the coding process can be a challenge to proficiently implement, and thus they propose that paper and pen may be a preferable method.

Theme investigation
In the third step, I wrote an analytic summary of each transcript. Schensul (2011) suggests that the analytic summary may format an initial report of an investigation into themes that provide a foundation for the project's final analysis and discussion. I described participants' insights that I considered most pertinent to the study and included relevant quotations to explore hidden and emerging themes. Attride-Stirling (2001) suggests that this process may encourage a more meaningful amount of analysis to occur. The emergent themes were then discussed with a supervisor. Analytic summaries were reread multiple times throughout steps four, five and six. These summaries provided a useful tool for further reviews and the writing up of the analysis.

Review of themes
In the fourth step, Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that themes are refined and checked to see if there is sufficient data to verify them, whether multiple isolated themes may be merged or whether larger themes might benefit from being separated. Accordingly, I arranged in Microsoft OneNote the codes and emergent themes identified through the previous two steps. In this step, I paid attention to the themes that could be removed, merged or separated, and I edited them accordingly.

Determining analysis
In the fifth step, once the reorganisation of themes had been completed, I created a category system. This involved establishing coherent labels and definitions for each identified theme. I then reviewed and reflected upon themes that had emerged from the transcript analysis of summaries (Schensul, 2011).

Report of analysis
Upon completion of the analysis of the data, I created a report of the findings in the sixth and final step. This appears as Chapter 4: Research Analysis and Discussion, in this exegesis.[56] Using the gathered extract examples and analysis, I connected themes back to the study's research question and underpinning literature to construct a final analysis report.

Analysis issues
I am aware that there is criticism of the analysis coding process due to the potential fragmentation of data. Skjott Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019) note that when data is separated into fragmented parts, the process may lead to the exclusion of holistic understanding (a critical component of qualitative research). While codes may be biased due to researcher subjectivity, Skjott Linneberg and Korsgaard suggest that coding is a necessary part of qualitative research. It can offer valuable insight into an experience that may outweigh the shortcomings of researcher bias because drawbacks "are offset by the richness and detail" (p. 267). By continually referring to the study's research goals, I checked the significance of emerging themes. This was done by conducting multiple visits to transcripts, participants' private journals, analytic summaries, my poetic summaries and field notes of observations. Additionally, I kept track of data that didn't fit with emerging themes to remain open to the analysis process.

56 Chapter 4 discusses the main findings that emerged and includes relevant literature related to the study.

Poetic inquiry and participant-voiced poems

Thematic analysis was supplemented by a process of poetic inquiry [PI]. This operated as both an alternative method for data analysis and an approach for representing qualitative data. As a method for analysis, I used poetic inquiry to enhance the dimensions of understanding of the research data. Faulkner (2019) suggests that using poetic inquiry for analysis may enable triangulation, which supports a research practice that is reflective in nature. Sjollema and Bilotta (2017) suggest that analysis through poetic inquiry may provide a holistic understanding when paired with thematic analysis because it has the potential to evoke emotion, thereby causing data to become more vibrant.

When employing poetic inquiry to create participant-voiced poems,[57] I sourced words, phrases or passages from participants' transcripts and private journals. Changes were made to the rearrangement of words and lines and I deleted or expanded text to create a more cohesive poem (Butler-Kisber, 2011).

In constructing participant-voiced poems, I used the following process:

> I employed the original word use in the participant's writing
> I included their key reflections, then
> I created a coherent poem[58] by crystalising ideas and presenting them as a reconceptualisation of data.

The resulting poems may be considered as an alternative representation of a participant's lived experience, which Furman (2006) suggests complements the research data. I engaged with poetic outcomes through repeated cycles of reflection and cutting. Using this process, 152 short poems were created from the participants' interview transcripts and private journals documenting their experiences of mindful drawing. For each of these poems, I created an analytic summary. Ohito and Nyachae (2019, p. 847) suggest that researchers can explore and analyse poetry by using specific questions, which may afford an additional level of rigor to the research. Informed by their suggestion, I adapted six of their questions to create analytic summaries:

> What does this poem reveal about the data?
> What deepened or different understandings about my participants or myself do I have as a result of writing and rereading a poem?
> What word, phrase, sentence or image in the poem most resonates?
> and
> Does the poem provoke feeling?

Sjollema and Bilotta (2017) note that due to its ambiguous nature, an analysis of poems poses certain challenges because it requires taking versatile, multifaceted jumps that don't always align with linear logic. With this in mind, these questions provided me with a framework for analysis that afforded some consistency across the data set. Analytic summaries of the participant-voiced poems were later included in the final steps of the thematic analysis process.

Using the digital archive

In creating participant-voiced poems I used Microsoft OneNote to distil transcripts into a condensed poetic construction. The process began by highlighting the most poignant insights. Highlighted material was then transferred into a condensed version. Further edits to the poem took place, with all changes made explicit using a highlighter and different coloured text. The final short poems were then transferred by hand, to the poetic workbook (Table 3.1). The digital space allowed the selection and cutting of text to be clearly visible, providing a record of the editing process that I could revisit throughout the study.

Table 3.1

Transcript	Edited	Short poem
(00.18) EG: What does mindfulness mean to you? (00.21) A: Mindfulness for me is being aware. Aware of your sensations, of your feelings, of your thoughts. Having them, not having them. Just being aware and awake. (00.37) EG: Awake. That's a good word. Can you speak more to that? (00.42) I think there's a process to mindfulness and the more you get into any practices or doing anything that resonates with you, you see layers of the onion peeling out. And you see glimpses of life or, I don't know. It's a bit etheric said like that. But you see what lies beneath. (01.16) EG: And have you done any practices around mindfulness? (01.20) Well I do practice mindfulness for quite some time and I've been to the Vipassana silent retreat and done, you know, my own, you know journaling or whatever worked. I have fallen out of practice with my meditations which were the way I would start the day. So I really, I was very thrilled to this research getting me back into practice. (01.56) EG: What happens when you meditate? (02.00) I create space. I create space for my thoughts. I create space for anything that needs to come to me. But there is a stillness and quietness that is just reassuring. So whatever comes in your life, you see it through different lenses.	being aware aware of your sensations of your feelings of your thoughts having them not having them being aware and awake there's a process the more you get into any practices you see layers of the onion peeling out glimpses of life what lies beneath I create space I create space for anything that needs to come to me there's a stillness and quietness that's reassuring whatever comes in your life you see it through different lenses	being aware aware of your sensations of your feelings of your thoughts having them not having them being aware and awake there's a process you see layers of the onion peeling out glimpses of life what lies beneath I create space I create space for anything that needs to come to me there's a stillness and quietness that's reassuring whatever comes you see through different lenses

Table 3.1. The process of poetic construction showing the initial transcript with pertinent text highlighted, and the subsequently edited text and resulting short poem that took form as the cutting process progressed. Deleted text is grey, while changes to grammar or rearrangements of text are highlighted in green (Gannon, E. April, 2020).

57 Prendergast (2009b) discusses how interview transcripts or information supplied by participants may be used to create participant-voiced poems.

58 Leavy (2015) suggests that words are used sparingly within poem construction so that the arrangement of words, rhythm and space create meaning. A poem may be described as "evoking a snippet of human experience that is artistically expressed as in a heightened state" (p. 78).

Poetic constructions using existing structures

As a development of these short participant-voiced poems, I considered three condensed poetic structures for representing qualitative data. They were the haiku (Blasko & Merski, 1998; Grisoni, 2007), the tanka (Furman et al., 2007) and the lune (Collom & Noethe, 2005).

Haiku

The haiku originated in Japan, and became established in the 19th century (Blasko & Merski, 1998). It is a short poem with a structure comprised of 17 syllables divided across three lines. These lines follow a pattern of five-seven-five syllables. The haiku's resonance lies in its ability to convey an identified absolute moment (Blasko & Merski, 1998). Prendergast et al. (2009) suggest that haikus can communicate and fuse insight into a compressed form, while Russell (2003) notes that they also provide an opening for contemplation and opportunities for our understandings of experience to be revised. While traditional Japanese haikus often adhere to metaphor and season references,[59] modern haiku poets like Kaneko Tohta have created work free from seasonal references (Tohta, 2012). Significantly, Lahman et al. (2011) refer to a *senryu* as a form of haiku that is free from seasonal or natural references. They note that a senryu's themes speak to humanity and interpersonal relationships. While many of the haikus I created were free from metaphor, they still may be considered a haiku if we consider Blasko and Merski's (1998) suggestion that a haiku can be a "fundamental cognitive process" (p. 43).As I focused on distilling an experience to its essence within 17 syllables, I found the haiku's fixed structure afforded me a framework for word selection. Grisoni (2007) suggests that the haiku's conciseness may minimise apprehension over word choice due to the restricted word count. I experienced, Russell's (2003) observation that while the haiku's structure may constrain possibilities, it can also enable a poet to "cut figurative description down to the bare essentials of poetic understanding" (p. 100).

Tanka

The tanka is a closely related poetic form that expands on the haiku in that it offers five lines in a five-seven-five-seven-seven syllable structure. The form has been used before in poetic inquiry, specifically in the work of Furman et al. (2007) who constructed research tankas using autobiographical poems. These researchers argued that the tanka proved "an excellent tool for presenting complex and dichotomous data in a highly compressed form" (p. 305). The addition of two seven syllable lines afforded me greater versatility because a longer reflection could be considered within the structure. The tanka also enabled me to use longer words containing more syllables.

Lune

The third poetic structure I experimented with was the lune. This also offered a concise method for word selection and arrangement within a compressed form. A lune consists of three, five and three words arranged in three consecutive lines.[60] Collom and Noethe (2005) have argued that the lune is more accommodating than its haiku predecessor because it is not constrained by conventional concerns with seasons, nature or images. Lathouras (2012) also found that lunes were less constrictive than haikus. I found that the lune's potential for touching the essence of a participant's experience lay in its reductive flexibility and its ability to refine an insight to three beats, unconstrained by numerical concerns with syllable counts. Like the haiku and tanka, the lune may also enable readers to grasp the essence of a participant's reflection on their experience at a glance.

The following example illustrates the three forms of poetic construction applied to the same participant's insight:

Table 3.2

Haiku	Tanka	Lune
look at leaf, not art switch grip, disengage brain I liked the challenge	hard to disengage my critical brain. just do look at leaf not art focus turned out distraction I enjoyed being focused	heaps of fun look at leaf not art turned out distraction

Table 3.2. Haiku, tanka and lune poetic constructions.

59 Blasko and Merski (1998) explain that "In Japanese, haiku includes a seasonal referent (*kigo*) and usually has a *kireji* ("cutting word"), a sort of spoken punctuation that divides the poem into two sections" (p. 40).

60 While I refer to the adapted lune structure created by Collom in the 1970s (in which words are counted), lune poems were originally created in the 1960s in New York by Kelly and were comprised of 13 syllables of five-three-five across three lines (Lathouras, 2012).

Poetic workbook

In addition to constructing poetic analyses of participants' experiences using Microsoft OneNote, I also experimented with poetic writing in a physical workbook. Initially, this workbook was used to create the haikus, tankas and lunes (Figure 3.10).

When creating poetic constructions by hand, I began to interact with words in a different way. Although Microsoft OneNote offered a comparably efficient method for working with large amounts of text, I was seeking a tangible, personal dwelling space for poetic construction. Handwriting provided a physical, haptic space that I found more reflective. Given that Leggo (2008) notes that "Poetry is a site for dwelling, for holding up, for stopping" (p. 166), in my notebooks I entered a realm where I could approach participants' experiences through touch by applying pressure, motion and rhythm. Accordingly, I was able to settle with the words.

In the haptic realm of thinking poetically I began to experiment with scale and media. I enlarged poetic constructions with brush and ink (Figure 3.11). Encouraged by Schoone's (2015) suggestion that dwelling within found text might enable further meaning to emerge, I found that a slower rendering of reflection allowed a deeper space and wider dimension in which I could experience the words.

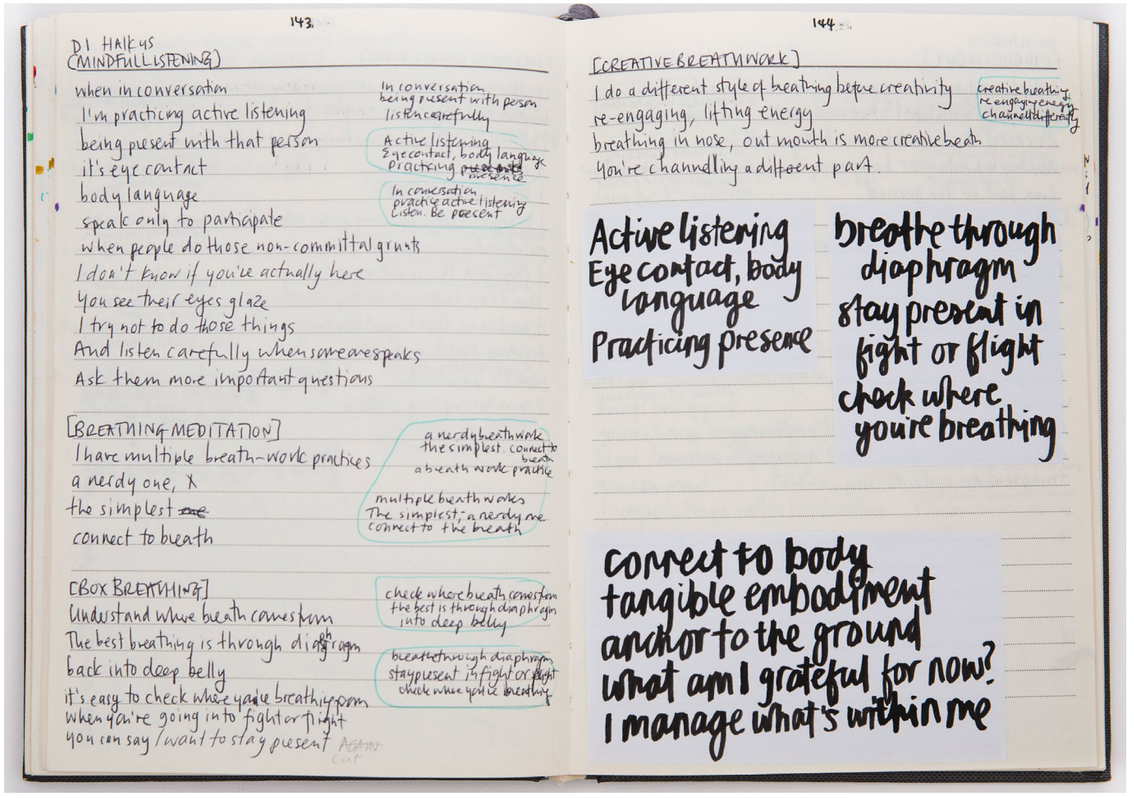


Figure 3.10. The poetic workbook using a participant's short poem created from their post-drawing interview transcript. The left-hand page shows the edited poetic form created in the digital archive. Haikus, tankas and lunes were created alongside the text. The right-hand page displays larger calligraphic treatments of this material (Gannon, E. March, 2020).

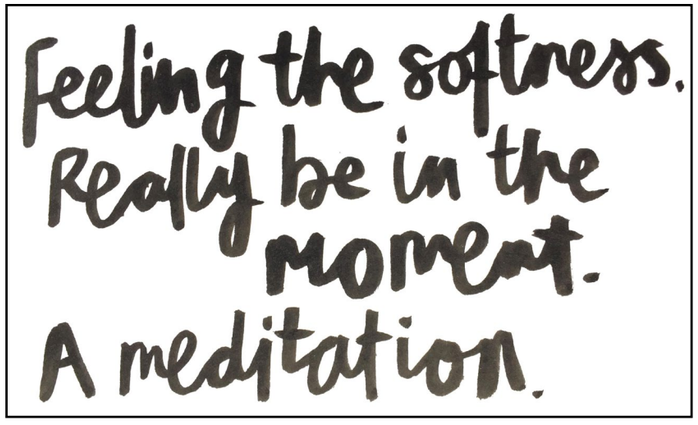


Figure 3.11. A handwritten calligraphic text of a haiku created from a participant's reflection. Through the process of handwriting words, I experienced a more fluid, continuously close relationship with meaning (Gannon, E. March, 2020).

Methods
Phase 4: Artistic synthesis

The study sought to offer an alternative perspective for engagement with qualitative data by presenting a selection of the study's outcomes as visual artefacts. This is because I believed that an interplay between image and text might provide space for more empathic and holistic insights of what had been experienced. The fourth phase of the study drew the analysed data into an artistic synthesis that sought to give expression to participants and my own experiences of mindful drawing exercises. These visual, poetic artefacts shaped my thinking conceptually and materially during the inquiry and culminated in the final portfolio of work.

The artistic synthesis phase of the project spanned 28 months. Initial experimentation grew alongside Phase 3, before becoming the focus of the study. Progressing from the haptic experiments with poetic inquiry I developed in my workbook, I expanded the idea of space and tactility. Here, I was trying to understand in greater artistic depth, from the participants' expressions of their experiences with mindful drawing and my own journey through the inquiry. This shift in emphasis was partly shaped by Covid-19 disruptions because artistic experimentation that might normally have extended into media available in the university or wider art environments, became limited to materials and processes available in my domestic environment.

Poetic clusters

My first experiments employed Faulkner's (2019) poetry clustering as a method for crystallising and communicating themes emanating from the research. As a form of found poetry, poetic clustering considers *multiple* research texts generated *across* an inquiry. Butler-Kisber and Stewart (2009) suggest that the inclusion of poetic clusters may allow greater meaning to be generated due to their flexibility in providing both a micro and macro view of a theme. Faulkner (2019) suggests that poetic clusters may be utlised "either as a form of data representation or as an analytical tool (pp. 86-86). An indicative experiment below demonstrates the creative synthesis involved in this method and how specific sources were identified in a work that considered relationships between time dilation and mindful awareness.

Adapting Faulkner's (2019) approach, I structured the poetic clustering using four stanzas,[61] each containing three lines comprised of less than 12 syllables. In the poem below, contextual research appears in quotation marks, participants' words are presented as normal text, and poetry created from participants' words is italicised:

"Out of our minds"[62]
a different concept of time
in my own little bubble
everything around you slows

"free of time, free of problems, and free of thinking"[63]
I trace the inner child in me
results don't matter

trying to traffic light the time
was I waiting for something?
it doesn't matter

maybe we all can draw
but we don't let ourselves go there
"seek to experience what is not visible."[64]

61 A stanza is the arrangement of words comprised of two or more lines that create a division in the poetic structure.

62 Robinson (2011).

63 Reid (2011, p. 51).

64 Downs et al., (2007, p. xiv).

Combinations of image and text

Because this phase of the study was concerned with artistic synthesis, the methods differed from what one might encounter in a traditional poetic inquiry. This is because original word arrangement and contexts were sometimes substantially disrupted. In the pursuit of resonance, I tried to remain open to alternative perspectives and experimentation. Through the engagement with paper-based methods, I explored practices that alluded to the physicality of drawing processes because the tactility provoked deeper immersions into the text.

I undertook a set of experiments that synthesised elements of poetic, textual and visual collage, and printmaking (such as monoprinting and eco-printing).[65] Faulkner (2019) notes that collage can be helpful for poetic inquiry researchers who utilise visual arts across several mediums. In these experiments, I was seeking out resonances between the subject material of mindful drawing and my experience of the process. Many of the participants in the study discussed paying close attention to small details when drawing objects from nature. I had also experienced such connections and was aware of the significance of drawing plants in my work (see Chapter 4). Thus, using my printmaking experiments, I investigated ways of integrating printed forms with poetic responses that might "magnify lived experience" (Janesick, 2016, p. 31).[66] These experiments explored relationships between image and text through variations in scale, texture, emphasis, colour, typography, and iconography. (Figures 3.12-13).

While combining poetic responses with the tactile experience of hand printing offered potentials for artistically presenting the experience of the study, I felt that these engagements took me beyond the project's central focus on drawing. Although researchers like Schoone (2015) have explored print making as a mindful exercise, I was aware that participants had experienced mindful drawing (not print making), and I had experienced a dialogue between drawing and poetic synthesis.

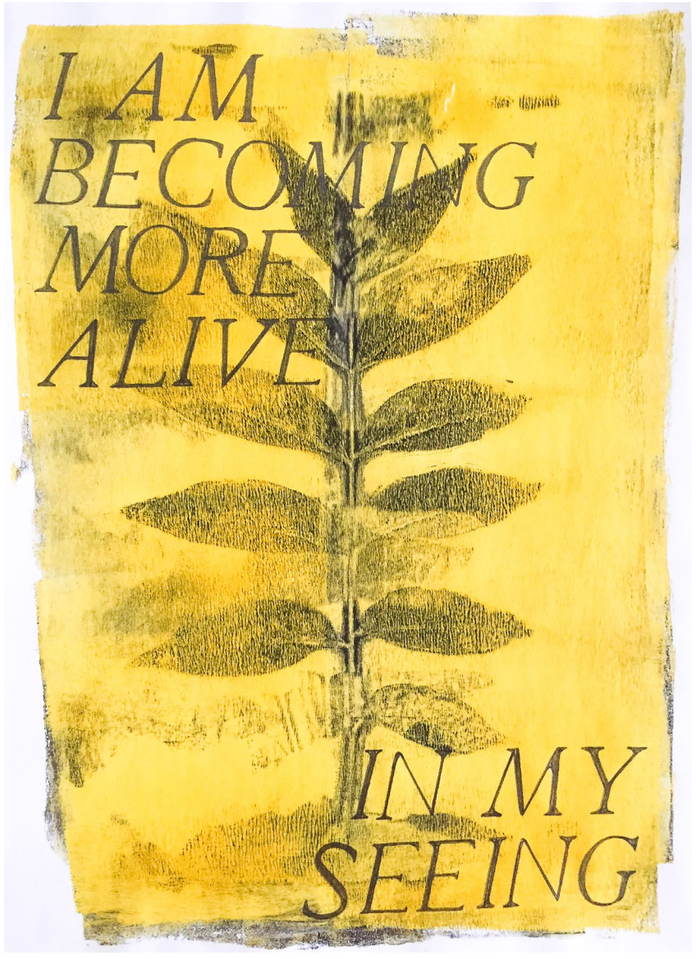


Figure 3.12. An experiment combining monoprinting with poetic text emanating from Phase 2 of the inquiry. In investigations like these, I was exploring the expressive tactility of relationships as a way of communicating the resonance of participants' experiences (Gannon, E. April, 2021).

Figure 3.13. An experiment combining haiku, eco-printing and mindful drawing (Gannon, E. November, 2021).

65 Flint (2010) defines eco-printing as the process of extracting dyes contained within natural resources to create an imprint on fabric. The technique may also be successfully transferred on to paper. I investigated ways of arranging a variety of flowers and foliage between sheets of stacked paper that were boiled in a bundle in water. Printing directly from natural elements created a unique imprint that emphasised ridges and textural details contained in the paper. With the outcomes not visible until the paper has been boiled and unfolded, control and the pursuit of aesthetic refinement is compromised throughout the boiling stage. The experience of not seeing the results until the very end was similar to what I and a number of the participants encountered when drawing with our eyes closed.

66 A selection of these prints and integrated poetic texts is available in Appendix 5.

Mindful drawing and poetic inquiry

Having realised that I needed to maintain a closer connection between mindful drawing as an experience and poetic synthesis, I revisited the abstract that I had written for the project and asked myself:

> 'If I am to artistically communicate what has been understood about how simple, mindful drawing exercises can cultivate greater present moment awareness and minimise self-judgment, what form of presentation might most effectively resonate with the nature and process of discovery?'

As a consequence, I developed a portfolio of work that sought to provide an artistic 'voice' for the study. To do this, I refocused my attention back on to relationships between poetic inquiry and mindful drawing. In the portfolio I employed artistic, poetic inquiry (as an interplay between image and text) to reflect on the research project and themes emanating from it. Although I completed over 80 drawings, for the portfolio Essences, I selected only 26. The nature of the portfolio is discussed in Chapter 5.

I found it useful to combine image and text in the presentation of outcomes because the combination provided space for more holistic understandings of mindful drawing experiences. I believed that visual poetic inquiry might offer a richer representation of subtleties of experience, while encouraging deeper levels of inner reflection.

Summary

The discussion of methods employed in the study has considered a range of approaches that were utilised across four distinct phases. In each phase, methods contributed to outcomes that fed into the next part of the inquiry. Methods in the first phase supported an investigation into practical and contextual knowledge relating to drawing practices that informed the construction of a series of initial, mindful drawing activities. Methods employed in the second phase were associated with gathering data from participants as they trialled and reflected on these activities. In the third phase of the inquiry, two distinctive contrasting methods (thematic analysis and poetic inquiry) were employed to identify and reflect upon significant themes emerging from the collected data. The final phase involved an artistic synthesis of my own and the participants' experiences. Here I engaged in a range of experiments with text and image that explored ways of giving voice to the prominent themes emerging from the inquiry.[67]

In closing this chapter, it is now useful to consider the research design employed in the project's development.

67 By 'giving voice to', I am referring to artistically presenting experiences of the study.

Critique of research design

In concluding this chapter it is useful to consider both the advantages and challenges of the research design. An Arts-based inquiry may offer viewers the potential to reach new understandings and question pre-existing beliefs (Leavy, 2015). Conversely, outcomes may be seen as incomplete (Lincoln & Denzin, 2004) and contradictory (Chappell & Barone, 2011), and without a definitive conclusion.

Advantages

A mixed method methodology that blended reflective practice and participatory reflection on practice, provided three significant advantages.

First, it allowed for an experimental and responsive approach to the inquiry. This approach enabled rich forms of exploration where the emphasis was placed on reflection on practice. Effective mindfulness drawing tools were developed in an environment where there was no assumption of generalisability.

Second, a mixed method approach offered diverse perspectives of mindful drawing experiences. As such, human experience and the positive benefits of mindful drawing became fundamental drivers for the inquiry. This meant that, as a researcher, I was resourced by an understanding that the inquiry might have a direct benefit to expanding understandings of mindful drawing.

Third, the research design enabled both an exterior (participant oriented) and internal (artistic inquiry) process to progress in tandem. This meant that creative synthesis was not tied to a need to establish generalisable truth as an Art-based inquiry. Instead, the structure enabled insight and resonance to surface through action and reflection such that contemplative experimentation and a mindful attitude were able to be cultivated (Langer, 2014).

Challenges

However, the research design also posed distinct challenges. First, given that such inquiry was action-oriented and reflective, the researcher needed to maintain an open and adaptable mindset so unanticipated situations and new information could be seen as catalysts rather than disruptions. This quality of action-oriented and Art-based inquiry was sorely tested by the unforeseen global pandemic and subsequent effects it had on the way that the research was able to be conducted. The pandemic stimulated an expansion of poetic inquiry and reoriented the research into a consideration of the potentials of visually poetic responses to research findings. The pandemic also meant that outcomes could not be presented in a physical exhibition and required reimagining as a digital artefact.

Second, because data in such an inquiry is normally subjective, care had to be taken when interpreting participants' experiences. For example, participants may distort information about their experience to align it with what they might perceive as the researcher's desired outcomes. Using a process of observation, reflective questioning and reviewing participants' journal entries partially helped address this challenge, but subjectivity remains a significant tenet of the inquiry.

Third, outcomes emanating from the study could not be measured easily due to the qualitative nature of the study. Subsequently, the researcher had to adjust to the idea that such an inquiry may have no definitive, transferable solution (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). The research instead concerned itself with documenting and reflecting on the experiences of mindful drawing activities, such that some light might be shone on the quality of certain exercises in inducing deeper states of mindfulness.

Fourthly, in implementing both thematic analysis and poetic inquiry, generation of data was increased and it was a challenge to navigate through the study's accumulation of text and vast possibilities for analysis. While poetic inquiry created additional data, due to the nature of its condensed poetic forms, it provided a beneficial method of data simplification that allowed for more efficient engagement with the research findings.

Finally, the research design required that the researcher and participants develop strategies for remaining in the present moment of an experience and adopt an analytical reflection on what had happened. Self-evaluation and analysis are oppositional to mindful experience, which requires the releasing of judgment. When I evaluated an experience while it was occurring, I brought my awareness back to focus upon the drawing practice and released any evaluative thoughts. During certain activities, evaluation less frequently arose due to the high state of mindful awareness I sustained throughout. I had to repeatedly refocus my awareness and release evaluative thoughts in other activities. This allowed me to practice mindful awareness while drawing throughout the study.

Chapter 4

Research analysis and conclusions

Research analysis and conclusions

Having now discussed the research paradigm, methodology and methods, it is useful to consider the research analysis and conclusions.

This chapter is arranged into three sections.

In the first section, the procedures that were used to collect information are discussed. These are:

- Self-practice as inquiry: Testing and organisation of activities
- Designing mindful drawing categories: Rationale and context for selected drawing exercises.

In the second section, I discuss findings and consider themes that emerged from the participants' 14 days of mindful drawing exercises. This section includes:

- Pre-drawing interview findings: Mindfulness definitions and drawing experience
- Post-drawing interview findings: Judgment and expectation, enjoyment, seeing deeper and accessibility
- A discussion of participant findings.

In the third section, I discuss the findings and themes that emerged from self-practice as inquiry. Here I consider the researcher's self-practice findings. This section includes:

- Sustained practice
- Nature appreciation
- Mark value.

Section 1: Self-practice as inquiry

In the first phase of the study, the testing and organisation of drawing activities were determined through a process of inquiry and practice undertaken by the researcher. Through reiterations of mindful drawing practice and reflection upon that practice, I was able to discern the activities I felt might offer greater potential for others to experience and sustain mindfulness. Extracting from my own self-practice provided a first-hand experience that deepened my understanding of drawing with mindful awareness.

Self-practice as inquiry

I began the study by collecting details of specific drawing activities and examples from the literature. I then photographed each activity and created a database of images and instructions using Microsoft OneNote (Figure 4.1). Once an activity had been identified, I completed it using paper, pen or pencil in a secluded quiet space. I then recorded my reflections on the experience using annotated reflective notetaking. Here, I paid close attention to the state of awareness I had experienced. I considered an activity for inclusion in the study if I could sustain mindful awareness effortlessly throughout the drawing process. I also asked myself whether each drawing would be easy for beginner drawers. In addition, I noted technical issues or adaptions that were made to ease potential physical or mental discomfort, and I considered how such adaptions might impact present moment awareness. Specific activities were tested multiple times and if necessary, adaptations were made to heighten the awareness I felt during the process. Thus, changes were made to recommended activity duration, grip, drawing tools and drawing subject matter.

Having completed a review of drawing literature, I began sorting the activities into groups. Once groups had been identified, I referred to my reflective notes to further refine and assign categories. During this process, duplications were deleted, and the selection was narrowed from 200 to 82 potential activities. I highlighted the activities that I felt offered the most potential as a mindful drawing experience in each category.

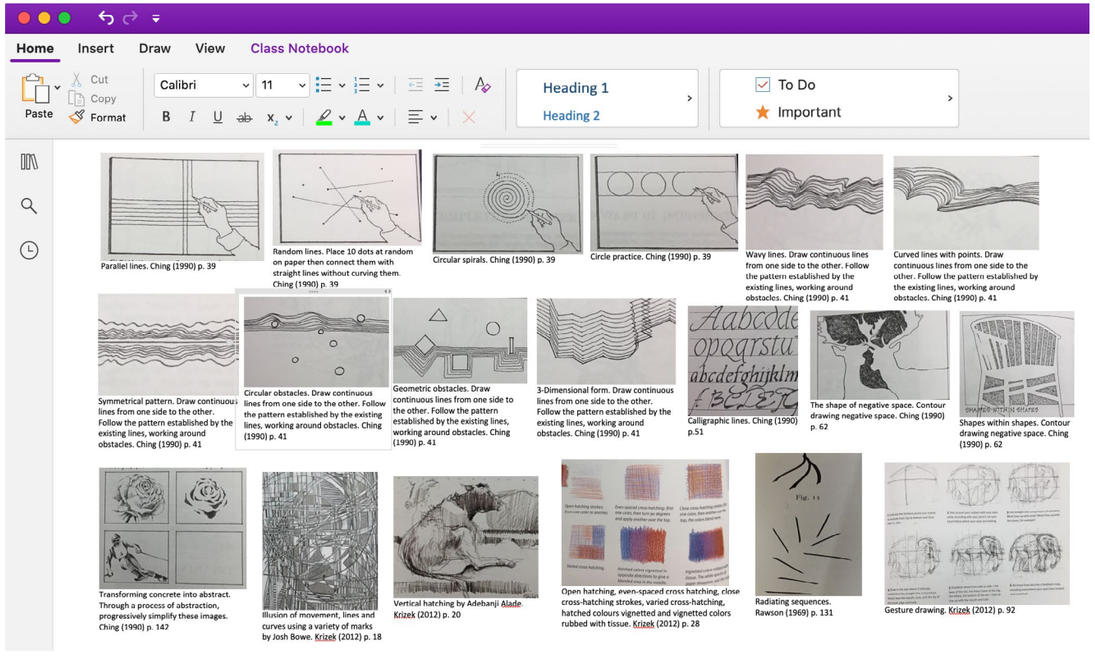


Figure 4.1. Database of over 200 images of drawing activities categorised within Microsoft OneNote. Images were accompanied by descriptive text and pertinent details that I could access throughout the study (Gannon, E. May, 2019).

Designing mindful drawing categories

Once I had organised the drawing activities, a classification system was identified. This system selected potential drawing activities that did not prioritise representational depiction.

In designing activities I was guided by four principles:

First, the activity had resulted in sustaining mindful awareness with greater ease throughout the drawing process, and as such would be more accessible to a beginner drawer.

Second, the exercises needed to be portable to adapt to the environment selected by each participant. (This is because I assumed that participants would benefit from a choice over the selection of a domestic setting or a diverse environment of their choosing).

Third, materials needed to be easily accessible. Because of this, activities were limited to those that required only paper, pens and pencils.[68]

Fourth, drawing subjects were limited to objects from nature[69] or activities that drew on the participant's imagination.[70]

The four principles enabled me to narrow down similar activities into categories. For example, activities were considered similar if they adopted the same physical approach (i.e. using multiple tools), or they required the closing one's eyes (i.e. drawing blind). The categories provided a framework for identifying how activities differed in their technical approach. Through the categorisation process, I was able to highlight activities within each category that I felt had been most successful in relation to the four principles. I selected labels for each of the categories that I felt best described their characteristics (See Chapter 4).

From the self-practice as inquiry process, seven drawing categories emerged:
Deep seeing (was concerned with the maintenance of continual eye contact with the subject while drawing)
Sensation (offered a connection to a sense of touch)
Physicality (presented a change in relationship between drawer and tool)
Duplication (was concerned with tracing the silhouette of a cast shadow)
Intuitive mark making (focused on creating abstract forms without the use of a drawing reference)
Simplicity (was concerned with creating simple or repetitive marks) and
Novelty (represented playful forms of mark making).

Within these categories, 15 activities were included for participants' consideration and a set of instructions was provided (Table 4.1 - p. 52). A maximum of 15 activities was selected so as not to overwhelm participants with choice. Additionally, 2 further activities were proposed: *Repeat a past activity* (an instruction to repeat a preferred past exercise) and *Invent your own* (a request to invent or adapt an existing activity). While participants were permitted to select the activities and order they wanted, I encouraged the selection of *Blind drawing, Seeing/ drawing, Repeat a past activity* and *Invent your own* activities. Participants were encouraged to select the activities they felt most interested in trying each day.

The seven categories offered participants a range of drawing activities from which to select. These provided versatile potentials for practice. It is worth noting that these activities were not original concepts, and they have been employed for diverse reasons by a range of artists, educators and practitioners over the past 100 years. However, the activities were considered in this study for their potential to increase an experience of mindfulness. The themes identified in Section 2 speak to the findings of participants and my own mindful drawing practice.[71]

68 In making this determination I was aware of Gunaratana's (2011) suggestion that mindfulness meditation methods should be economical, and Noble's (2017) recommendation that a mindful drawing practice should be immediate and available to everybody.

69 This criterion was influenced by Maslen and Southern's (2011) suggestion that such approaches may heighten the freedoms available to those undertaking drawing activities. This is because natural subjects often contain imperfections and irregularities and this may lessen preoccupations with precision. Accordingly, exercises like those that emphasised perspective were excluded because of their emphasis on structural accuracy.

70 However, exercises that were used in a therapy context (i.e. 'draw how you feel' activities) were omitted. This is because the study is not concerned with mindful drawing as a method of therapy or as a treatment for illness or anxiety.

71 See Appendix 4, for a selection of participants' drawings emanating from these exercises.

Table 4.1: Mindful drawing categories		
Category	Activity	Instructions[72]
Deep seeing	*Seeing/drawing*	**Subject:** An object from nature. **Suggested duration:** Ten - twenty minutes. **Instructions:** Fix your gaze onto the object, trace the object's details and edges with your eye and transfer exactly what you see by moving the pen. You may occasionally glance at the paper but try not to make any marks when you're not looking at the object. Instead, wait until your eye is fixed back on the object before continuing to draw.
	Blind drawing	**Subject:** An object from nature. **Suggested duration:** Ten minutes. **Instructions:** Similar to the *Seeing/Drawing* activity, but without any glances at the paper until you finish the drawing. Fix your gaze onto the object and draw only what your eye traces. It doesn't matter if you get 'lost' on the paper or forget what you've already drawn; continue to make marks regardless. It may be helpful to obscure the paper with something held in your other hand so you're not tempted to look.
	Rapid drawing	**Subject:** Bird(s) or flying insect(s). **Suggested duration:** One to five minutes. **Instructions:** Draw a creature before it leaves your eyesight. Don't be concerned with looking at the marks you make by keeping your eyes locked on the creature. If it moves, keep drawing what you see. Your drawing may have overlapping marks, so it may not look like a 'creature', but you will record an experience of looking at a creature. Draw multiple creatures if you see more in the same period.
	Continuous drawing	**Subject:** An object from nature. **Suggested duration:** Ten minutes. **Instructions:** Draw an object without taking your pen off the paper. This may mean you have to draw a line that doesn't exist to get to a new area. Spend more time looking at the object and less time on the lines drawn.
Sensation	*Touching nature*	**Subject:** An object from nature. **Suggested duration:** Five – ten minutes. **Instructions:** Close your eyes and, with one hand, touch the object. With the other, draw what you feel. The result may not show a recognisable object because you are free to create an interpretation of what you are touching.
Physicality	*Using your non-dominant hand*	**Subject:** An object from nature. **Suggested duration:** 15 minutes. **Instructions:** Draw using your non-dominant hand (the hand you don't write with). Spend more time looking at the object and less time on the lines being drawn.
	Using your foot	**Subject:** An object from nature. **Suggested duration:** Five – ten minutes. **Instructions:** Use your toes to hold your pen/pencil and draw your selected object.
	Using a bundle of tools	**Subject:** An object from nature. **Suggested duration:** Five – ten minutes. **Instructions:** Select two or three pencils and draw with them as though they were one pencil. Spend more time looking at the object and less time on the lines being drawn.
Duplication	*Tracing*	**Subject:** An object from nature. **Suggested duration:** Five – ten minutes. **Instructions:** Placing paper underneath the object, use sunlight to create a shadow (branches with multiple leaves work well). Trace the shadow cast onto the paper.
Intuitive mark making	*Colouring in*	**Subject:** An object from nature. **Suggested duration:** Five – ten minutes. **Instructions:** Loosely copy a previously drawn image. Using a colouring in technique, add colour to the drawing. You don't have to fill the entire drawing with solid colour, fill it in however you like.
Simplicity	*Joining the dots*	**Subject:** Your imagination. **Suggested duration:** Five – ten minutes. **Instructions:** Make 30 or so dots randomly around the page. Then connect the dots in as many lines as possible without overlapping previously drawn lines. No ruler is necessary, wobbly lines are okay.
	Travelling	**Subject:** Your imagination. **Suggested duration:** Two–five minutes. **Instructions:** Draw from one side of the paper to the other using a variety of marks. Make each 'line' different each time and continue until you have filled the page.
Novelty	*Monsters*	**Subject:** Your imagination. **Suggested duration:** Eight minutes. **Instructions:** Divide your paper into quarters. Draw a different quick scribble or shape in each section. Set a timer for two minutes and turn one of the scribbles or shapes into a monster. Draw without stopping until the timer goes off. Repeat for all the sections.
	Time lapse	**Subject:** Your imagination. **Suggested duration:** Five minutes. **Instructions:** Divide your paper into six sections by either folding the paper or roughly marking out the lines (no ruler is required as wobbly lines are okay). In the first box, draw a castle in 60 seconds. In the second box, draw a castle in 45 seconds. In the third box, draw it in 30 seconds. In the fourth box, draw it in 20 seconds. In the fifth box, draw it in 10 seconds. In the sixth box, draw it in five seconds.
	Using blind layers	**Subject:** Your imagination. **Suggested duration:** Three minutes. **Instructions:** Close your eyes and use a yellow pencil to draw a human skeleton in one minute without looking. Then, using orange, close your eyes again and draw another skeleton on top of the yellow one. Finally, repeat using blue.

72 Alterations have been made to the initial instructions the participants received, in order to provide greater clarity within this thesis.

Deep seeing

The deep seeing activities involved maintaining continual eye contact on the subject while drawing. The activities included *Seeing/drawing* (Franck, 1963, 1973, 1979, 1993), *Blind drawing* (Edwards, 2012; Franck, 1993; Nicolaïdes, 1969), *Rapid drawing* (Nicolaïdes, 1969) and *Continuous drawing* (Davidson, 2011; Dodson, 2007; James, 2013). During *Seeing/drawing,* occasional fleeting glances at the paper were permitted in between the marks being made. However, during *Blind drawing* (Figure 4.2), *Rapid drawing* and *Continuous drawing* exercises, participants were asked to avoid looking at the paper. Nicolaïdes (1969) notes how a certain kind of experience emerges when the gaze is sustained upon the drawing subject. In this regard, Kellogg (1970) recommends drawing while the eyes are closed.

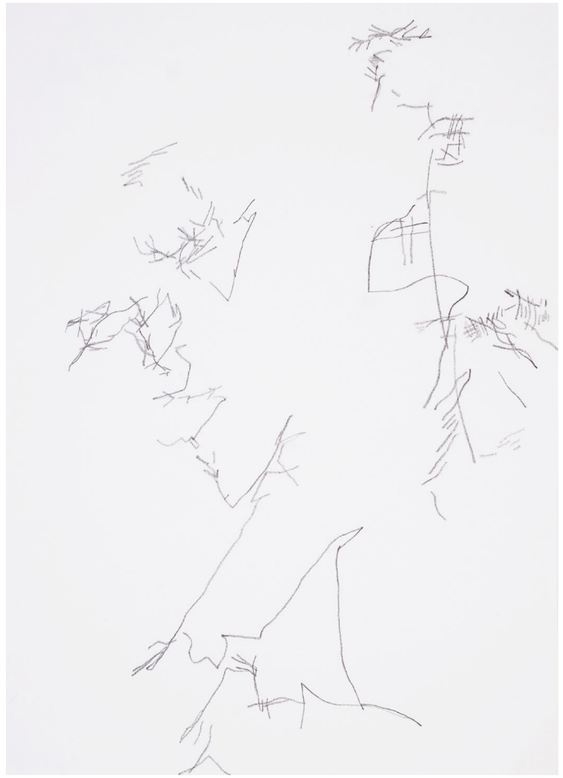


Figure 4.2. Example of the *Blind drawing* activity, marking the lines of my palm (Gannon, E. May, 2019).

Sensation

The sensation category connected the sense of touch to a drawing activity. In the activity *Touching nature* (Heath, 2014; Kingston, 2003; Maslen & Southern, 2011), the participant's eyes remained closed and they used only their fingers as reference. Accordingly, tactile sensations were translated into marks on the paper (Figure 4.3). Here, tactile awareness offers the potential for engaging mark making (Maslen & Southern, 2011).

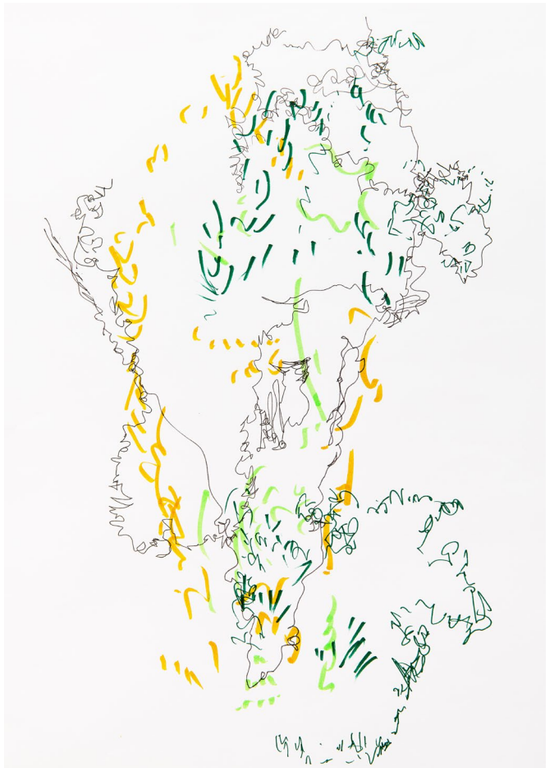


Figure 4.3. Example of the *Touching nature* activity, recording the felt sensation of touching a moss covered stick (Gannon, E. June, 2020).

Physicality

The physicality activities offered a change in the relationship between the mindful drawer and the drawing tool. The activities included: *Using your non-dominant hand* (Capacchione, 2019; Clayton, 2014; Edwards, 2012), *Using your foot* (Berman, 2010) and *Using a bundle of tools* (Maslen & Southern, 2011; McNiff, 1998b; Sherman, 2014) (Figure 4.4). In the activity *Using a bundle of tools*, multiple tools used simultaneously created a physical change to conventional mark making because drawing was now recorded by multiple, simultaneous, linear transferences. In selecting these exercises I was cognisant of McNiff's (1998b) claim that using an unaccustomed pencil grip may result in an altered drawing experience. I also incorporated Sherman's (2014) proposition that the dominant hand's muscle memory becomes habituated in its gestures and this may be circumvented by using one's non-dominant hand.

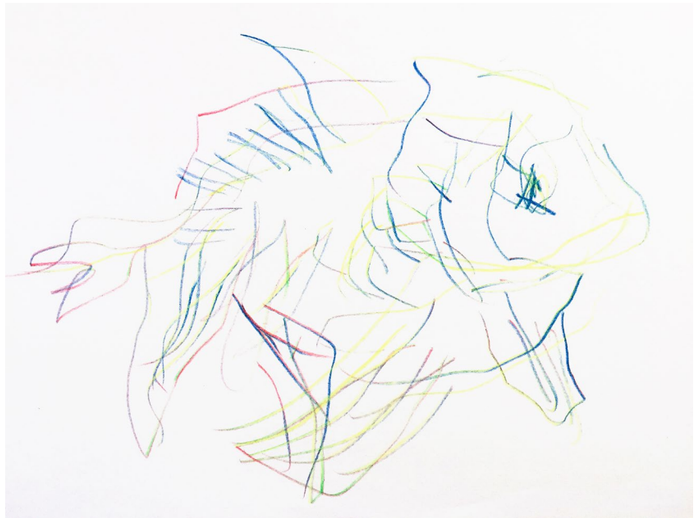


Figure 4.4. Example of the *Using your foot* activity to draw a fish[73] (Gannon, E. November, 2019).

73 While the exercise focuses on using one's foot to draw, Fox Weber (2009) describes how the Bauhaus artist Klee would encourage students to observe fish within an aquarium and be inspired by their distinct markings and forms.

Duplication

Duplication exercises involved casting a shadow across the paper and tracing the resulting silhouette. Thus, an exercise like *Tracing* (Allen, 1995; Sherman, 2014; Gregory, 2015) offered a tangible guide for the placement of marks upon the paper (Figure 4.5). In such an exercise, one dwells in the process of quietly recording something temporary and organic. Allen (1995) discusses such activities as protective spaces for a nervous or beginner drawer.

Figure 4.5. Example of the *Tracing* activity, where the shadow of a fern is recorded (Gannon, E. November, 2019).

Intuitive mark making

The intuitive mark making exercises focused on making abstract forms without the use of a drawing reference. Thus, an activity like *Colouring in* (Carsley & Heath, 2018; Mantzios & Giannou, 2018; Santos, 2014) offers a method of mark making that is free from anxieties about representation, prescription or accuracy (Letourneau & Yencer, 2014) (Figure 4.6). Mantzios and Giannou (2018) suggest that such simple activities offer a focus that may expand attention and awareness. Here, the expression of the mark becomes of greater importance than its comprehension (Germer & Neeser, 2010).

Figure 4.6. Example of the *Colouring in* activity (Gannon, E. October, 2019).

Simplicity

Exercises under the simplicity category were associated with simple or repetitive mark making using dots, lines or shapes. The activity *Joining the dots* (Ching, 1990; Sherman, 2014) offered an accessible entry point into making simple marks because of its non-association with representational drawing (Figure 4.7). In *Travelling* (Borgman, 1981; Brunetti, 2011; James, 2013: Klee, 1968) repeated marks or patterns are drawn from one side of the paper to the other. In selecting this activity, I was aware that McNiff (1998b) suggests continual movement and reiteration may allow self-consciousness to be relinquished.

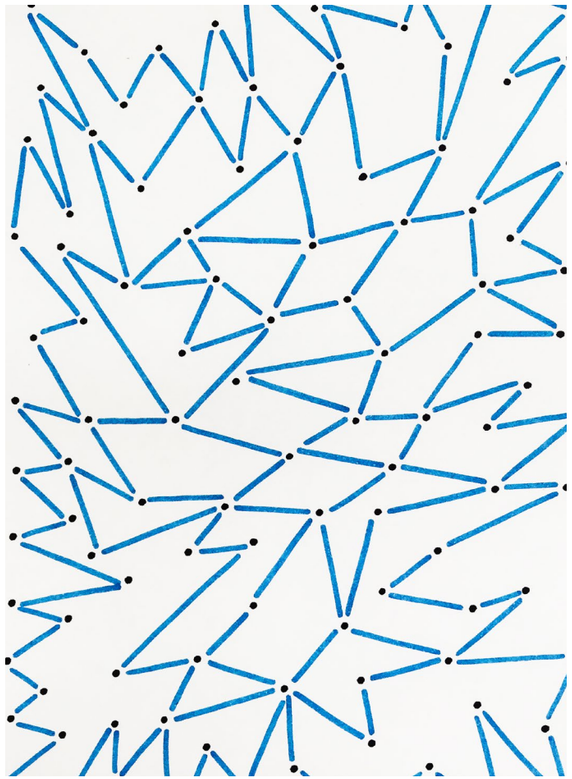


Figure 4.7. Example of the *Joining the dots* activity, connecting randomly placed dots with lines (Gannon, E. December, 2019).

Novelty

Novelty exercises may be seen as a more playful form of mark making. These activities included: *Monsters* (Barry, 2019; Sherman, 2014), *Time lapse* (Brunetti, 2011; McNiff, 1998b) and *Using blind layers* (Barry, 2019). I suggested reduced time frames for these activities because this encouraged a more rapid approach to mark making that I felt might minimalise overthinking or stalling and provide a detachment from accuracy. The activity *Monsters* had a light-hearted quality due to the childlike concern with drawing fantasy creatures (Figure 4.8). In *Time-lapse*, a castle was repeatedly drawn in shorter increments of time. I was also aware when selecting and refining these activities, that Barry (2019) suggests increasing speed in a drawing activity may enable more spontaneous mark making that takes on a life of its own. In the activity *Using blind layers,* a skeleton is drawn three times using different coloured pencils, while the eyes are closed.

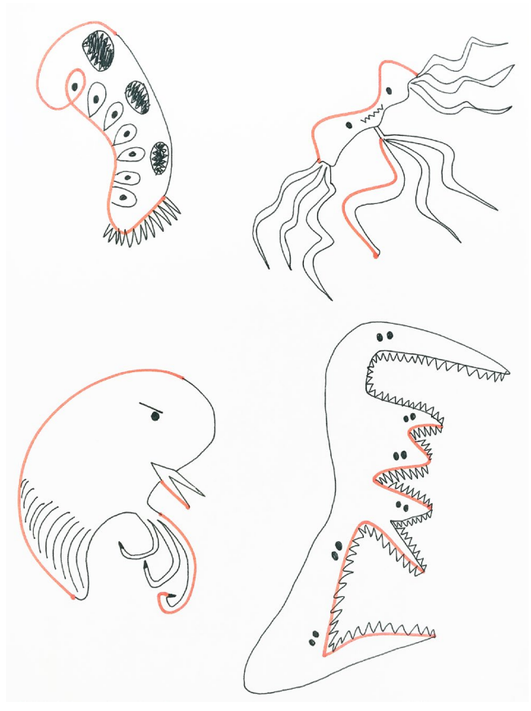


Figure 4.8. Example of the *Monsters* activity. An orange pen is used to create an initial scribble from which subsequent marks are made using a black pen (Gannon, E. November, 2019).

These exercises were carried into Phase 2 of the study. They were predicated on affording participants diverse opportunities to experience present moment awareness while drawing. In making this selection of exercises, I was aware that some researchers, when testing mindful awareness, have limited themselves to one drawing activity (Carsley & Heath, 2018; Grant et al., 2004). However, my decision to provide a range of exercises reflected an awareness of the multifarious and nuanced nature of drawing and an appreciation of the different temperaments of individuals. I was aware that what might be considered mindful for one individual might not be regarded in the same way by another.

Section 2: Findings and discussion

The project's aim was to investigate three questions: What drawing strategies and methods might facilitate the pursuit of mindfulness? What contingencies and conditions of practice need to be taken into account when engaging with mindful drawing, and what benefits can be derived from mindful drawing? In this section I present participants' engagement with mindful drawing exercises and I reflect on how their experiences relate to the study's questions. Data was drawn from pre- and post- drawing interviews, participants' private journals and drawings emanating from 14 days of involvement with the project.

Introduction

The discussion of findings begins with the pre-drawing interview which considers insights from participants' past mindfulness and drawing experience. The post-drawing interview discusses themes that emerged from participants' experiences of a mindful drawing practice relating to Judgment and expectation, Enjoyment, Seeing deeper and Accessibility.

Representation of data

While the description of themes traditionally contains interview transcript quotations, many of the descriptions within this study are presented as poetic inquiry. Short poetic forms including haikus, tankas and lunes are used throughout the findings as an alternative to traditional interview extracts. With their condensed forms, these constructions offer a concentrated presentation of the crux of the study. Lahman et al. argue that such shortened poetic forms offer value because they "may be seen as the abstract, thesis, nucleus, kernel, essence, or core" (2011, p. 894). While excerpts from interviews are presented in quotation marks, poetic inquiry is presented without these devices. This stylistic differentiation indicates that the text has been edited from the original transcript. In addition, given their edited form, these short, poetic works do not begin with a capital letter and they do not conform to the structural tenets of academic prose. When analysing both the pre- and post- interview transcripts, I instituted both an analytical and poetic lens. As such, I quote directly from the transcript, and in other instances, I sometimes provide poetic crystalisation of a participant's reflection. On a few occasions, I quote from participants' journals. Because all of the participants used their journals as a memory aid during their post-drawing interviews, they often read out loud entries when discussing certain activities. Multiple poetic forms were created through the analysis process to find the 'essence' that most succinctly represented the insights. In total, 169 short poems, 348 haikus, 51 tankas and 57 lunes were created from the pre- and post- drawing interview transcripts. Glesne (1997) suggests that such poetic forms of inquiry offer a reflective space that "opens up a spirit of discovery and creation in the research, and in the reader, who may begin to think about the process and product of research in very different ways" (p. 216). The nature of poetic crystalisation is illustrated in Table 4.2.

Quote	Short poem	Haiku	Tanka	Lune
"I really appreciated the opportunity of seeing the unseen. So, getting so deep into something that I would draw that. I would notice things that I otherwise wouldn't and appreciate the essence of the object […] a transcendental way of looking at things. It was a different way of connecting to that object in nature."	seeing the unseen notice things I otherwise wouldn't getting so deep into something appreciate the essence of the object a transcendental way of looking a different way of connecting	essence of object a transcendental looking seeing the unseen	essence of object a transcendental looking seeing the unseen appreciate the essence connecting to that object	appreciate the essence a transcendental way of looking seeing the unseen

Table 4.2. The five categories of representing data from participant A's insight.
All poetic structures have been created from the original transcript.

Participant pre-drawing findings

During the pre-drawing interview, participants were asked to discuss their past mindfulness and drawing experience. The study found that past experiences with mindfulness were varied and none of the participants identified as having formal mindfulness practitioner training. Accordingly, experiences of creative activities undertaken with mindful awareness were limited.[74] Prior drawing experience was mainly confined to childhood, with a few exceptions of art-related experiences as adults. Drawing was judged on its aesthetic value and had not been previously explored as a method to increase mindfulness.

Mindfulness experience

Interview data suggested that the participants shared a common understanding of mindfulness described as moment-by-moment awareness (Germer, 2016). Most mindfulness practices centred around breathing meditations, in which the mind was focused upon the present moment. For example, participant B discussed how focusing the mind allowed a peaceful experience to occur:

> *"I associate mindfulness with meditation and a sense of peace and calmness. Being in the present moment and not letting our monkey brain get the better of us."*

As participant B explained, a distracted 'monkey mind'[75] can disrupt present moment awareness.

Participants had previously engaged with a range of mindfulness practices. For example, participant B discussed an engagement with a reiki meditation and shared how it offered a peaceful way to engage with the present moment:

> *"When I'm done and I've, y'know, open my eyes… then it's just like a really nice sense of peace or like tranquility just like, yeah there's definitely a few seconds of just calmness."*

Participant A also discussed breathing meditations and witnessing delusional thoughts during a mindfulness practice:

> *"You see that your mind is really tricking you at times … you might come to the realisation that the reality is different from what is initially thought."*

Participants discussed breathing meditations that included vipassana, box breathing,[76] facilitated mediation retreats, and guided breathing mediations accessed via the use of an app. Embodied movement practices included dancing to music and nature walks through the bush and by the sea. For example, participant C explained how an experience of being at the beach allowed them to feel present in the moment:

> *"Looking out at the expansiveness of the ocean. That was really meditative for me. Listening to the sounds of the waves crashing on the beach."*

Alternative experiences of mindfulness included shamanic journeying,[77] listening mindfully in conversation, paying attention to one's heart rate, journaling and spending time with animals. Only participant D noted that they had previously engaged with a creative mindfulness practice. This experience occurred in a workplace where people were encouraged to use a wall as a surface to draw freely upon.

> *"This needs to be my wall to sit and draw and doodle in here because I need time to disconnect from what I'm doing. […] I just wish I could sit here and just do this rather than my job because some days are just really hard."*

Participants demonstrated existing mindfulness practices that covered a broad spectrum of techniques. This mindful awareness was achieved through structured and less formal practices tailored to suit personal temperaments and circumstances.

74 By creative mindfulness practices I am referring to a creative practice which is considered using an introspective or meditative method.

75 Referred to in Buddhist teachings, monkey mind is the lowest degree of concentration, whereby the mind uncontrollably wanders (Komagata & Komagata, 2010), while Gunaratana likens monkey mind to a "waterfall of thought" (2011, p. 155).

76 Box breathing is a technique that involves a 4 second cycle of inhaling, holding the breath, exhaling and holding the breath.

77 Gingras et al. (2014) explains that shamanic journeying is "associated with an ancient spiritual practice to reach shamanic trance states" (p. 1) and that present Western rituals may involve the act of repetitive drumming that facilitates a transition to a different state of awareness.

Drawing experience

The participants in the study did not draw as adults and considered their drawing skills to be limited. As noted earlier, participants were selected due to their lack of professional drawing experience, and this is reflected in their discussions. For example, participant D discussed a lack of artistic self-belief and anticipated that an attempt to create a lifelike drawing would result in a deficient outcome:

> *"I was never particularly artistic. I don't feel I've had that skill nurtured in me […] I'm always willing to give things a go but I think I'd find it really entertaining. Because it would be pretty, pretty, shockingly bad."*

Adult art making experiences included private drawing of stick figures, cartoons, doodling[78] and repetitive patterns. Public experiences of art making included an informal group painting session and using basic drawing techniques as a tool to convey an idea within a workplace. Participants recalled childhood art practices like pottery, collage and linoleum cutting. Their childhood experiences of drawing involved activities such as *Colouring in* and using the imagination to create simple forms. For all participants, adult art making and drawing was perceived as demonstrating minimal technical skill. Thus, participant B emphasised a preference for drawing exercises to remain private because of their concern that what they might produce would lack aesthetic value:

> *"It would probably just stay in my notebook forever. […] I probably wouldn't show it to anyone because I don't think it looks that nice."*

In describing what constitutes drawing, some of the participants referred to the work of established artists. For example, participant D referenced gallery works created by Dali, that they felt demonstrated qualities such as spacial awareness, depth and richness:

> *"Something lifelike. Or someone who could do something like art in an art gallery. I think of Dali and how he does the clocks and the scissors and it's just like Oh wow! The spacial awareness on a page and putting colours together in a way that makes sense. Designing something that's got a bit more depth. A richness to it."*

78 Culhane (2017) explains how doodling is unplanned and spontaneous mark making in which there is "no censoring, just doing and discovering" (p. 8).

Most of the participants felt that drawing competently involved the ability to be effortlessly 'accurate'. For example, participant E stated:

> *"… to be able to draw an object accurately. Like for somebody else to come along and go oh, that's a chair or that's a table […] to be able to convey what they were thinking in a picture form, not sort of struggling to put what you've obviously seen before."*

Many of the participants discussed how they aspired to create 'quality' drawings, but they felt that they possessed insufficient technical training or natural talent. For example, participant A said:

> *"Drawing was never really my forte […] You start with a work of art, obviously, in your mind's eye. You already know what you want to achieve, or at least you have glimpses of the beautiful painting you want to get and then when it starts to go in the wrong direction you want to rescue it. But it goes from bad to worse and next thing you know, it's not even possible […] not being able to get there can cause struggle because you want to rectify. And yet you don't have the skills necessary […] I would like it to be a work of art of course!"*

Even when participants wanted to improve their drawing skills, they felt frustrated by not knowing how to progress their technical abilities. For example, participant E spent three months studying architecture in high school but withdrew from the course. They recalled:

> *"I couldn't understand how you would get better at it […] Math right, I can look at an easy problem and be like oh, I know that, and then a harder problem go, oh, I don't know that, but once you explain the answer to me, I'm like oh okay, I can see how you go there and therefore next time I'll know how to do it. And you can practice, and you get better. But drawing to me was so abstract."*

Frustration permeated many of the interviews, and participants often questioned the point of pursuing a creative path that continually made them feel judged and substandard. For example, participant C made the distinction between drawing experiences in childhood and those encountered at high school:

> *"All of a sudden, it becomes less about enjoying the process and actually getting the technique or techniques right and it has to match the art teachers' preferences […] When you're a kid it's so much fun. Spend like hours, an entire weekend just drawing or creating things. And then as you get older, those things have to have a purpose or a value. They can't just be because you enjoy going through the creative process."*

The participant pre-drawing interviews suggested that experiences of frustration when drawing and art-making may be related to meeting perceived criteria, especially when the focus of drawing practice moves from expressive enjoyment to demonstrating and being judged on technical skill. While the sample is small, this finding supports existing research that suggests when visual accuracy[79] is regarded as a superior aspect of the drawing process, the pursuit of drawing for enjoyment can be marginalised (Anning & Ring, 2004). Pre-drawing interviews also indicated similar experiences of drawing across the participants, where positive experiences were largely associated with childhood. Subsequently, drawing as an adult posed a challenge because of a pervasive sense of self-judgment and judgment by others.

Having dealt with findings from the pre-drawing interview, I will now discuss participants' experiences of the 14 days of mindful drawing practice.

79 Cohen and Bennett (1997) define visual accuracy as depicting "a particular object at a particular time and in a particular space, rendered with little addition of visual details that cannot be seen in the object represented or with little deletion of visual detail" (p. 609). They use the example of a photograph as being accurate in its depiction of an object.

Participant post-drawing findings

In overview, the study results found that participants' experiences of using simple drawing activities allowed mindfulness to be increased, and the exercises were seen as largely enjoyable and engaging. Participants were able to explore a different relationship to drawing through a variety of different mark making activities and they experienced a shift in emphasis around what might constitute drawing.

While participants' experiences of specific activities differed, there was a consensus with regards to drawing's potential to be enjoyable and more accessible (compared to their earlier frustrations with inaccuracy and beliefs that drawing was an unobtainable skill). Through a 14 day engagement with specific activities, attention was more easily focused on the present moment, allowing a mindful drawing experience to be cultivated.

Following the completion of 14 days of mindful drawing, the participants discussed their experiences at the post-drawing interview. In analysing the participants' interview data, four key themes emerged (Figure 4.9):

Judgment and expectation
Enjoyment
Seeing deeper and
Accessibility.

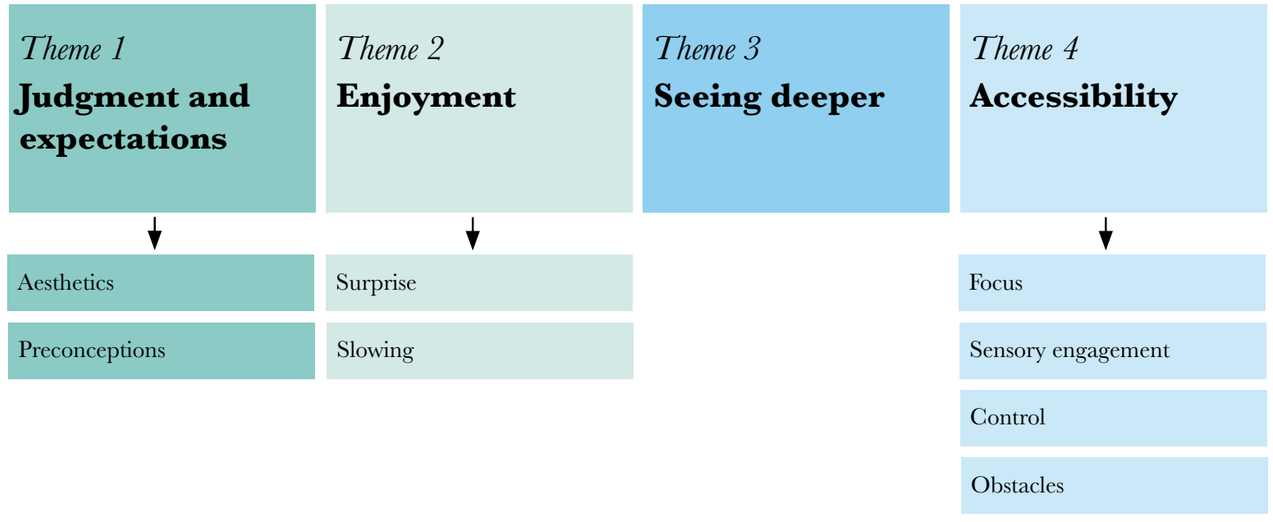


Figure 4.9. The themes and sub-themes that emerged from the interview data.

Judgment and expectation

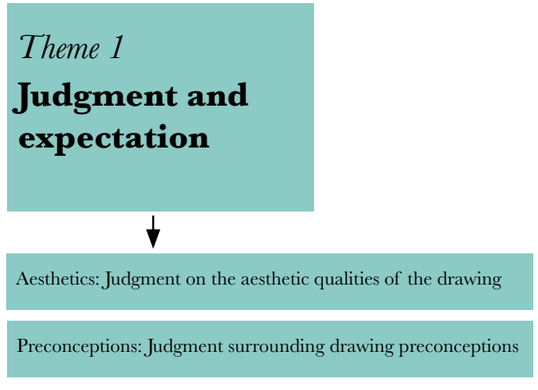


Figure 4.10. Judgment and expectation theme and sub-themes.

Overview

The most prevalent finding to emerge from the study was that debilitating judgment and expectations were frequently experienced by all participants when approaching a mindful drawing practice (Figure 4.10). Expectations and related labels or roles Langer (1989) suggests are associated with mindlessness, in that they "work to direct attention to certain information and consequently away from other information" (p. 151). This may result in new or prospective information being overlooked. Negative judgments of the aesthetic quality and the arrangement of marks were seen as indicative of the participants' drawing ability. In addition, existing definitions and preconceptions associated with the word 'drawing' also contributed to participants experiencing frustration due to high expectations that their drawings should be accurate representations of the subject. It is useful to consider this issue through two sub-themes: aesthetics and preconceptions of drawing.

Aesthetics

The study found that despite a central concern with mindfulness, all participants observed instances of judgment based on visual aesthetics. They all reported a desire for their drawings to display technical competency. While they acknowledged a lack of formal skills required to produce sophisticated levels of representational drawing, there was still a strong desire to be perceived as drawing well. For example, participant B stated:

> *"I don't see myself as an artist or a drawer, so despite my best efforts and not judging myself because I know that it's not something that I'm naturally good at, I shouldn't be expecting anything from it. But I'm still urg, why can't I make my drawing more realistic? Why can't I make my drawing more, just like good looking?"*

Significantly, this participant later discussed how activities completed with one's eyes closed offered a release from the desire to make representational drawings:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a short poem**
"But when I didn't have to look at it, it didn't have to resemble anything so I could just do whatever I want basically […] There wasn't like any need to control anything because I could just do whatever I want […] It is very freeing to draw something without looking at the thing. Now I don't have to worry about how it looks. I'm not going to judge how it looks and it's nice to only look at the object and just focus on it without having to overthink things."	it's very freeing to draw without looking not judge how it looks it didn't have to resemble anything there wasn't any need to control I could do whatever I want

When attempting a new activity, participants' initial enthusiasm could quickly result in feelings of intimidation and expectations that things 'needed' to go well.

Interviews revealed that the desire to achieve representational drawing competency ran deeply through participants' experiences. For example, participant D demonstrated judgment on drawings that they believed to be falling short of aesthetic expectations:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a short poem**
"In my head, I'm like 'oh, I can draw it like this' and it comes out like vomit drawings, it looks nothing like what you imagine it to be."	in my head 'oh, I can draw it like this' and it comes out like vomit drawings nothing like what you imagine

There were often accounts of apprehension concerning a disjunction between the pre-imagined drawing and the reality of what was produced. This discrepancy often led to a sense of frustration. Frustration also appeared when some of the participants wrestled with self-doubt regarding technical competence. Indicative of this is participant D's discussion about drawing with a non-dominant hand:

> *"I just thought it would be a mess […] it wasn't gonna be, whatever not as good means. Which is dumb, right? Because I don't even draw so what's good? And judging by the state of my drawings, it's not like I'm some sort of Picasso."*

This said, it is worth noting that when the drawing activity was completed, a discovery was made that the drawing wasn't as bad as expected, and this provoked questioning about what 'good' actually means.

Frustrations about what might be 'good' aesthetically were experienced even when participants were undertaking drawing activities within a short timeframe. For example, in discussing engagements with the *Time Lapse* activity, participant E said:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a haiku**
"I need for it to look like, somewhat of castle. That was the finish. Even though one of them was like five seconds."	even five seconds I need for it to look like somewhat of castle

These accounts of experience are interesting when considered in relation to Bowman's (2018) assertion that drawing without attention paid to the aesthetic arrangement can minimise self-judgment, allowing participants freer expression because all emerging marks are accepted. Kabat-Zinn (2014b) also notes that suspending judgments relating to what is 'good' or 'bad' can offer a form of liberation because each moment is able to be accepted as it is. Kabat-Zinn argues that engaging in mindful activity negates the advancement of skill, because the practice refers to developing mindfulness. Thus, it was recognised that judgment and expectation needed to be released in order for a mindful drawing experience to occur.

The marginalisation of such judgment appeared to be achievable in several ways. In certain instances engaging with an entirely new kind of mark making activity appeared to enable disconnection from judgment and mindful awareness to occur. For example, participant C's recollections might be crystalised as:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a short poem**
"Because I haven't done this before there weren't any like expectations to connect to, So I was just kind of present and […] taking in the experience more. […] I found this an energising exercise to do."	because I haven't done this before there weren't any expectations to connect to so I was just present taking in the experience more energising exercise

In addition, engaging in a novelty activity was sometimes experienced as energising, because of a lack of expectation. With no past experience, there was no measure of what 'success' might look like and this appeared to help participants to be more present moment focused. As indicative of this, participant B discussed feeling 'childlike' again when engaging in the *Tracing* exercise:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a lune**
"Then I was like, I guess the results doesn't matter. It's just the experience. So, using sunlight to create shadows for tracing feels like an activity from my childhood. Because I think I did a lot of tracing when I was young for some reason. It was almost like art classes 101 when you're five. They give you something to trace. You trace over something and then you draw it in. So, I felt like a child again […] I feel like drawing things brings out the inner child in me."	drawing brings out the inner child in me results don't matter

It also became evident that engaging more frequently in a mindful drawing practice may decrease judgment over time. For example, participant D discussed how with practice, self-judgment was able to be lessened:

> *"Self-judgment on something as simple as drawing continued to diminish, and therefore that calls in more space and grace for the self, which therefore translates to more space and grace for everyone around you."*

Most participants reported that judgment was reduced during activities when their eyes were closed (i.e. *Blind drawing*), when attention was focused on the subject rather than the drawing (i.e. *Seeing/drawing*), when hand control was restricted (i.e. *Using your non-dominant hand*) and when mark making was loose or repetitive (i.e. *Colouring in)*. Participants also noted that when indicators of drawing accuracy were invisible, preoccupations with aesthetic refinement could no longer be judged, and attention could be concentrated on mindful drawing.

The participants found that previously unexplored or unfamiliar drawing activities held minimal expectations as to what was a technically appropriate visual arrangement of marks. In this regard, a novelty activity may provide greater accessibility due to the lack of expectations.

Preconceptions

Another factor that appeared to impact levels of frustration was the participants' existing conceptions of what constitutes a drawing. Interviews revealed that outcomes were often anticipated before participants began an activity. Participant D, for example, discussed a desire to create the ideal drawing conditions from the outset:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a short poem**
"I'm about to start it, I'm like oh it needs to be perfect conditions […] all these things my mind throws up in my way, because like I'm like gonna start something new […] we hold ourselves back from things, or just like that potential of trying something new, can be really scary for people, even if it's something as lovely as this."	I'm about to start oh it needs to be perfect conditions all these things my mind throws in my way we hold ourselves back from things trying something new can be really scary even something as lovely as this

All participants discussed a desire to produce a visual outcome that would demonstrate skill and accuracy. Interview data suggested that the term 'drawing' appears to have come with preconceived notions that may have impacted the potential for a mindful drawing experience. This was especially evident in activities where a physical or imaginary subject formed part of the exercise. By this I mean Deep Seeing and Physicality exercises like: *Seeing/drawing, Blind drawing, Rapid drawing, Continuous drawing* and *Using your non-dominant hand, Using your foot* or *Using a bundle of tools* to draw an object from nature. The same issue arose in imaginative exercises that contained some level of representation, like drawing a castle in *Time Lapse* or a skeleton in *Using blind layers*. Frustration about these forms of drawing is illustrated by participant C who experienced a demarcation between drawing objects and mindful activities that did not involve imaginary or physical artefacts:

> *"I think drawing is a more serious activity, with an outcome. Like I'm going to draw this person's face and it is going to look like this. And again, it has those expectations that it has to look good. Whereas doodling for me, it's just for me, and it's just a fun exercise or a destressing exercise. Whereas, when I think of drawing, I think of art, and then it has those implications and those connotations."*

It appears that exercises like *Travelling* or *Joining the dots* that placed less emphasis on demonstrating drawing competency, may have afforded a reduction in anxieties around aesthetic refinement. For example, participant A stated:

> *"I like doodling! […] Relaxed. It's just fun. It's not something that I do with a certain goal in mind or challenge or anything. Having fun and experimenting with being silly, playful."*

It appears that by labelling an activity with a term like 'doodling' (rather than drawing), participants were able to more easily lower their expectations and permit themselves to make uninhibited marks. It is interesting to note that participants often used the verb 'doodling' to describe certain activities, even though this was not a definition I employed in the naming of activities or in the accompanying instructions to the exercises (See Table 4.1). Participant E's reporting on pre-existing perspectives on drawing before commencing the study might serve as an illustration:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a short poem**
"It's made me realise my relationship with drawing was very, like one dimensional and very set […] I've always had a like a, bias and a preconceived notion of what drawing means and what arts mean and crafts stuff so, not surprising I was never good at it and I don't-didn't particularly enjoy it either. It did feel like a bit of a waste of time back then […] in some ways it's a form of accepting or recognising what your relationship with this was, prior to this."	I've always had a bias a preconceived notion of what drawing means what arts mean not surprising I was never good I didn't particularly enjoy it felt like a waste of time it's a form of accepting recognising your relationship prior

Many of the participants noted how their definitions of drawing were created many years ago and had not been examined since. Interestingly, interviews appeared to suggest that through increased engagement with certain kinds of mindful drawing activities, one may gradually be able to challenge preconceived notions of drawing. This insight was expressed by participant E who discussed the potential benefits of drawing more frequently:

> *"People run because they feel good afterwards and it helps with their mental health and mental wellbeing, so you can't just look at somebody who runs slowly and be like, 'Why are you so bad at running?' So I've always understood that, but now it's just actually realising that drawing can be the same thing, as maybe people do it because they like to and it calms them."*

Responses to the exercises seemed to suggest that with the removal of perceived pressure to demonstrate representational drawing skills, individuals felt more at ease with the exercises and felt positive about continuing to frequently draw. The findings reported by participants may support Hassed's (2014) claim that when there is less striving to achieve a certain outcome, mindful awareness becomes more attainable. Practising mindful awareness through a drawing activity may offer a way to disengage from being results orientated so that attention can be paid more closely to the experience. Clayton (2014, p. 6) has noted that it is clear why drawings have been considered good or bad when:

> ... drawing is "good" only when it accurately depicts a scene, event, or a person's likeness and it is "bad" when it fails to achieve this. A drawing does not always have to be judged a success or failure based on whether it is a good rendering. There are different kinds of drawings and the process is what matters, as well.

Clayton suggests through the adoption of a more light-hearted approach "there is a special power in not taking every mark too seriously" (p. 4).

Because the participants suggested that the word 'drawing' comes with expectations that feel unobtainable, it might be helpful in future to use words such as 'doodling' or 'mark making' as they might suggest a greater focus on the felt experience. I also suggest the adoption of the term mindful drawing to allow a release of preconceptions about the aesthetic components of one's practice.

Summary

Findings suggest that care needs to be taken when designing activities so preoccupations with judgment (associated with attaining representational outcomes, aesthetic arrangement or improvement) are minimalised. Higher levels of mindful engagement were reported when indicators of drawing accuracy were avoided.

Accounts of judgment being diminished were related in the Deep seeing exercises (*Blind drawing* and *Seeing/drawing)* because during these practices, attention was more fully focused on the drawing subject rather than on the marks being made. Similarly, judgment was lessened in the *Using one's non-dominant hand* exercise, possibly as a consequence of restricted hand movements. Additionally, reduced levels of judgment were reported in the Duplication (*Tracing*), Intuitive mark making (*Colouring in*) and Simplicity exercises (*Joining the dots* and *Travelling*) because in these activities, mark making was repetitive or non-representational. In addition, the novelty of a mark making activity and repetitive exercises, perhaps because they could not easily be linked to preconception, also appeared to elicit lower levels of judgment.

Given that the traditional definition of drawing comes with certain expectations and preconceptions, adopting a term such as 'doodling,' 'mark making' or 'mindful drawing' may be useful in orientating emphasis on the present moment experience.

Enjoyment

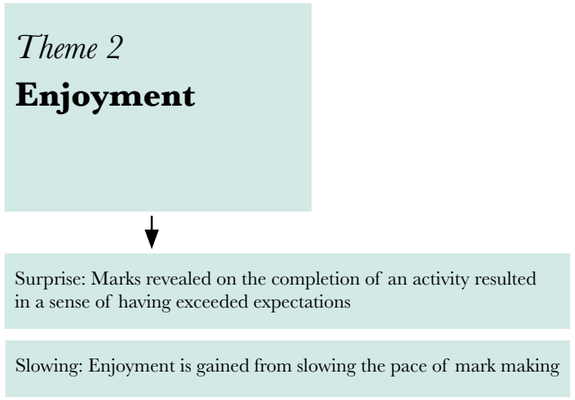


Figure 4.11. Enjoyment theme and sub-themes.

Overview

The second theme emerging from the data relates to enjoyment (Figure 4.11). After a general discussion of this principle, I will consider it through two sub-themes; surprise and slowing. The term enjoyment describes a positive state of mind exemplified by feelings of peace, calm, delight, playfulness, joyfulness and surprise. Enjoyment helped to deepen engagement with the drawing practice and allowed continued curiosity and openness to be cultivated when approaching new activities. It appears that drawing activities experienced as enjoyable from the outset led to easier engagement and adoption of frequent practice. Participant C, for example, explained how activities that contained a 'reveal' moment could offer an easier introduction to mindfulness due to their ability to provide immediate positive feedback:

> *"One of the main reasons why people find mindfulness so hard to get into is that it's difficult to like kind of focus or relax your mind and body and be in the moment and it's hard to gauge the positive effects of it especially when you're starting out. So having that little bit of like surprise, joy, delight that comes from like opening your eyes and having that reveal, I think will enable people to go back to it and practise it more often."*

Most of the participants experienced enjoyment through a sense of accomplishment when a drawing activity turned out to be richer than they anticipated. For example, participant D discussed how the exercise *Using blind layers* offered an engaging present moment focused activity that provided affirmation upon completion:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a haiku**
"I felt more confident […] impressed with myself, which was such a nerdy thing, to say, because I can't draw but I was like, oh yeah, I nailed this one! I had this like sense of accomplishment at the end of it."	felt more confident a sense of accomplishment because I can't draw

Due to the enjoyment experienced, participant D talked about missing mindful practice on days when a drawing wasn't completed:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a short poem**
"Life's not as fun as you think it is because you forget to do awesome stuff like this. So, on the days that you do this you feel, I find, more like, centred, more peaceful, more fulfilled. And then on the days where you don't, you miss that feeling and you know it comes from doing something beautiful for yourself like this."	on the days you do this you feel more centred, peaceful, fulfilled then on days you don't you miss that feeling you know it comes from doing something beautiful for yourself like this

A few participants also experienced enjoyment when certain activities reminded them of past positive art making experiences. Participant B, in a reflective journal, stated:

> *"Drawing things makes me feel like a child again (in a good way). Feels like we take everything so seriously as adults."*

It became evident that engaging in an enjoyable activity created a positive experience for the participants. Participant D, for example, discussed how they enjoyed the *Monsters* activity:

> *"I enjoy how colourful they were and how silly they were, I just thought they were delightful to do."*

Specifically, participant D recommended the *Monsters* activity to someone unaccustomed to mindfulness because of the potential to experience enjoyment:

> *"Monsters is probably a really good one to really help people, it's such a joyful one […] from a perspective of someone who doesn't have a mindful practice […] I think you'd go in with a low level of judgment."*

In contrast, participant C discussed how the *Monsters* activity wasn't as enjoyable:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a short poem**
"It's not the most pleasant thing to think and draw about monsters. I didn't find it to be very meditative. I've written that I prefer the abstract, the more abstract things and inspiration from nature, rather than like depending on my brain and thinking about my memory and thinking about monsters."	it's not the most pleasant thing to think and draw about monsters I didn't find it to be very meditative I prefer the abstract and inspiration from nature rather than depending on my brain and memory and thinking about monsters

From this comparison, it can be seen that enjoyment of an activity can vary depending on individual preferences.

McNiff (1998b) suggests that adopting a childlike expression can allow reconnections to joy and playfulness, and that this may encourage exploration into qualities such as spontaneity and the engagement of the imagination. Specifically, the participants in the study found that activities where their eyes were closed or the gaze was fixed on a subject reduced aesthetic judgment, and a more enjoyable drawing experience occurred. Additionally, novelty activities (i.e. *Monsters* and *Using blind layers)* that encourage joyful engagement may provide a positive experience for certain individuals, and this may offer greater potential in accessing mindful awareness.

Surprise

The results of this study indicate that most of the participants experienced an element of surprise when reviewing marks they had made. Surprise was felt in two distinct ways. The first was a result of a drawing exercise exceeding initial expectations. For example, participant A discussed surprise in exceeding the anticipated outcome of a drawing activity:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a short poem**
"I enjoyed it more than I thought I will. I even surprised myself because I would look at the result and I thought Actually this is kind of decent […] Seeing the results and then being surprised by the result […] I love nuggets of surprising myself and saying You can do it. You actually have that side to you which you might have denied for a very long time […] I think I can draw! […] I think that it did unleash a part of believing that Well yeah I can draw, and I can actually enjoy the process and I can have fun with it […] and it definitely unleashed that acceptance of the drawing […] I surprised myself on a number of occasions where I thought maybe you're underestimating yourself. Maybe we all can draw but we don't let ourselves to actually go there."	I surprised myself actually, this is kind of decent! I love nuggets of surprising myself you can do it! you have that side you've denied for a very long time it did unleash a part of believing I can draw! I can enjoy the process have fun with it it unleased acceptance of the drawing maybe you're underestimating yourself maybe we all can draw but we don't let ourselves go there

This participant noted that frequent drawing can lead to increased levels of acceptance because previously held expectations can be overturned. Upon reviewing a drawing during their interview, they also reflected on how lower expectations associated with the *Using your non-dominant hand* exercise enabled them to more easily accept the marks they were making. After completing the drawing, participant A explained that:

> *"It was really interesting to see how clumsy it was. But at the same time, it's a decent drawing and I thought 'Oh.' So, in a way all that clumsiness, it can be done. That means, what would it be if you exercised it? […] Where else is this the rule that we are not noticing, but we're just taking it as-is? And never challenging if this is the reality of it. So how much are we limiting ourselves in different ways?"*

Significantly, in this reflection, the participant drew on the experience of completing such a drawing to question how reality is constructed.

Most participants discussed surprise at the *Using your Non-dominant hand* exercise results because, despite the physical awkwardness of the activity, the experience and outcome turned out better than expected. It appears that by embracing a looser style of mark making, they were able to expand their perspectives on the kind of marks that offered value, which challenged previously held judgments.

Surprise also surfaced in exercises involving drawing without looking at the marks appearing on the paper. In activities like *Blind drawing*, *Using blind layers* and *Touching nature*, a 'reveal' moment was created upon opening one's eyes and discovering the nature of the completed work. Participant C linked the sensation of an enjoyable surprise to anticipation and the reduction of judgment:

> *"I was turning off the parts of my brain that place judgments […] because all of that expectation is eradicated by these different elements, I was like I can do whatever I want, it's fine! By not knowing what the end result is gonna be, I introduce an element of excitement due to awaiting a surprise."*

Because there was less preoccupation with an expected outcome and the result was a surprising revelation, participants positively anticipated the viewing of marks, which contributed towards their enjoyment of the activity. In discussing a *Blind drawing* exercise, participant E recalled:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a tanka**
"The consistency of blind drawing surprised me, in the sense that, I mean it kind of was what I was imagining in my head, whereas I thought if I opened my eyes, it would be all over the show […] I thought it would be quite messy, like in terms of the actual drawing itself, so I thought it wouldn't really make any sense but when I actually looked at it and I was like Oh, no, well each of those lines, each of those colours does make sense."	I thought it would be all over the show, messy it wouldn't make sense but each of those lines, colours when I looked, each does make sense

Thus, participants found that a drawing could still have a communicative visual component even if their marks lack accuracy in the arrangement. Similarly, they noticed that when keeping their eyes fixed upon a subject, they experienced less judgment about the aesthetic nature of the drawing. This finding appears to be consistent with Capacchione's (2019) suggestion that unknown intricacies and skills may be uncovered when expectations are set aside during an activity that offers an element of surprise.

Joyful engagement was reported in novelty activities such as in *Monsters* and *Using blind layers*. However, participants reported mixed experiences with the *Monsters* activity, reflecting that certain activities may be better suited to different temperaments.

The study's findings suggest that activities offering a surprising, revealing moment may enable richer, less anxious engagement with the drawing process. In proposing this finding, I am aware that Langer (1989) observes that individuals who are open to novelty and surprise may have heightened chances of creative engagement. By extension, Kalmanowitz and Ho (2016) argue that the creative process assists the opportunity of surprise, and its combination with mindfulness may increase self-awareness and awareness of wider contexts.

Slowing

The second sub-theme related to enjoyment relates to pace. While a slow momentum may not be a requisite for mindfulness (Gunaratana, 2011), Brown and Ryan (2003) explain that in the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) rushing through an activity with less attention paid to the task is used as a marker to gauge lack of mindfulness. Slom (2020) argues that slowing down allows concentration to be refined so that joy may be experienced in the present moment.

In this study, many participants experienced enjoyment by slowing down the pace of physical mark making. For example, participant B recalled:

> *"When I slowed down, that was when I really started to enjoy it. And when I slowed down, I feel like time has slowed down as well."*

Participant D found that a slower pace practice afforded deeper present moment awareness and intentionality:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a short poem**
"With the left-handed one there was without thinking and on reflection, I think I spent, I think that I was super intentional […] the most like, slow-it-down, be-here-now and intentional […] the process was all about being here, being present and slowing it down so much."	super intentional the most slow-it-down be-here-now the process was all about being here being present and slowing it down

When attempting an activity that required drawing in shorter time frames, the faster pace could make the experience feel rushed and diminish the enjoyment. For example, participant C discussed the time constraints involved in the activity *Time Lapse*:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a short poem**
"I didn't really like it because of the feeling rushed, the time element I didn't really like. I feel like I can't really like focus when there's a, like any deadlines, I freak out […] doing the task I didn't really enjoy doing it […] but I really liked reflecting on it. So, like once it had been done just like looking back at it and observing the differences, I really enjoyed that."	I didn't really like it the feeling rushed the time element I can't really focus when there's deadlines I freak out doing the task I didn't really enjoy but I really liked reflecting on it looking back and observing the differences

Thus, activities that suggest shorter durations, may not provide an enjoyable experience for individuals who prefer drawing at a slower pace.

The study found that slower movement when drawing offered a way to more fully enjoy the present moment. This finding may support Jones Callahan's (2016) suggestion that intentional slowing down allows the mind an opportunity to relax and this may increase the potential of mindfulness occurring. In concordance with this, Kabat-Zinn (2014b) suggests adopting a slower pace to alleviate rushing in order to cultivate greater acceptance of the presence in that "If you miss the *here,* you are likely to miss the *there.* If your mind is not centered here, it is likely not to be centered just because you arrive somewhere else" (p. 147). From these observations, we might conclude that, if impatience while drawing is experienced, altering movement to a slower pace may offer a useful way of reconnecting with the present moment.

Summary

The inquiry suggests that enjoyment may contribute to deeper engagement during a mindful drawing activity, which may lead to heightened levels of absorption and concentration (Rao, 2018). In the study, participants found that elements of surprise contributed to their sense of enjoyment, especially when expectations were exceeded at the revelation of obscured marks.

Participants experienced enjoyment in activities that encouraged spontaneity (i.e. *Using blind layers*) and use of the imagination, which resulted in a positive experience that allowed mindful awareness to be supported. However, the *Monsters* activity received mixed responses, demonstrating that different activities may not suit certain personal temperaments.

Finally, enjoyment was also experienced when participants engaged in slower movement exercises and this led to more immersive experiences. This result may have been because slower approaches to drawing afforded deeper levels of engagement with the task. Feedback also suggested that being able to relax and adopt a slower pace may heighten the experience of joy in a drawing activity and this may lead to more frequent engagement. As such, certain individuals may find that short time constraints add a sense of pressure that may hinder the enjoyment of an activity.

Seeing deeper

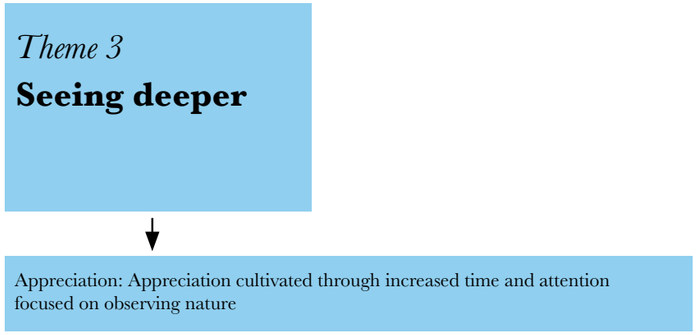


Figure 4.12. Seeing deeper theme.

Overview

The third theme arising from an analysis of the data concerns the depth of observation. By 'seeing deeper' I mean to see with an increased visual awareness. In this study, most participants discussed how drawing from nature contributed to a mindful experience due to the increased attention to small details (Figure 4.12). There were increased levels of interaction with nature because of the initial selection of drawing subject matter, the process of sustaining their gaze and the act of physically touching objects while drawing.

Interviews revealed that the small might be magnified when noticing the minute details that may go undetected in everyday life. For example, participant C recalled that close observation of a plant provided increased levels of fascination due to seeing intricate details. This led to them reflecting on potentially overlooked areas of life that may also warrant the cultivation of deeper levels of attention:

> *"Zoomed in on the intricacies. […] Completely captivated by its stunning bright colours and the intricate patterns on the leaves. […] There's probably a lot of these little like magical pops of interesting things around me that I'm just like taking for granted, or not really paying attention to because everything is such a rush."*

Intentionally spending time observing natural elements offered the opportunity to practise mindful awareness. Significantly, participants noticed how the drawing object needed to provide enough detail to sustain engagement during the activity, without threatening their level of drawing confidence. For example, participant E noted in a reflective journal entry:

> *"- Object crucial, needs to be complex enough*
> *- Types of marks matter*
> *- Slow strokes/marks the best*
> *- Felt like I was de-constructing the object*
> *- This made it easier to be mindful and present when looking at the object."*

In the interview, this participant discussed this deconstruction process in the *Blind drawing* exercise and considered how it simplified the object to a series of marks:

> *"I was looking at it more carefully because you can't see what you're drawing and the fact that I'd gone down this sort of deconstructed route meant that you started to draw each and every part of that plant and because you're not looking at what you're drawing, you're more focused on looking at the object. […] I saw it more defined, yeah, more carefully."*

The idea, that by increasing one's focus of attention upon a subject so that a greater awareness of unseen details might be cultivated was also discussed in a reflective journal entry by participant B:

> *"The more I see/look, the more I discover. I finished the outlines with plenty of time to spare, so I took a much closer look at the object and saw more details which I overlooked."*

Participant C also reflected on paying closer attention to objects from nature during the *Blind drawing* activity and the resulting immersive experience that supported a greater sense of feeling fully present:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a short poem**
"I actually felt like I was in a bit of a trance doing this exercise because I was like completely zoning out. I felt like I was absorbed by the tree, and I wasn't even really thinking about my hand movements. I was just like looking at the object and completely immersed in its presence and like I knew that I was doing a thing, but I felt like I wasn't actually consciously thinking about what I was doing."	I was in a bit of a trance completely zoning out absorbed by the tree I wasn't thinking about hand movements I was looking at the object completely immersed in its presence I knew I was doing a thing but I wasn't consciously thinking about what I was doing

Interview and journal data suggested that seeing more deeply had an invigorating impact on the participants. With their gaze focused solely upon the object being drawn, this depth of observation afforded a release from distracting thoughts and judgments. Hill (1966) argues that drawing can direct people to look closer, and this may allow insensitive sight to be revived. Franck (1993, p. 50) also argues that an object is articulated through a renewed vision that translates into an "eye-heart-hand reflex."[80]

Maintaining one's focus on the drawing subject appeared to create a physical anchor for attention, through which mindfulness was able to be practised. As participants spent more time concentrating on details, they reported expanded levels of awareness. This finding appears to be consistent with McNiff's (2004) suggestion that observing with increased visual awareness allows mindfulness to be strengthened so that "when looking deeply at things, we get outside ourselves and become immersed in the object of contemplation. This meditation brings new and vital energy into our life" and we "become completely present" (p. 57).

In this study, many of the participants discussed an increase in appreciation for nature that surfaced through drawing natural objects. Participant D, for example, explained how spending time fixing attention on a plant offered an enjoyable, purposeful way to practise mindfulness:

> *"I loved focusing and appreciating the plant. Also, I was glad I squeezed in the time to do the art as I forgot yesterday. These moments feel intentional and deliberate."*

Participant C discussed a strengthened connection to nature that positively affected attentiveness outside of the study:

> *"How like, amazing and interesting it is to actually like, sit and observe what's happening. Like even a city backyard has so much interesting stuff if you actually just sit there for some time and observe it. And again, yeah that feeds into your mindfulness practice and being more attentive in your everyday life."*

80 Franck (1993) when describing this reflex (as it occurred during a *Seeing/drawing* activity) stated: "When I draw this leaf, it is not I, the little Me, that is expressing either itself or that leaf. Rather, the leaf is allowed or invited to express itself by means of the eye-heart-hand reflex" (p. 50). In 1973 Franck argued that in such a state, the hand becomes free to mark down lines without hesitation.

Participant A also discussed experiencing a connection between their sense of being and observing and drawing objects from nature:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a short poem**
"There is a level where you really connect with being and you connect with the oneness of everything and that would be the one observing […] observing and really appreciating, connecting, being one with it."	there is a level where you really connect with being you connect with the oneness of everything observing appreciating connecting being one with it

Participant A extended this sense of connectedness into a transcendental experience of things:

> *"I really appreciated the opportunity of seeing the unseen. So, getting so deep into something that I would draw that I would notice things that I otherwise wouldn't and appreciate the essence of the object […] a transcendental way of looking at things. It was a different way of connecting to that object in nature."*

The results of the study suggest that paying closer attention to natural objects through mindful drawing may increase our appreciation for them. Lisi (2012) notes that drawing intricate details may foster a kind of appreciation for the subject that may expand beyond the practice. This finding supports through application in practice, and in-tandem analysis, Langer's (2005) claims that increased intimacy can be conducive to appreciation and may lead to recognising a subject's intrinsic nature. Langer explains how in social psychology, the "exposure effect" (p. 204) suggests that the repeated exposure to an event or subject, may expand our affinity to it. Greenhalgh (2020) suggests that a drawing practice that facilitates a deepening of seeing through connection to nature may also revive attention, and Franck (1993) proposes that this may serve to develop a reconnection to human nature itself.

Summary

Participants found certain drawing exercises afforded them an opportunity to practice present moment awareness through invigorated observation and a release from distracting thoughts and judgments. Thus, the activities were largely experienced as enjoyable and purposeful, and there was a perceived connection between exercises and a sense of wellbeing. Specifically, the study found that participants experienced a deep sense of seeing when drawing from nature, which resulted in a more appreciative and intimate connection to the natural environment.

Many participants also noted that increased attention to small details caused them to reflect more broadly on their levels of attentiveness to things outside of the study.

However, it was noted that while a drawing exercise based on a natural object needed to provide enough fascination with detail to sustain engagement, at the same time the activity needed to be achievable enough not to threaten a participant's level of drawing confidence.

Accessibility

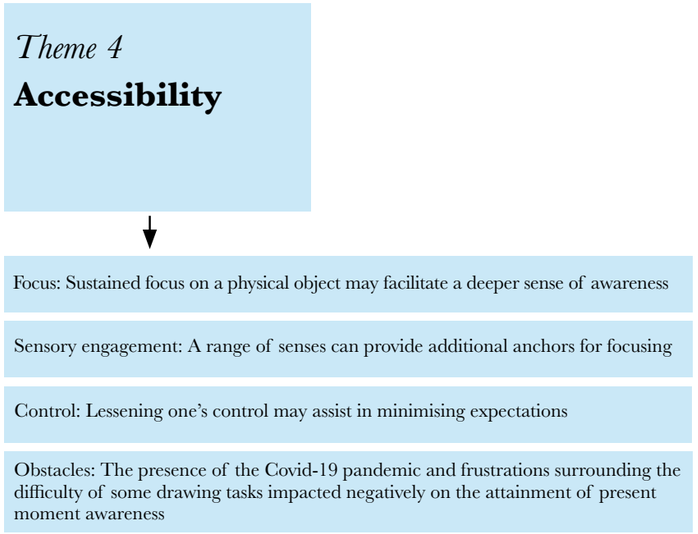


Figure 4.13. Accessibility theme and sub-themes.

Overview

The final theme emerging from the data is accessibility. After a general discussion of this principle, I will consider it through four lenses: focus, sensory engagement, control, and obstacles (Figure 4.13).

In the study, some participants discussed how traditional meditation practices that involve an awareness of breath can be more difficult than drawing when they attempt to sustain mindful awareness. For example, participant B argued that because mindful drawing offered an external object for attention, it was comparatively easy to feel detached from disruptive mind events:

> *"This is like an external meditation […] it's probably harder to block out your thoughts when you are within yourself because then you're actually inside yourself where all your thoughts are. But if you're doing something that's outside of yourself you are not actually letting any thoughts, come into play."*

Many of the participants noted how quickly they were able to experience present moment awareness when engaged in drawing activities. Participant C discussed how the exercises offered a more accessible and supported way to introduce an individual who is not familiar with mindfulness practices: [81]

> *"Doing these types of exercises is like your training wheels for your bike so that you can more easily get into a mindfulness practice in your everyday life."*

Participant E felt that mindful drawing may be a more convenient way to practise mindfulness compared to a traditional breathing meditation:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a haiku**
"Some activities was easier to be present and mindful […] using drawing as a way of practising mindfulness can really be quite useful because it felt overall, depending on the activity, was easier to do than say a breathing exercise."	practise mindfulness drawing was easier than breathing exercise

Participants also found that engaging with mindful drawing in shorter increments made for a more easily maintained practice when navigating challenging daily routines. For example, participant D observed:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a tanka**
"It didn't make a difference if it was two minutes or ten minutes […] just two minutes is enough to make you feel like you can have a nicer day […] two minutes can give you just so much space in your entire day so it's just amazing."	two or ten minutes it didn't make a difference just two is enough you can have a nicer day so much space. it's amazing

This participant suggested that duration of practice does not necessarily relate to experiencing present moment awareness. This observation may be consistent with Kabat-Zinn's (2014b) argument that a short practice may be just as beneficial and insightful as a longer practice because the quality of the engagement depends more on the intention to pay attention than on the duration.

81 Kabat-Zinn (2017) argues that modern, mindful-based interventions require accessibility and practicality to engage beginners who do not find meditation appealing.

Flexibility is required when considering the amount of time to dedicate to mindfulness practice. Salzberg (2011) suggests that it is regularity rather than duration of practice that provides greater impact. One possible implication is that shorter activities may support more frequent mindful drawing practices.

The study found that participants experienced the drawing exercises as comparatively accessible and effective at producing positive results, even if one was a newcomer to mindfulness practice.

Focus

All participants reported that focusing during drawing allowed deeper awareness, resulting in a more engaging experience because distracting thoughts were diminished. A deeper focus was achieved through the removal of sight, shorter time durations of practise, focusing on marks being made, and the motion of the drawing tool.

For example, when the focus was exclusively fixed upon the object being drawn, participant B noted:

> *"It is very freeing to draw something without looking at the thing. Now I don't have to worry about how it looks. I'm not going to judge how it looks, and it's nice to only look at the object and just focus on it without having to overthink things."*

This participant also found that the repetitive act of mark making created in exercises like *Colouring in*, facilitated deeper focus on the activity because it eliminated thinking:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a short poem**
"There's something about colouring that makes me forget everything and concentrating on the colours. So even though it's a repetitive act and you can kind of do it without thinking, and I think actually, that's the crux of it. You do it without thinking. And I just think so much that it's nice to not think […] with the colouring, I was only colouring […] I was really, fully 100% completely present in […] when you are in a deep meditative state sometimes, when you don't get any interruptions and you're not actually thinking about anything, I got that within 5 minutes with this."	there's something about colouring that makes me forget everything and concentrate on the colours it's a repetitive act you can do without thinking that's the crux of it I think so much it's nice not to think with colouring I was only colouring I was fully 100%, completely present I got within 5 minutes a deep meditative state

Similarly, participant A found the exercise *Colouring in* to be immersive:

> *"I would just go in, I would really be in the moment, really just there. No thoughts or anything coming to my mind. It was like a meditation."*

This study suggests that experiencing deeper focus within a practice may subsequently tune out inner distractions and external events that cause attention to become fragmented. For example, participant C explained:

> *"It's completely immersive, I feel like I'm both hyper focused but really relaxed and in control. And it's a very satisfying state to be in. Again, don't have that mental chatter in the back of your mind. The other things in your surroundings don't really affect you either."*

The capacity to lessen disruptions with minimal effort may offer a nourishing experience because one's focus is paid more fully to the present moment. Similarly, using a physical marker for attention may offer an additional anchor for focus. Participant E, for example, described how a physical focus enabled greater levels of present moment focus:

> *"Watching the pen move on paper gave me a sense of presence […] it's the combination of you feeling your hand move, you can feel a reaction to it, so pen on paper, and you've got a visual cue as well. For me, it's like, this is what we're concentrating on right now, this is the mark that we're making and nothing else beyond that."*

It also appears that the level of commitment one experiences with an activity may impact the level of focus one experiences. Participant A described how disruptive thoughts were more likely to occur during activities that felt less engaging:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a short poem**
"There were one or two I struggled with different thoughts coming in, possibly the exercise was not as engaging and for some reason it just let other thoughts come in, or it was that it was just busy and they would creep in […] but when I would be engaged, like fully engaged with something, even if it was a very busy day, I would stay engaged."	one or two I struggled with different thoughts coming in the exercise was not as engaging thoughts would creep in when I was engaged fully engaged even if it was a busy day I'd stay engaged

Participants' opinions differed on the specific activities found to be the most engaging, and as such, the study acknowledges that there appears to be no 'one size fits all' approach. It seems that by providing a range of exercises, individuals can locate activities that best suit their unique preferences and contexts. In a manner similar to how breath can provide an anchor line to the present moment during a breathing meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 2014b), the drawing tool and paper appeared to offer a physical link for awareness. Participants found that mindful drawing offered a method for concentrating focus that allowed awareness of external events to be minimised. This finding correlates with the claim made by Maslen and Southern (2011) that external events may be diminished as attention is paid to the experience within the drawing. In particular, participants found that adopting a physical anchor provided a sustainable method to secure focus when attention wandered. In this regard, mindful drawing may offer multiple anchors for attention to be sustained and focused on the present moment.

Sensory engagement

Most of the participants found that mindful drawing offered a sensory dimension that allowed them greater accessibility to experiencing mindfulness. While many drawing activities automatically relied upon sight, others required sensations of touch and sound to be activated. Most participants noted how the physical element of touch allowed them to feel more present. For example, participant A explained how using coloured pencils in the *Colouring in* exercise offered a comforting physical experience:

> *"Feeling the softness of the colour being transferred on the paper has soothing element to it and I really enjoyed that part."*

Feeling the pencil mark on the paper offered a tangible physicality that afforded a distinct way of sustaining attention. The sound of the drawing tool in motion may also provide an alternative focus for attention. For example, participant E noted:

> *"The sound of the pencil on paper was very calming. And unsure if having eyes open help or hinder in trying to be present. But I think by the end of it, I decided that definitely having it closed helps."*

With the assistance of an additional physical or audio focus, participants found accessing alternative senses helpful when sustaining present moment attention. Combining these additional sensory components may offer additional support. For example, participant E explained how the combination of holding the pen and looking at the object being drawn offered a more memorable experience:

> *"You were physically doing something, you were looking but at the same time you weren't looking, right, because you could see the object but you can't see what you're drawing so you kind of have to imagine what you're drawing. And all that together I think just made it more memorable."*

Engaging multiple senses may help create a richer, more enjoyable experience. For example, participant C argued that the experience of drawing from a digital image[82] lacked depth and that utilising additional senses was more conducive to a mindful state:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a short poem**
"The additional sensory input that you get when the thing is right there in real life rather that an image. I suppose that would influence it […] you might have a smell that kind of brings you into the moment more. Like there's additional layers to something when it's in real life as opposed to an image which would probably add to bringing you into like a more mindful and focused state […] things that make the experience so much better that you don't get when it's only using one sense."	additional sensory input when it's in real life as opposed to an image would influence it add to a more mindful focused state a smell that brings you into the moment more things that make the experience so much better you don't get when only using one sense

Drawing from real life may engage more senses than an exercise predicated on drawing from a reference photograph. Both Hill (1966) and McNiff (2015) note that by focusing more intentionally on sensory experiences, greater awareness of movement, feel, positioning or specific tension of the hand can be experienced. Malchiodi (2012) has noted that in addition to tactility, repeated gestures may facilitate a feeling of relaxation that may contribute positively to wellbeing because of the inherent soothing sensory quality of the action. This finding appears to support the claim made by Flett et al. (2017) that colouring activities can offer an accessible and effective method for positively affecting mental states.

Most of the participants found that mindful drawing offered a sensory component that allowed them greater accessibility to experience mindfulness. While many drawing activities automatically relied upon sight, others required sensations of touch and sound to be activated.

82 The study was designed to draw using tangible real-life objects and to refrain from using images as subjects. The participant acknowledged that their selection was a deviation from the instructions provided.

Control

The study found that most of the participants experienced a loosening of control that allowed distracting thoughts to be lessened. Participant B, for example, explained how releasing control of the outcome of a drawing felt liberating:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a short poem**
"I like to be seen as a responsible person so those are the things that you have to make the right decisions, or you have to do the right thing. So, it was nice to not have to, really just let go of any control and just do whatever and it doesn't matter, probably also being tied to being results orientated. But if you let go of control it doesn't matter how the results turn out. So that was quite freeing for me."	I like to be seen as a responsible person make the right decisions be results orientated it was nice to not have to just let go of any control do whatever if you let go of control it doesn't matter the results that was freeing

Placing less significance on the outward appearance of a drawing appeared to enable emphasis on the experience of making marks, which appeared to enable the cultivation of deeper engagement. Engaging in a completely new activity for the first time offered an additional way to release control. For example, participant C noted:

> *"I felt like I didn't have that much control over it, I guess. And as a result, I needed to pay more attention to what I was doing, which was a good thing. And because it was again, like in new, new experience, it enabled me to be in the moment throughout it. Like, I couldn't think about anything else apart from drawing."*

When participants could release control over a drawing's outcome, they more easily experienced the present moment. Participant A, for example, explained how overthinking each forthcoming repetitive line pattern in the exercise *Travelling* felt less mindful. When control over each arrangement of the line was intentionally relinquished, a shift in presence was felt:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a tanka**
"There was something that was released in that moment and let my hand just go and do. […] I was too, very much in my head on what I want to transfer on that piece of paper […] but when I detached from a thinking process, then my creativity and the way I was expressing myself changed […] activities where some would be so much outside my comfort zone that I would overthink the process […] it would not be so much in the flow, it would not be as much in touch with the present moment and it would not be as deep because it would be very rational and very into my head."	overthink process no flow, no deep, too much head release and detach letting my hand go and do something released in that moment

Overthinking by attempting to control and rationalise upcoming marks resulted in less mindful awareness. Once there was a detachment from thinking, the participant felt they would encounter a more enjoyable experience. This observation correlates with, and demonstrates through practice, Greenhalgh's (2020) assertion that when we relinquish control of a drawing's outcome, we can relax the need to strive, allowing ourselves to remain present in a mindful drawing experience.

Participants found that by adopting a physical limitation (such as the activity *Using your non-dominant hand)* or releasing control of the visual outcome, a more spontaneous way of mark making was enabled, which afforded greater access to present moment awareness. This finding may support McNiff's (1998b) proposition that drawing with one's non-dominant hand can assist in creating an original artistic expression that is free from habitual control. Capacchione (2019) has observed that professional artists frequently engage with non-dominant hand drawing as a means of loosening up and inciting creative energy. This loss of control Clayton (2014) suggests allows for richer exploration into more spontaneous, loose kinds of mark making (McNiff, 1998b; Rogers, 1993). In supporting this idea, Barry (2019) suggests that allowing the hand an opportunity to meander may uncover unconscious expressions because one is not attempting to control its every move. Greenhalgh (2020) argues that drawing without attempting to control the outcome allows an opening into a direct experience so that mindful awareness may occur. In this project, participants engaging in the *Travelling* exercise found that continual movement through reiterations of mark making allowed self-consciousness to be liberated because attention was focused on what was occurring in the present moment. McNiff (1998b) suggests that while repeated forms may give the impression of banality, repetition may encourage the emergence of fresh traits and the facilitation of additional stages of creative expression. Although the loosening of marks minimises control and may contribute to freer expression, the thesis suggests that this may also lead to the cultivation of mindful attention.

Obstacles

Data from the study indicates that while the experience of mindful drawing was generally positive for the participants, certain obstacles emerged that made accessibility challenging. In addition to the judgment around expectations of drawing discussed earlier in this chapter, for some participants the global pandemic and its ongoing ramifications impacted significantly on their practice. Participants C and D completed their drawings after the first Covid-19 nationwide lockdown in March 2020. They experienced additional layers of difficulty in maintaining their practices due to the unexpected and complex conditions they were facing. For example, participant D was not able to complete the full 14 days of drawing because of pressure accruing in other areas of their life:

> *"It just was like so hard. […] so much stuff also happened in my life on a personal level […] I needed more practice, and obviously when the going gets tough, that's when you need it the most, and that's obviously the first to go out the window. So yeah, I, like everyone else in the world, I felt quite untethered."*

Participant C also discussed additional stresses resulting from the pandemic:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a short poem**
"I was feeling quite stressed initially with what was happening around the world with the pandemic. […] that was just really freaking me out […] I was finding it really hard to actually be present and taking time out to do these exercises. I think there was some guilt in it as well, trying to find pleasurable things when like the whole world, like I felt like the whole world is on fire […] a general tense, frustrated and scared and I wasn't able to find my footing like, I wasn't able to ground myself through any exercises […] at the time I was still feeling quite stressed about the lockdown and worrying about people who will be negatively impacted by it. And it's hard to feel positive in times like this."	I was feeling stressed what was happening around the world the pandemic freaking out hard to be present and taking time to do these exercises there was some guilt trying to find pleasurable things when the whole world is on fire tense, frustrated and scared I wasn't able to find my footing it's hard to feel positive in times like this

While isolation and global anxiety caused substantial disruptions, participant E discussed how, with the added complication of travel disrupting normal routines, it was impossible to maintain a mindfulness practice around 'normal' work and life:

Original transcript	**Transcript as a haiku**
"Trying to do this 14 days in a row, was, I kind of surprised myself that I couldn't do it. I mean I was away this week but in some sense that's kind of like an excuse […] I think that's the struggle with a lot of routine changes."	trying 14 days surprised I couldn't do it routine change struggle

Another obstacle appeared to relate to the complexity of certain exercises. A few of the participants discussed the challenge of drawing an intricate object. If a proposed object presented complexities beyond their perceived ability to draw, it was deemed to be confronting. For example, participant D stated:

> *"It was impossible to draw! […] because it was so detailed, had so much depth and overall, a very hard object to capture with one continuous line. It was like a debacle. But I like looking at it, it's funny how bad it is."*

The study alligns with claims made by Mantzios and Giannou (2018) that it may be wise to avoid a difficult activity that is outside of an individual's technical capabilities, and Germer (2009) who suggests that mindful drawing activities need to be flexible enough to match personal temperaments, routines and circumstances. Hanson (2009) suggests that when an individual is faced with obstacles to practice, applying self-compassion may balance the mind and assist in navigating challenges.

Summary

Some of the participants noted that certain drawing activities offered an easier way to experience being present (when compared to traditional breathing-focused exercises). The study found that certain drawing activities provided a positive experience because they afforded flexibility with requirements, like the duration (i.e. people could adopt a shorter or longer practice as desired).

The physical, multisensory nature of drawing was helpful because materials appeared to function as anchoring instruments that helped participants to focus and sustain attention on the present moment. Participants experienced deeper levels of access when they focused on the motion of the drawing tool and marks being made. They also noted that the adoption of a physical limitation and engaging in repetitive drawing acts were effective because such activities helped to eliminate disruptive thinking. The study also found that disruptive thoughts were more likely to occur during activities that felt less engaging. Releasing the desire to control a drawing activity positively influences the degree of present moment awareness experienced. Such awareness appears to occur when orientation in the present becomes more important than controlling the visual outcome.

Given that the research occurred during a pandemic, the study confirmed that providing a range of exercises can enable people to engage with activities best suited to individual preferences and contexts. While the activities were designed to be easily implemented, everyday challenges at such a time, and stress, can negate practice, regardless of intention.

Discussion of participants' findings

The thesis asked three questions: What drawing strategies and methods might facilitate the pursuit of mindfulness? What contingencies and conditions of practice need to be taken into account when engaging with mindful drawing? What benefits can be derived from mindful drawing? The findings suggest that a mindful drawing practice can offer a supportive method for encouraging and sustaining present moment awareness.

Drawing mindfully offered a supportive space for the participants to practise acceptance of each completed drawing. For example, through the process of drawing more frequently, participants were able to question previously held judgments about a drawing requiring a visual outcome that demonstrated technical accuracy. Despite their lack of experience, participants expressed a desire to be better drawers and associated drawing with demonstrating representational accuracy or technical ability. I suggest that the term 'mindful drawing' may offer greater flexibility and freedom for people to begin making marks because the adjective 'mindful' releases associations with technical precision and aesthetic refinement associated with representational drawing.

By adopting a mindful drawing practice, judgment relating to achieving specific aesthetic outcomes was diminished. Judgment surrounding perceived lack of talent or technical skill provided a barrier to engagement with a drawing practice because of participants' high expectations surrounding the production of aesthetically pleasing, technically representational outcomes. There was often an uncomfortable tension between the imagined drawing and what the drawer was technically capable of producing. Long held beliefs about drawing capability that originated in childhood appear to have been preserved and remain relatively unexamined in adulthood, as past experiences of 'unsuccessful' drawing attempts impeded participants' confidence. People found that mindful drawing offered a release from pursuing a particular visual outcome because the focus of the practice was on the experience of being present. This was mostly achieved through the use of activities that reduced physical control or minimalised the observation of marks made during the drawing process. With control being restricted, participants' expectations could be lowered and the acceptance of diverse forms of mark making grew. In one case, a participant's expectations were exceeded because an exercise surprised and subsequently delighted them.

Given the different ways in which attention may be sustained, mindful drawing appears to offer a multisensory mindfulness practice. When drawing from nature, a deep sense of seeing was cultivated due to the increased attention paid to contained intricacies. The tactile nature of drawing also appears to offer a physical anchor point for the drawer's focus because of a heightened awareness of the pencil/pen grip and the subsequent movement and sounds created while drawing. Participants experienced an increase in mindful awareness when their focus was fully applied to both the movement of the drawing tool and the creation of marks. A slower pace of movement while drawing also provided participants with a way of experiencing greater levels of enjoyment in an activity and this may increase the chances of repeated engagement. I suggest that a mindfulness practice that offers additional ways to focus attention may offer a less demanding and more engaging way to sustain awareness of the present moment.

It was a satisfying experience for the participants to appreciate the natural life that surrounded them, both during the drawing process and for some time afterwards. The findings suggest that the deep seeing that was facilitated by eye contact being sustained upon natural objects (e.g., a leaf) while drawing, cultivated deeper awareness of details. Participants reported that familiar subjects were often seen differently when attention was focused on them. While appreciation may be developed through the deeper investigation of the significance of each present moment, I suggest that drawing from nature may provide a physical focus point that offers an opportunity for rich contemplation and fulfilment.

Mindful drawing may offer some people easier entry into experiencing mindfulness when compared to traditional practices (like observation of breathing) where distracting thoughts were reported as occurring more frequently. As individuals may experience certain mindfulness practices differently, offering a range of drawing activities may allow individuals to choose a practice that best suits their requirements and context. Additionally, it can be challenging for some individuals to accommodate and sustain longer durations of mindfulness practise in fast-paced lifestyles or under stressful conditions. The study also found that, even with a few minutes of practice, participants could experience mindful awareness. A more flexible approach that allows shorter durations may offer a beginner a more accessible entry point into cultivating a sustained mindfulness practice.

Conversely, one participant found activities completed within a short, timed activity may contribute towards feeling pressure to finish, which may compromise enjoyment. As such, the duration of practice in future exercises might be profitably extended, or predetermined time constraints might be eliminated, so there is no emphasis on finishing within a set time.

By engaging with activities that encouraged simplicity and minimised judgment, a freer, more enjoyable way of making marks was experienced. This often connected participants to their childhood, when art was made purely for enjoyment. Enjoyment felt during the mindful drawing process allowed participants' engagement to be deepened, and this created a positive experience that extended beyond the practice. With a positive and enjoyable experience of mindfulness practice at the outset of the exercises, participants suggested that an ongoing practice would more likely be adopted and sustained. I suggest that the enjoyment of a task may be very important in sustaining practice long-term, especially for a beginner who finds witnessing or releasing distracting thoughts challenging. I propose that mindful drawing may offer a method that enables people to reconnect with the latent creativity that was once inherent and frequently expressed in childhood. This is because it can provide a safe space for present moment focused exploration that encourages curiosity and openness.

Section 3: Researcher's self-practice findings

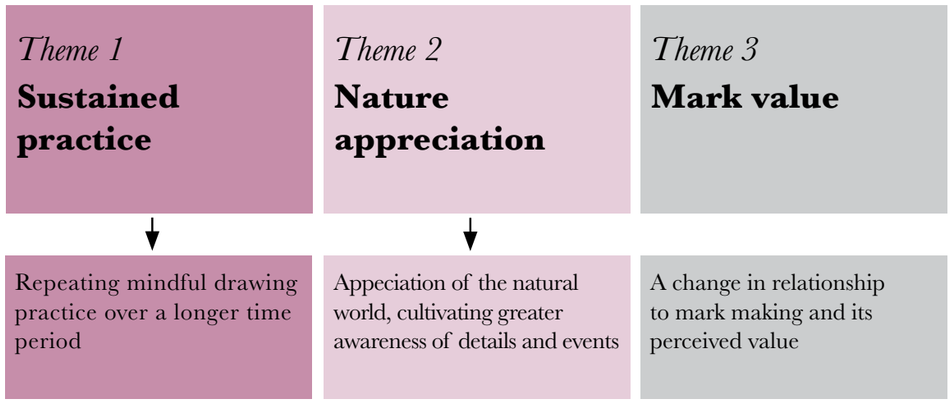


Figure 4.14. The themes that emerged from the researcher's self-practice.

Overview

In this third section, the most prevalent themes and findings that emerged from my self-practice are discussed. Material noted in this section is drawn from reflective notetaking and researcher-voiced poems (as short poems, haikus, tankas and lunes) that surfaced during the study.

As a researcher who has also completed drawing activities over several years, my self-practice has been more frequent and extensive compared to that of the participants in this study. As such, my perspective on mindful drawing has evolved across all four phases of the inquiry. At the start of the study, I began with the judgment that I was not able to draw well. This judgment has changed following my immersion in the study and its findings. It is useful to consider this issue through three sub-themes: sustained practice, nature appreciation and mark value.

Sustained practice

While the participants engaged with 14 days of practice, my daily engagement and reflection spanned the entirety of the 36 months of the doctoral programme. During this period, I experienced an increase in confidence and changes in my attitude towards mark making. This became apparent when I attended my second life drawing session in February 2020 and noted how different the experience was compared to my encounter 16 months earlier. While drawing, I applied a much wider range of techniques and sought out a mindful encounter with the immersive experience of mark making, exploring drawing with *Blind drawing*, *Seeing/drawing*, *Using your non-dominant hand* and *Continuous drawing* techniques.[83] By adopting these approaches, I found that I had gained an increased ability to forsake control and this resulted in a deeper level of present moment experience of both the model and the drawing process (Figure 4.15 - p. 79). At the time, I wrote in an annotated reflective note:

> *"My non-dominant hand feels stronger, more certain about mark making. It doesn't hesitate now. There is still a lack of control in the marks, but I've become comfortable with the feeling of it being uncomfortable. It's okay now that the marks are shaky and less defined. […] competency visually is of no consequence."*

83 Drawing an object without taking your pen off the paper. In addition, focusing attention on the object instead of the lines being drawn.

Figure 4.15. Comparison between drawings of a life model. The first was drawn prior to the study and was completed in two minutes. The second used a combination of drawing techniques (Gannon, E. October 2018, and February, 2020).

I found the experience to be more enjoyable when less emphasis was placed on the visual aesthetics because distracting thoughts were minimised. With reduced glances to the paper, it felt like the lines were able to arrange themselves (Franck, 1993). While a visible difference can be seen between the work produced in the two life drawing sessions, the most significant variation was between what was experienced internally. While the lines of the February 2020 exercise may demonstrate greater technical competency, they do not contain the felt change in confidence and enjoyment I experienced.

The 60-day experiment

While I regularly engaged with a variety of activities from May 2019 to January 2022, I also experimented with a concentrated, 60-day reflective practice. Drawing on Fenner's (1996) approach[84] where drawings are completed daily, I sought to understand the significance of engaging with mindful drawing exercises over a longer period. Across the 60 days I completed two daily 5 minute mindful drawing sessions of objects from nature.[85] From these exercises, I archived 120, 10 x15 cm drawings (Figures 4.16-17).

84 Fenner's (1996) study explored a five-minute drawing practice over a two-month period in order to "determine its value in enhancement of personal meaning and therapeutic change" (p. 37).

85 I selected natural objects because during the lockdowns these were readily available, and I had found them to be consistent in sustaining my attention because of their imperfect details.

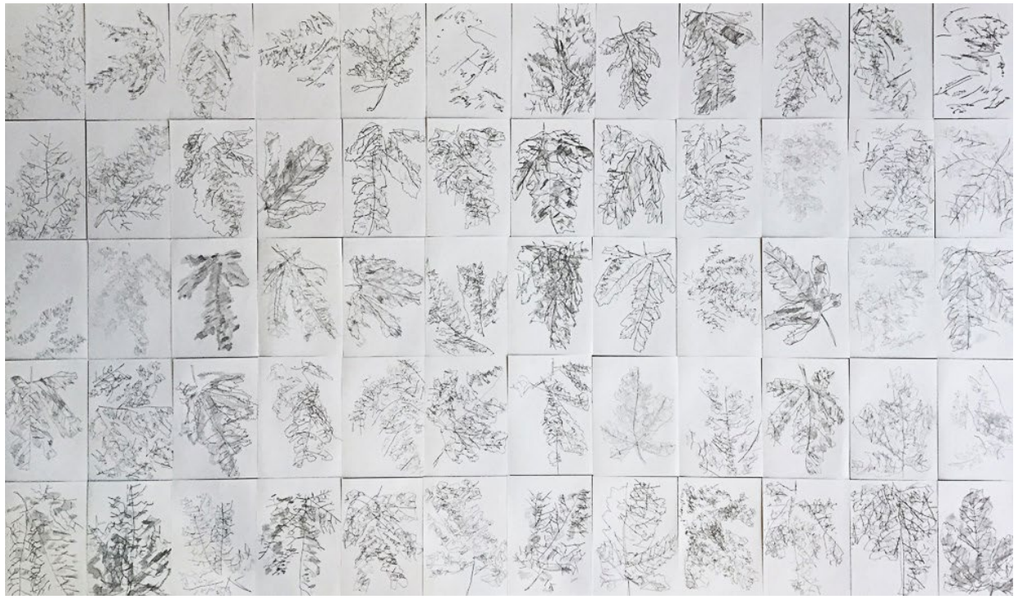


Figure 4.16. The series of 60 mindful drawings using pencil, created as five minute engagements each morning (Gannon, E. January – March, 2021).

Figure 4.17. The series of 60 mindful drawings, completed in pen, created as five minute engagements each afternoon (Gannon, E. January – March, 2021).

After each drawing activity, I wrote an annotated reflective note about the experience. Using these reflections, I created multiple researcher-voiced lunes,[86] and those that most effectively encapsulated the essence of my experience were typed into Microsoft OneNote. During the morning practice I drew the same leaf in pencil; while in the afternoon I drew a different object from nature using a pen. The change in drawing tool was so I could visually demarcate the two practices. Although some participants found drawing tools had an impact on the nature of their drawing encounters, I found both the pen and pencil comparable in offering a mindful experience.

I was curious to observe if the afternoon's change in drawing subject might afford a different experience. I also asked myself if a variety of subjects, sensory engagements and attention to detail might increase the depth of present moment awareness I encountered in a mindful drawing exercise. Each engagement drew on a range of possible approaches, including *Blind drawing, Continuous drawing, Using your non-dominant hand, Seeing/drawing* and *Touching nature.* Activities were often combined, such as using the *Continuous drawing* activity with the *Blind drawing* activity. Eighty per cent of the practice was completed with my eyes closed, while 20% was completed using methods where I could see what I was drawing. I selected these activities because past experience had indicated their consistency in sustaining high levels of present moment focus.

86 While I chose to create researcher-voiced lunes for the 60-day experiment, I used a mixture of short poems, haikus, tankas and lunes throughout the rest of my practice.

The main finding emerging from the 60-day sustained practice was that subtleties of detail became more apparent with my deeper attention. While I anticipated a level of disengagement in the morning practice because I was using the same small leaf each time, by concentrating my focus on its small details, each encounter proved to be an engaging experience. The following lunes are indicative of my experiences:

day 55, am
trusty morning leaf
I am still engaged within
the crispy corners

day 60, am
immersed in practice
moving around veins seen before
I see anew

Across the 60 days of practice, the leaf continued to offer fresh perspectives due to my cultivation of deeper attention. Thus, nuanced differences were visible across the duration of the exercise. My experience is similar to McNiff's (1998b) observation that repeated gestures will never create identical results because "new qualities emerge from the familiar basis of expression" and these can develop into a "springboard for new levels of expressive integration" (p. 18). I also discovered that by using the same leaf each morning I circumnavigated procrastination over the selection of the drawing subject. This afforded me a sense of freedom:

day 35, am
no morning deliberation
relief to pick same leaf
a freeing choice

I also became aware of a heightened sensory state when drawing so, like participants in Phase 2 of the study, touch, sight and sound offered anchors for attention. In addition to these senses, smell also focused my awareness:

day 56, pm
aged, veiny leaf
time changed, smell still strong
road map veins

The 60-day practice offered a consistently engaging way to connect with the present moment. In comparing the variety of subjects I engaged with during the afternoon practice, I found no difference in the quality of my present moment awareness (compared to the morning exercises) when I repeatedly drew the same leaf. It appeared that a variety of subjects may in fact be inconsequential to focusing and sustaining attention. As the pile of completed daily drawings grew, I developed increased disengagement from the visual aesthetics of each work. As Greenhalgh (2020) argues, I found that the accrued drawings served as a physical reminder that the particulars of each mark arrangement were irrelevant. Like Tolle (2016), in making the present moment the focus and letting go of past drawings, more enjoyment was experienced in the moment.

The 60-day drawing practice was an effective and supportive method. I found that familiarity with a subject, sensory engagement and attention to detail can heighten the depth of present moment experience one encounters in a mindful drawing exercise.

Nature appreciation

While the Seeing deeper findings emanating from Phase 2 of the study revealed how natural elements can help to cultivate awareness and appreciation, I found in my 60-day experiment that decay and distortion offered additional levels of engagement. Significantly, the process of drawing an object as it began to wilt and break down over time afforded me a deeper appreciation of the transition and passing of time[87] (Figure 4.18).

For example, I noticed how a leaf I frequently used as a subject altered colour and shape. Its transition from life through decay offered continual engagement and renewed interest:

> I notice more
> the irregularities
> leaf on tree
> leaf on ground, now found
> time has passed
> transition
> changes noticed
> seeing more deeply

In addition to leaves, branches and old tree stumps also became sources of focus that presented a variety of hidden complexities and details:

> lines of a fallen branch
> full of twists
> knots of imperfections
> tiny hills, crevices
> dotted holes
> hidden shapes and dimensions
> cragged, jagged
> dried and faded from the fall
> there is so much to see
> tiny details I missed
> drawing, I see the inner world
> a tiny world
> it remains alive in the marks
> in paying attention
> I am becoming more alive in my seeing

I began to see decay that was once viewed as unpleasant, as having inherent value. Through this I experienced a detachment from binary judgments about what I considered ugly or beautiful. I saw how every detail provided a focus for practising mindful awareness. By regularly paying attention to decaying and distorted details, I gradually began to prefer drawing these tiny complexities in contrast to natural subjects that were pristine (Figure 4.19 - p. 82):

> immersed in the hunt
> lost in crags and crevices
> I'm carried away

Like many of the participants, with increased time spent observing natural elements I felt more connected and aware of the natural world around me, and through this I experienced greater levels of sustained focus:

> I see life
> beauty in irregularities and decay
> present with life

Figure 4.18. Acanthus and ivy leaves regularly used as drawing subjects displayed distinct visual changes over time (Gannon, E. 2020-2021).

87 This awareness and acceptance of imperfection of life is akin to the Japanese philosophy of wabi-sabi. Greenhalgh (2020) explains how wabi-sabi is a perspective that allows the world's seemingly insignificant and tiny details to be viewed with greater appreciation.

Figure 4.19. Drawings of a pile of tree stumps using the *Blind drawing* activity (Gannon, E. April, 2020).

My increasing awareness of detail contributed to a feeling of being alive in the moment. For example, in my first attempt at drawing a pinecone using the *Touching nature* exercise (Figure 4.20), I noticed how once I let go of thinking about the specific kind of marks I needed to make, I felt more connected to the object:

> *"I felt connected to the pinecone and became very aware of how sharp it felt … More information is collected and noticed about the object by holding and feeling it."*

With my eyes remaining closed, I could easily practise deeper awareness of the pinecone, which quickly created an immersive experience. The expanded sensory awareness extended from the singular to instances where I became absorbed in wider environments. This may be related to the concept of *en plein air*, a traditional approach to drawing outside where one experiences an open absorption of nature (Ryan, 2014). For example, I found that when drawing tree leaves on a breezy day, my attention was focused not on static form but on feeling and observing movements caused by the wind:

leaf dances with breeze
I feel connection to leaf
to wind, time, seasons

Such exercises also moved me into detailed absorption:

drawing leapfrogs me
into a focused looking
microscopic view

Figure 4.20. A drawing of the feel of a pine cone completed during a *Touching nature* activity (Gannon, E. February, 2020).

Rapid drawing exercises out of doors provided a space to view nature in motion, and this focus of attention quickly resulted in heightened present moment awareness. When drawing birds, I focused my attention on their fleeting presence.[88] Often, I would be afforded only a few seconds before they disappeared. Consequently, many of my drawings consisted of only a few marks. By drawing so fleetingly, I became less attached to capturing the form of a bird. Instead, my marks contained multiple energies. My pen caught frantic movements; the birds' motion and momentary presence, my excitement upon spotting them, my eye alighting on details (Figure 4.21). I realised that I was developing an appreciation of presence.

This shift to drawing fleeting presence caused me to become much more attentive. I noticed birds on my window ledge and on my walks between appointments (Figure 4.22). In my annotated notetaking, I reflected on my relationship with them:

> birds singing, chatting
> listening to world around
> plants me to the ground
> this space of life symphony
> the sounds ripple out to me

My findings from these exercises correlate with Greenhalgh's (2020) assertion that practising mindful drawing allows increased awareness of the drawn subject matter. Through attentive engagement, we may "naturally start to appreciate the small, hidden beauties in the most everyday, and imperfect things and places" (p. 97).

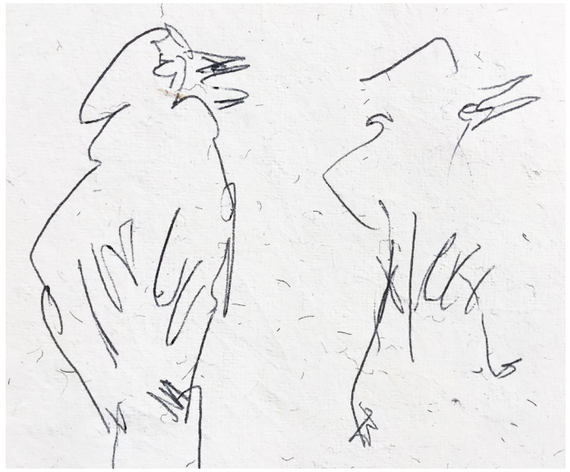


Figure 4.21. A *Rapid drawing* of birds (Gannon, E. November, 2019).

Figure 4.22. A tree containing a flock of birds in constant motion presented an opportunity to pause in my day. Using the *Rapid drawing* activity, I sketched multiple variations as they alighted and darted around the foliage (Gannon, E. November, 2019).

88 I regularly drew birds that landed on my window ledge, before they flew away.

Mark value

The third group of findings relates to a change in my relationship to mark making and its perceived value. My findings concurred with those of participants who found a correlation between a lack of control assisting mindful awareness (i.e. during the *Using your non-dominant hand* activity). However, with advanced practise, the activity revealed additional experiences. First, a difference in the physical experience of holding the drawing tool developed. For example, my grip felt awkward at the beginning of the study, but with ongoing practise, I began to experience:

> move beyond expectations
> brave new hand grows strength
> gently in control

While my restricted control resulted in unsteady lines, I gathered increasing confidence and appreciation of the crooked lines I was creating, and the mark's inaccuracy was vitalising:

> wonky, imprecise lines
> energy is contained within them
> the drawing's alive

The unruly aliveness contained in the lines produced an energetic record of my experience. Capacchione (2019) notes that drawing with the non-dominant hand causes one to move at a slower pace because of the lack of muscle control, resulting in closer observation of the subject. Capacchione suggests that this hand may lead to drawings containing emphases that may more effectively represent the 'heart' of a subject. With my growing practice and appreciation of less managed lines, my levels of acceptance expanded. For example, I began questioning the importance of making a 'good' drawing:

> can we be here now
> no need to draw better
> allow messy art

I became aware that my mindful drawings often became records of sensory observation rather than representations of form. Thus, when experimenting with *Touching nature* exercises, I came to understand my drawings as 'mark maps' of the experience of a natural object being touched:

> a map
> rough and jagged
> following a line
> tracing
> time space travelled
> an experience map
> a feeling map

I subsequently coined the term an 'experience map'. By reconceptualising drawing as a form of map making, I was able to reframe activities so concerns with representational accuracy were circumvented. Now, what was appreciated was a record of inner and outer experience. Marks represented the sensing of an object, not the object itself. For example, a drawing of a leaf recorded the layers of different details that my eye had traced (Figure 4.23):

> charting my seeing
> reveal shows multilayered looking
> leaf in line

This reframing contributed to a detachment from concerns related to visual accuracy and the concept of the 'mark maps' influenced a new definition of mindful drawing; '*An experience of seeing, recorded through marks*'.[89] In such drawings, the line may become a time capsule of seeing, a residue of experience that contains energy. The desire to control the aesthetics of visual accuracy was marginalised because the value was transferred to the 'felt' experience. Thus, in the drawing of tree stumps (Figure 4.18) I understood the mark making as a transitory process and my feelings about the experience were preserved as an enduring impression:

> this drawing shall pass
> words contain experience
> my feelings remain

Figure 4.23. An experiment that combines *Blind drawing* and *Continuous drawing* activities. The work contains multiple layers of seeing. The red coloured pencil records when my attention was paid to the shadows of a leaf, while the monochromatic pencil marks show when my attention was focused on its edges and the details (Gannon, E. September, 2019).

89 When I use the word seeing I refer to it in a wider context than an ocular encounter. Franck (1993) offers a distinction between seeing and looking in that "Seeing touches […] the heart. Looking-at is cold-hearted" (p. 38). Franck suggests that the seeing deeper that occurs while drawing is "a total openness to that which meets the eye. It is to be in touch with the Ground of Being, inside and outside of oneself" (p. 109). In this regard, I suggest that seeing can also offer a multisensory way of engaging in the present moment while drawing.

These drawings feel exploratory in nature; they constitute an experience of 'seeing recorded through marks'. This resonates with Franck's (1993) suggestion that an emphasis on seeing more deeply may be likened to an exploration, in which full sight is attempted by remaining open to whatever emerges. Franck suggests that drawing in this manner may present a more honest representation of seeing and being. However, I would expand Franck's idea beyond the preserve of sight. My sustained and sensitised practice also revealed the resonance and focus that can be afforded through encounters of touch and smell. This causes me to ask, 'What is the potential of mindfully drawing sound or taste?' It would seem from my immersion in the 60-day exercise, that such dimensions of consideration are viable and may warrant a future inquiry into relationships between mindful drawing and a wider spectrum of sensory engagements.

Summary

My extended self-practice produced several findings that either supported the experiences of participants or extended their observations.

By repeating a mindful drawing practice over the 36 months of the project and conducting a concentrated experiment across 60 days, I discovered positive changes in my attitude towards mark making. Specifically, it appeared that by increasing the frequency with which one engages in activities like *Blind drawing, Continuous drawing, Seeing/ drawing* and *Using your non-dominant hand*, one may be able to intensify a desire to make non-representational drawings. In relinquishing preoccupations with achieving technically accurate and aesthetically refined depictions, I experienced a deeper level of present moment awareness of both the subject, and the drawing process. Through a mindful engagement with drawing, life and mind events became viewed as transitional, and I was increasingly able to focus on the present moment.

This may have been because the deep seeing was associated with the *process* of drawing and distracting thoughts were minimised. By focusing on these types of activities, I discovered that subtleties of detail could become more apparent and a heightened sensory state during the drawing process could result. This shift in focus meant that mark arrangement was deprioritised.

My extended practice also resulted in a greater appreciation of nature. When regularly drawing the same organic subject over time, I found that attention can become captivated by small elements of changing detail, and one's expanded awareness of this can contribute to a feeling of being alive in the moment. I also found that ephemeral irregularities in a subject can offer a rich anchor for focus.

In my self-practice, I also discovered that using *Rapid drawing* exercises to record moments of transient motion, like the birds, heightened my experience of the ephemerality of life. In these moments, I became increasingly aware of the energy and essence of life that surrounded me.

Finally, I discovered that when regularly using activities such as *Using your non-dominant hand*, I gathered both confidence and an appreciation of the vitality of creating energetic sensory records of experience. Coming to appreciate the drawings I created as 'experience maps' meant that concerns with representational accuracy were replaced by an appreciation of delicate records of inner and outer experience. A consequential reframing of drawing resulted in a detachment from concerns related to visual accuracy and a new definition of drawing emerged; '*An experience of seeing, recorded through marks.*' Here, the process of drawing may be understood as transitory and lines may become appreciated as residues of experience that contain energy.

In overview, I found that with sustained practice, I recognised that the experience of seeing more attentively possesses higher value than any drawing (as a visual outcome). This is because unrestricted exploration appears to facilitate greater mindful awareness and enjoyment. I concluded my self-study with a new definition of drawing, one that aids the cultivation of present moment awareness. This alternative approach to drawing, I suggest, may contribute something useful to how we might reduce the debilitating influence of judgment and expectation.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to investigate 'What drawing strategies and methods might facilitate the pursuit of mindfulness; what contingencies and conditions of practice need to be taken into account; and what benefits can be derived from mindful drawing? The research found that certain mindful drawing activities offered an accessible method to connect to the present moment because they focused attention on the process of mark making. The study offers a framework for practice and reflection on practice. As such it addresses a discernible gap in the field because there has to date, been no significant research that considers multiple experiences of mindful drawing through the application of multiple drawing activities, (where strategies and conditions of practice cultivate mindful awareness). The framework offers a variety of drawing activities that are accompanied by instructions and visual examples. Being bifurcate, the thesis incorporates both an artist's reflective practice and participatory reflection on practice, then considers how poetic inquiry might be used both as a tool for thematic analysis, and a means of presenting the holistic nuances contained within human experience. Accordingly, the study demonstrates how visual poetic inquiry can offer a distinctive perspective through which one might engage with experience in a vibrant manner.

Overcoming judgment and expectation
Increased levels of mindful awareness were reported when indicators of representational accuracy were circumvented. This allowed judgment upon the aesthetic arrangement of marks to be diminished. Accounts of reduced judgment were reported in the Deep seeing exercises (*Blind drawing* and *Seeing/drawing*) and in the *Using your non-dominant hand* exercise, because these exercises limited control of one's hand movements. Reduced levels of judgment were also experienced in the Duplication (*Tracing),* Intuitive mark making (*Colouring in)* and Simplicity exercises (*Joining the dots* and *Travelling*) because here, mark making was repetitive or non-representational.

The study also revealed that one needed to perceptively match a participant's current level of drawing confidence with the complexity of an exercise being offered. If this was not done, levels of frustration could occur and these interfered with people attaining a mindful, present moment focus. In directing awareness on the present moment experience, using terms like 'doodling' or 'mark making' may be useful in reducing representational expectations that traditionally accompany the word 'drawing.' This renaming of specific exercises I suggest, might be understood as part of an overall reframing of mindful drawing as 'the experience of seeing, recorded through marks'.

Enjoyment and slowing
It is evident that mindful engagement can be affected by the level of enjoyment experienced when undertaking an activity; this is because enjoyment appears to increase levels of absorption and concentration. Elements of positive surprise were often experienced in the revelation of hitherto obscured marks that surpassed expectations. The study also indicated that higher levels of enjoyment experienced in an activity will often lead to an exercise being used with greater frequency. Enjoyment was also experienced when participants engaged in slower movement exercises because this lessened pressure around expectations that an exercise should be completed within a prescribed timeframe.

Sensing deeper
It appears that drawing exercises associated with observation (either by sight or touch) enabled greater levels of mindfulness because they encouraged a release from distracting thoughts and judgments. There may be potential richness in expanding exercises beyond recording what is seen, so that tactile senses and sound can also become focusing anchors for mindful drawing practice. Participants noted that when drawing small details from nature, they often found themselves encountering a more appreciative and intimate connection to their immediate environment and a greater sense of 'being alive' in the moment. I found that using an activity like *Rapid drawing* expanded my awareness of the ephemerality of life because attention was paid more fully to the *essence* of what was encountered. Such drawing enabled me to reach beyond physical form and appreciate energy contained *within* what was being recorded.

This said, it was noted that to sustain engagement, when designing drawing exercises based on natural objects one needs to balance attention to detail with achievability, so the activity does not threaten a mindful drawer's sense of drawing confidence.

External anchors
In comparison to traditional breath practices, some activities were found by one participant to be more accessible in developing mindfulness. This appears, in part, to be because certain drawing activities afforded access to external anchors. Significantly, exercises based on multi-sensory experiences enabled sustained present moment experiences because the focus was fixed on either an external subject or the motion of the drawing tool and marks being made.

Accessibility
Activities that limited physical control (i.e. *Using your non-dominant hand*) or provided repetitive motion (i.e. Intuitive mark making or Simplicity activities) appeared to be effective in minimalising distracting thoughts and increasing present moment awareness. Conversely, distracting thoughts appeared more frequently during activities that were experienced as less engaging.

The study found that novelty activities like *Using blind layers* provided accessibility because they were encountered as 'playful' and therefore accompanied by lower levels of expectation. While activities that encouraged spontaneity and the use of the imagination were sometimes reported as supporting mindful awareness, the *Monsters* activity received mixed responses, and this suggests that personal temperaments may affect individual levels of enjoyment. The fact that participants were able to decide on what activities they selected resulted in certain exercises being experimented with more frequently. This made it impossible to provide a comparative overview of proportional engagement with specific activities. The situation was also compromised by the fact that some of the participants were not able to complete the full 14 days of mindful drawing. Negative feedback on specific exercises was minimal and generally focused on the limitations prescribed timeframes placed on a participant's ability to become immersed in an activity. Drawing monsters as a subject was noted by one participant as confronting. Another participant found drawing an intricate object challenging, because it was perceived as presenting complexities beyond their perceived drawing ability.

While the design of activities prioritised accessibility, the participants noted that everyday stress in the midst of a pandemic impacted adversely on the maintenance of a sustained practice. This pressure underscored the necessity to design exercises that are flexible, use available materials, are not time limited and are responsive to diverse and sometimes constrained personal environments.

It appears that as attention is paid more fully to the *process* of making marks, there is less concern with visual arrangements, and a heightened sensory state can be experienced because present moment awareness of both the drawn subject and the process is deepened. In such a state, it appears possible to encounter mindful drawing as a form of 'experience map' that charts the delicate records of inner and outer experience.

Mindful drawing has been defined in this thesis as 'the experience of seeing, recorded through marks, where lines may become appreciated as residues of experience that contain energy'. This reframing allows space for drawings to become records of sensory observation rather than representations of form. This is because I argue that the experience of attentive seeing possesses higher value than the creation of a visual outcome. The study has shown how allowing the eye and hand to wander in a responsive or exploratory manner may facilitate greater mindful awareness and enjoyment of the process, thereby lessening judgment and expectations that may incapacitate subsequent practice.

Having now discussed the procedures that were used to collect data, findings and themes that emerged from the participants' 14 days of mindful drawing exercises, and findings emanating from my self-practice, it is useful to consider the portfolio that speaks to the study.

Chapter 5

Essences: The portfolio

Essences: The portfolio

Given that the research was undertaken during such a disruptive and uncertain time, it is helpful to offer discussion as to how the study was effected and shaped by world events. In this chapter I discuss the final portfolio of mindful drawings and associated poetic writing that has been created as a conclusion to the thesis.

Following the study's analysis of findings, I embarked on a mindful drawing and poetic practice that reflected on what I had experienced. In this endeavour, I sought to provide an overview of the research as an artistic expression of understandings that surfaced from the inquiry. A selection of this work was curated into the digitally formatted portfolio, *Essences.*

This portfolio contains two parts.

Part A comprises 16 new mindful drawings that I made. These were paired with 16 poems selected from the research findings in Chapter 4. These drawings were produced between December 2021 and January 2022, after the findings from the research had been written up. The composite works constitute the researcher's artistic reflection on what was generated *inside* the research.

Progressing from this, Part B presents a more discrete body of work that is my culminating practice of mindful drawing and poetic interpretation of the experience. This section presents 10 mindful drawings that I completed in December 2021. Each of these drawings is accompanied by a *new* researcher-voiced poem that I created *after* the drawing exercise was completed.

The digital portfolio

The title *Essences* was chosen for the portfolio because the document represents core understandings that surfaced from multiple mindful drawing experiences. In making this decision, I found helpful Richardson's (2002) observation that poetic inquiry offers a method to "express the sense of the whole or *the essence* of the experience as constructed by the interviewer" (p. 883). The word 'essence' is an abstract noun that derives from the Proto-Indo-European root meaning "to be."[90] As a collection, these drawings and poems speak to the 'being' of the study; its quintessence and distilled substance.

Chronologically, the portfolio constitutes an overview and return. It employs artistic, poetic inquiry to reflect on the research project and themes emanating from it. Thus, the portfolio is a body of work created at the end of the study that artistically comes to terms with what was experienced. The decision to present findings both exegetically and in a portfolio afforded the study a multiperspective means of representation. I realise that a portfolio constitutes a curated selection of mindful drawing understandings and therefore cannot reflect *all* of the findings presented in the study. Instead it may be understood as the researcher's artistic meaning-making of the inquiry; a response through practice to ideas and insights that were significant within the study. As such it is also a presentation of resonant thinking for those who encounter the thesis.

Ingman (2022) notes that using visual devices to present research findings can reinforce connections between the practice and the research, and provide access to viewers who might initially be unapproachable. Weber (2008) also suggests that the potency of combining art with the research findings can provide an increased memorable experience while making literal and metaphorical understandings more accessible to a larger audience. This thinking supports Barone and Eisner's (2011) argument that Art-based research may provide an alternative perspective from which to view and understand previously unquestioned social domains.

The creation of a digital portfolio arose because of complications surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, especially issues relating to public access to creative work generated within the thesis. Initially, I had envisaged a physical gallery setting where people might be able to walk around and dwell within a space of mindful drawing and poetic synthesis. It was proposed that the exhibition would be accompanied by a catalogue and introductory essay that would orient viewers who might not have read the exegesis. However, as the thesis study drew to a close, there were restrictions resulting from the pandemic with very few gallery facilities available and access issues (including the inability for international examiners to see the work) which forced a rethinking of potential options.

As an initial solution to this, I investigated the potential of using a virtual gallery exhibition (Figure 5.1). My thinking here was a transference of physical space into a virtual 'walkthrough'. However, while testing a range of websites I experienced ongoing technical difficulties. These included images becoming distorted or not loading correctly and clumsy navigation and movement that impeded the viewing experience in a virtual space. In addition, many gallery templates required a specific computer operating system and this limited access to the work. In addition, because the galleries used default templates, there was limited control over the options for the poetic text to be laid out as an equally empowered, discursive part of the display.

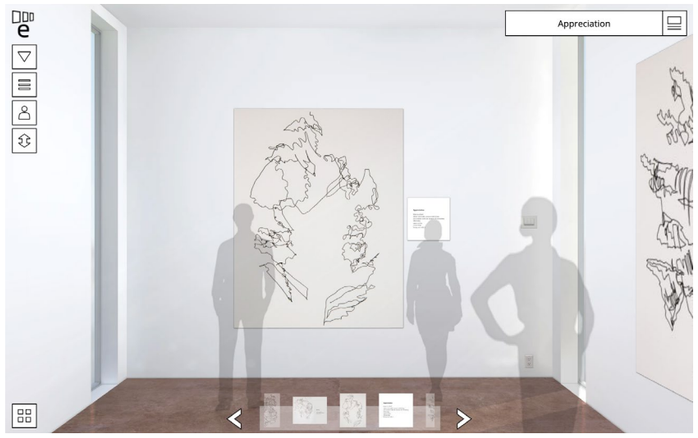


Figure 5.1. A mock-up of a virtual gallery where drawings were enlarged beyond their original size.[91] (Gannon, E. February, 2022).

90 https://www.etymonline.com/word/essence

91 The website *Exhibbit* (used here) offered virtual galleries and exhibitions (https://exhibbit.com/home/)

In addition, drawings that were originally produced as small and intimate would need enlarging into artefacts so they weren't subsumed by the space, and I was afraid that this might suggest 'finished outcomes' rather than maps of experience.

After trialling a number of options I began experimenting with a digital pdf format for presenting *Essences* as a portfolio.[92] There were a number of advantages to this.

First, a digital portfolio could enable international access because a pdf is a widely accessible type of file.[93] Accordingly, the works would be more accessible than an installation in a physical gallery setting or via a virtual walkthrough that required specific software to be installed and navigated by viewers. The 26 poems and drawings contained within the pdf portfolio could be presented in a discrete discourse with each other, without the peripheral interference of other work or other people occupying the space. Discourses could be intentionally designed so the poems spoke with the same sense of presence as the drawings (Figure 5.2). A digital pdf could also be viewed in private, on a personal computer. This might offer an experience that was more attuned to the scale of the original drawings and the ethos of the solitary practice.

there is a level
where you really connect with being
you connect with the oneness of everything
observing
appreciating
connecting
being one with it

Seeing deeper #2

Pen on paper
21 x 29.7 cm
2022

Figure 5.2. The digital portfolio artefact from Part A of *Essences*. Here, the researcher's mindful drawing is combined with a participant-voiced reflection to create a final artefact titled 'Seeing deeper #2' (Gannon, E. February, 2022).

92 This was constructed using Adobe InDesign.

93 Created by Adobe, the Portable Document Format [PDF] is a versatile file format that provides users with a reliable way of presenting and exchanging image and text documents, irrespective of the software, hardware or operating systems available to those viewing the document.

The visual poetic works in Part A of *Essences*

Part A of *Essences* contains new drawings that were paired with poems already generated in the study. My aim here was to connect new work completed after the main body of the study with existing poetic essences. From the research, I selected 13 participant-voiced poems constructed in Phase 3[94] and 3 of my own researcher-voiced poems that I had constructed in Phase 1.[95]

Selecting the poetic works

The participants' poems were sourced from interview transcripts and statements in their private journals. I selected an existing poem that addressed each of the 12 themes and sub-themes from the participant post-drawing findings section of the study,[96] and one poem from each of the three themes from my researcher's self-practice findings. In selecting these works I was reminded of Hervey's (2000) assertion that the specific selection of poetic inquiry represents "the artist/researcher's aesthetic values and the desire to let the data speak authentically" (p. 87).

In selecting pairings from the inquiry, I was influenced by a range of criteria that had been used by Faulkner (2019), Leavy (2020) and Richardson (2000). Leavy (2020) suggests criteria such as aesthetics, methodology, usefulness and audience response. These may be inseparably combined and diversely contemplated, creating complicated territory for evaluation. Richardson (2000) offers the following criteria: Substantive contribution to the understanding of community; aesthetic merit; reflexivity relating to data collection, ethics, and researcher subjectivity; impact pertaining to emotions and intellect; and expression of a reality, offering a credible account of an embodied sense of experience. My selection was guided by the following questions:

Articulateness. Does the new mindful drawing speak articulately to the existing poem?
Authenticity. Does the poetic work reflect original word usage and context?
Accessibility. Does the pairing of the poem and the drawing enable deeper engagement with the idea?
Richness. Does the work bring additional dimensions that develop the intended message of the research? (Lahman et al., 2019; Owton, 2017).
Usefulness. Does the composite work allow key themes of the research to be expressed?
Feeling. Is one engaged with the *essence* of the experience through this work? (Glesne, 2010).

In this part of the portfolio, each of the drawings is presented alongside a poem that I felt best encapsulated the mindful drawing experience. Although I reread the poems between my practices, I did not 'design' a final drawing to fit with a specific poem. This is because I wanted to avoid 'illustrating' the poems or treating them as 'subjects'. Instead, I dwelled inside 42 mindful drawing activities, and *after* this was done, I sought connections between these experiences and poems that had surfaced during the research. I reflected on how certain words and phrases from the findings expressed in poetic form had become imprinted on my memory. I felt strong connections with these participant reflections because they echoed many of my own experiences of mindful drawing.

94 These are discussed in the themes from the Participants' pre-drawing findings in Chapter 4: Section 2.

95 These are discussed in the themes from the Researcher's self-practice findings in Chapter 4: Section 3.

96 The exception to this is the theme Seeing deeper, from which I selected two poems.

The mindful drawings

The mindful drawings were limited to materials used in the preceding phases of the inquiry and I selected natural objects for the subject matter. I employed a combination of *Blind drawing* and *Continuous drawing* because these approaches had already been effective in affording me significant levels of release from judgment regarding the aesthetic quality of visual outcomes. Accordingly, the marks I made became visible to me only once a drawing was complete. This allowed my hand to translate what my eye traced, without the interference of judgmental thinking. I was cognisant that I was allowing a map of my mindful drawing experience to emerge on the paper (Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3. The drawing selected for pairing with the poem 'Mark Value' (Gannon, E. January, 2022).

The visual poetic works in Part B of *Essences*

The 10 drawings that make up the second part of *Essences* are also my own and they are accompanied by poetic texts that I created, after considering my present moment experiences of mindful drawing activities. I chose to continue using the readily accessible media of paper, pens and pencils that had become staples of the wider inquiry. Given that I had achieved and sustained mindful awareness most easily when drawing from nature, I also chose to predominantly use natural subject matter. While the drawings employed activities tested by participants, I also experimented with three new methods that had suggested themselves through my previous 60 day concentrated period of self-practice. The activities included:

Rapid drawing

Continuous drawing using an inorganic object as the subject

Soundscape drawing (recording sounds while continually moving the pen) (Barton & Hosea, 2017) (Figure 5.4 - p. 96)

Drawing with two hands (simultaneously to create a mirrored image) (Itten, 1975) (Figure 5.5 - p. 96)

Colouring in combined with *Travelling*

Tracing

Drawing the breath (marking the inhale and exhale with a line) (Barton & Hosea, 2017; Greenhalgh, 2020) (Figure 5.6 - p.96)

Blind drawing with paper pinned upside down under a table

Rapid drawing using people as the subject, and

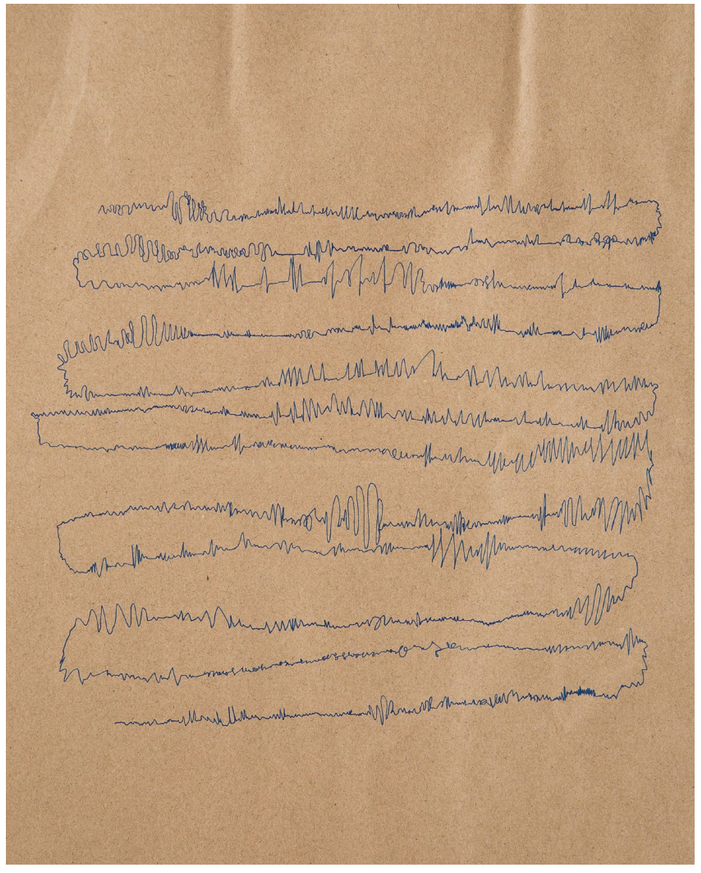
Drawing with a bundle of tools.

After completing each drawing, I used annotated reflective notetaking to record my experience. I then created multiple researcher-voiced poems from each reflection. From these, I selected the poem that I felt most succinctly encapsulated the experience. These poems were then positioned alongside the corresponding paper bag drawing (Figures 5.5-8). From multiple exercises, I finally selected ten combinations that I felt offered the richest perspectives of my experience of mindful drawing. While I had completed 38 drawings on paper bags, the aim was not to present a sizeable record of all my experimentation. Instead, I sought to communicate the 'essence' of the inquiry through relationships between drawing and poetry.

Given the limitations of lockdowns and the nature of constraint, I chose to draw on recycled brown paper bags because they were immediately accessible in the constrained environment of my home.[97] Because the bags had already served their intended purpose and had been collected from a recycled paper pile, I felt free to make unrefined and imperfect marks. I am reminded here that Maslen and Southern (2011) encourage framing imperfections as vital components of a drawing in order to encourage an open attitude. Thus, the photographs of the drawings in the portfolio include the paper bag's handle ridges and paper imperfections. These 'imperfections' serve to reinforce the principle that these are not exhibited artworks as aesthetic refinements, but rather a selection of mindful drawing exercises accompanied by poetic reflection.

97 I had amassed a quantity of these bags due to online shopping delivery becoming a staple during the Covid-19 lockdowns.

Soundscape drawing



a meditation throughout
a stillness to the practice
connected to surroundings

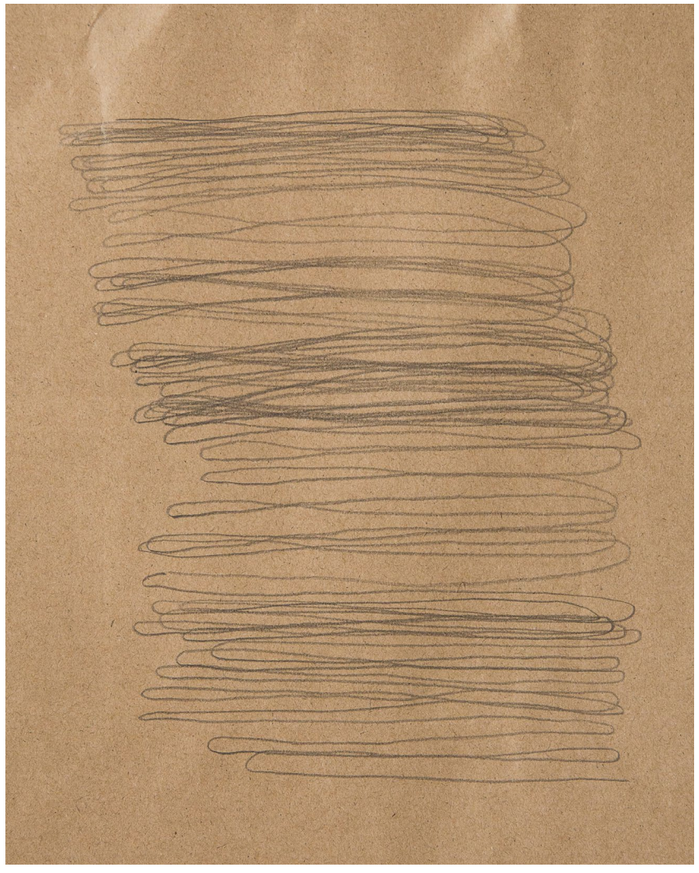
Figure 5.4. Here I drew the sounds heard in a garden. In this exercise, as with *Blind drawing,* one's awareness is paid to intricate details, but one is responding to sound instead of sight. One's line continually moves across the paper and each sound is captured in the pen's movement. The motion creates an additional physical anchor for attention. The drawing is paired with my researcher-voiced poem (Gannon, E. December, 2021).

Drawing with two hands

engaged making marks from the start
switching between awareness of hands
moving in sync
as one
letting motion dictate directions
moving simultaneously
focused on the hand link
lost within some lines
when all attention was on motion

Figure 5.5. In this exercise I drew a mirrored image using two hands. Here the physicality and movement of the multiple pens offered additional focus points. The drawing is paired with my researcher-voiced poem (Gannon, E. January, 2022).

Drawing the breath



breathing visible on paper
sound of pencil provided anchor
a few thoughts crept in
simple and quick refocus to pencil
no reference point
for what breath looks like
minimal judgments
the pencil sounds
as if breathing with me

Figure 5.6. Here I drew the inhalation and exhalation of my breath. Combined with the sound of the pencil this created a focused and engaging experience. Again, this drawing is accompanied by my researcher-voiced poem (Gannon, E. January, 2022).

Summary

In selecting work for this portfolio, I asked myself how I might give voice to experience. I created a dialogue between drawing and *existing* poetic responses (Part A) and drawing and *new* poetic responses (Part B).

The portfolio suggests a mode of research presentation that may encourage viewers to consider relationships and perspectives. Here a research presentation speaks from within artistic practices (poetry and drawing). The use of such a portfolio may address Ingman's (2022) assertion that resonant relationships between artistic practice and findings can provide access to viewers who might initially find research reporting unapproachable. This proposition is echoed by Weber's (2008) assertion that the potency of combining art with research findings may provide an enhanced, memorable experience while making literal and metaphorical understandings accessible to a larger audience. Barone and Eisner (2011) have also suggested that such research may provide an alternative to view and understand what might have previously been unquestioned (in this instance, the experience of mindful drawing).

Thus, the portfolio *Essences* offers a digitally accessible, visual poetic representation of how simple drawing exercises may be explored and understood as a method to increase mindfulness. By including this portfolio as the culmination of the study, I have provided an example of how a visual text can speak to, and for, the experienced nature of mindfulness practice.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The impact of Covid-19 on the inquiry

The study took place during the unfolding of an unprecedented event in history that effected how the research was able to be conducted due to the extended periods of uncertainty and disruption it caused. This section opens with a reflection of the Covid-19 pandemic on the research. It then summarises the key ideas contained within the study. It also discusses three significant contributions that the project may offer to how we understand mindful drawing as practice and the nature and potentials of poetic inquiry. The chapter then discusses recommendations for further research through additional studies, a published book, mindful drawing workshops and a physical exhibition of final works. The chapter concludes with a personal reflection on the study.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic changed the world and, subsequently, the way I was able to conduct the research project. Before the World Health Organisation had declared an official pandemic in March 2020, I had completed my Confirmation of Candidature presentation[98] and, after gaining ethics approval, I had begun interviews with several participants. Interview sessions were scheduled between April 2020 and March 2021. However, this timing became compromised.[99] Due to the contagious and potentially fatal nature of the virus, there was no global indication as to when lockdowns would end, and 'normality' might be restored. In March 2020 the university's ethics committee (AUTEC) requested that all field research involving any form of potential physical contact should cease. With interviews unable to be conducted for an indeterminable period that stretched from weeks into months and then into years,[100] I was forced to investigate approaches to the research that I could develop while confined to working from home. I was also cognisant that any participants who had signed up for the study would similarly be working in some form of government mandated or personally constructed isolation. This led me to consider alternative methods of dealing with a substantially reduced number of participants and approaches where I could conduct the inquiry without meeting with participants face to face. At this point, I chose to supplement an intended thematic analysis of data with poetic inquiry. The aim here was to create a dual lens on qualitative data that would also draw the position of the researcher more intimately into the project. At the conclusion of the fieldwork, I had to consider how I might effectively represent and disseminate the research findings.

In late 2021 Auckland was still experiencing lockdowns,[101] and by January 2022 the Omicron strain was detected in the country.[102] The lockdowns that preceded and accompanied this state created physical restrictions and complexities. While some of these were logistical, there were also mental challenges surfacing from long-term insecurity.[103] During the lockdowns, I noted how it was a challenge to navigate the new low-level hum of anxiety that surrounded my days, regardless of how much meditation or mindful awareness I practised. I also witnessed the pressure the situation was placing on some of the participants. Although Kabat-Zinn (2013) suggests that as soon as awareness is applied to a stressful event, "you have already changed that situation dramatically and opened up the field of potentially adaptive and creative possibilities just by virtue of not being unconscious and on automatic pilot anymore" (p. 336), I also knew that the research would be forced into a more flexible form and expectations would be constantly disrupted and renavigated.

Emerging from the protean and responsive nature of the study, I chose to present the research as an exegesis (as an explanatory and contextualising document) and a portfolio (as an artistic synthesis and presentation of understanding).

In 2020, the artist Pevernagie, when discussing the Corona virus said: "When the whole world is entrenched in the bunker of physical and often emotional isolation, only flexibility and ingenuity can revive us to remain grounded and imbibe the bolstering sunlight piercing through the canvas of chaos" (para. 1). Like Pevernagie, this thesis has navigated flexibility and ingenuity as a necessity. The research has embraced the pandemic and unfolded with it. This has resulted in both limitations and opportunities, and these have impacted on both its form and trajectory. Accordingly, the study stands as a kind of groundedness, aware of both its constraints and its potentials.

98 In the Ph.D. programme this presentation occurs at the conclusion of one year of full-time study. The external review of progress to date (including an articulation of the proposed methodology, evidence of ethical approvals, an initial review of knowledge and evidence of practice) is used to determine whether the thesis can progress as a doctoral study.

99 Level 3 (and 4) lockdowns that prevented interviews included March 23rd 2020 – May 12th nationwide, August 12th 2020 – September 23rd in Auckland, February 14th 2021– February 17th and February 28th 2021 – March 6th in Auckland (*History of the COVID-19 Alert System*, n.d.; Strongman et al., 2021).

100 The Covid-19 vaccine arrived in New Zealand in February 2021, 11 months after the initial outbreak (Strongman et al., 2021).

101 Auckland remained at Level 3 and 4 lockdowns between August 18th and November 10th 2021 (*History of the COVID-19 Alert System*, n.d.)

102 The new variant of Covid-19, Omicron was more transmissible and resulted in high numbers of outbreaks due to its ability to double cases over a two to four day period (*COVID-19*, 2022). On January 20th 2022, the Prime Minister confirmed that the Omicron variant was being transmitted within the community and predicted that outbreaks would likely increase to thousands of cases within 14 days (Ardern, 2022).

103 Internationally, the pandemic had a significant effect on mental health and wellbeing (Bäuerle et al., 2020; Shevlin et al., 2020) and it is considered by researchers like Bridgland et al. (2021) to be a traumatic stressor.

Summary of key findings

The research addressed three question that required exploration through practice:

> What drawing strategies and methods might facilitate the pursuit of mindfulness?
> What contingencies and conditions of practice need to be taken into account when engaging with mindful drawing?
> What benefits can be derived from mindful drawing?

Paradigmatically positioned as an Art-based inquiry, the study employed a mixed methodology that blended reflective practice and participatory reflection on practice. The methodology was developed through four phases, each of which utilised a range of methods. The phases began with the researcher's self-practice, then moved to participant engagement with mindful drawing practices, on to thematic and poetic analyses of the findings, and concluded with an artistic synthesis of mindful drawing experiences. As a conclusion to the study, a portfolio of drawings and poems was created that constituted an artistic map of seeing and understanding the diverse experiences of mindful drawing practices.

In the study, traditional conceptions of drawing concerned with technical aptitude and representational accuracy were marginalised and an emphasis was placed on a non-judgmental process of drawing. Mindful drawing was practised with present moment awareness.

The study found that participants experienced mindful awareness while engaging with certain types of drawing activity. Physical anchors such as the drawing tool or drawing subject, and the tactile experience of making marks, allowed present moment awareness to be anchored and sustained. Participants found that drawing without judgment was more enjoyable because all marks could be embraced. The study confirmed Franck's (1979) and Greenhalgh's (2020) assertions that the release of concern regarding aesthetic quality allows for the development of greater awareness of the drawing experience.

Given limitations shaped by the 2019-2022 Covid-19 pandemic, the concerns of the inquiry focused on the depth of experience. The study acknowledges that conducting research with a broader sample of participants may have afforded additional insight into mindful drawing experiences. However, the implementation of poetic inquiry through both analysis and representation has offered what Kalla and Simmons (2020) propose can be an in-depth contemplation of human experience.

Contribution to knowledge

This study acknowledges Savin-Baden and Wimpenny's (2014) suggestion that Art-based research is inevitably complex and inexplicit, and Lincoln and Denzin's (2004) proposal that such research is continually incomplete. While the study cannot claim definitive conclusions, it can encourage discourse that contributes towards developing understanding (Leavy, 2015). I am reminded that Chappell and Barone (2011) argue that Art-based research offers the possibility of insight and may achieve its intention "if consumers of the work are lured into rethinking (rewriting) their perspectives concerning that which has been thematically addressed in the research text" (p. 275).

Given this position, the thesis offers three significant contributions to knowledge.

Understanding mindful drawing
First, as a small qualitative study the project contributes to understandings of mindfulness in drawing practice by focusing on experiences of mark making among participants who pursue a heightened sense of present momentness. As such, the study adds voices of experience and analysis to current research in the field of mindful drawing (Grant et al., 2004; Greenhalgh, 2020; Montarou, 2013; Slom, 2020).

Mindful drawing as practice
Second, the study contributes to ways in which mindful awareness may be developed through drawing practice. The thesis offers a range of exercises and issues that warrant consideration if one is designing drawing activities that might facilitate present moment awareness. The research also reveals how, with frequent practise, mindful drawing may assist adults to overcome anxiety and restrictive beliefs regarding their ability to draw.

The application of poetic inquiry
Finally, the study shows how visual poetic inquiry can offer an expansion of ways that qualitative data may be processed. In addition, the project offers novel insights into Art-based methods for representing qualitative research findings through the synthesis of visual and poetic modes of inquiry.

Recommendations for future research

In this study, I appreciate that I have presented one approach to exploring mindful drawing. Had the research not been so heavily impacted by complications emanating from a global pandemic, it may have evolved differently. As such, the study may benefit from being repeated at a future date when physical limitations are not a factor.

Given this situation, the project suggests potential areas for future research.

Expansion
The five participants in this study spent only 14 days mindfully drawing. As such, a longer study may provide more substantial feedback as to the long term effects and implications of a mindful drawing practice. A longer duration of time could also provide greater detail as to which drawing exercises are more effective at maintaining or increasing mindful awareness over time. Additionally, alternative practices that engage tactile and sonic senses might help to expand the spectrum of activities that are useful in mindful drawing exercises. By extension, creative activities like printmaking,[104] painting and working with clay or collage might be explored as methods to increase mindful awareness.

Recruiting a larger number of participants may also provide a greater breadth of experiences. In addition, future studies might adopt a mixed-method approach and combine qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. This would offer a different form of triangulation to the thematic analysis and poetic inquiry utilised in this study.

Outreach
The study identified a range of drawing categories and exercises that facilitated present moment awareness. Accordingly, there is potential for their inclusion in a published book for public readership. Given the small number of drawing books that provide a supportive framework for drawing without judgment, new published work might enable a wider audience to connect with creative mindfulness practices. Such a publication might include both activities and an introductory discussion on the nature of mindful drawing. This book would go beyond the simple provision of activities because it would provide exercises with a rich contextual discussion that considers 'how' drawing and mindfulness might be connected. Such a publication would have the potential to extend the research benefits surfacing from thesis because it might offer potential contributions to the fields of art therapy and art practice pedagogies.

The study may also provide a springboard for a series of mindful drawing workshops. These could be facilitated and might connect to the thesis or draw from it in developing new exercises based on the research findings.

Finally, while the final works contained within *Essences* are presented digitally, there is the possibility of displaying them in a physical exhibition setting at a future date (when Covid-19 is no longer a pandemic within New Zealand). While I hold some concerns with this approach, by locating mindful drawings inside a gallery space we might challenge preoccupations with drawing as a purely artistic rather than mindful practice.

104 I am aware that Schoone (2015) has already begun exploring the potentials of this form of practice.

Personal, parting thoughts

This study has extended my art practice into the fields of mindful drawing and poetry. In drawing mindfully, I have learnt to practise non-judgment upon the marks I make, enabling acceptance of whatever outcomes emerge. I have discovered how sustaining mindful awareness allows deeper seeing and connection to the world. I have seen how a new definition of drawing can allow a way to practise mindfulness in a supportive and engaging way. As a result, I have begun to question desires I previously held to increase my technical drawing skills. Instead, I see greater value in letting the hand trace what the eye more deeply sees. Kabat-Zinn (2014) explains that mindfulness requires letting go of improvement, as "the only way you can do anything of value is to have the effort come out of non-doing and to let go of caring whether it will be of use or not" (p. 39). I have experienced the power of letting my hand move without judgment and remaining open to whatever emerges. Without critical interference trying to control marks, I have made space for surprise and delight that have cultivated greater present moment awareness. Here, the *process* of mark making has resulted in sensory 'experience maps' that have surfaced out of deep, present moment encounters with what is being drawn. In addition, by mindfully drawing natural subjects across a sustained practice I have experienced a more appreciative and intimate connection with my immediate environment, producing a greater sense of 'being alive' in the moment. In this state, I have come to experience mindful drawing as a delicate charting of inner and outer experience.

When approaching a drawing practice, Barry (2019) suggests that "your hand needs time to wander enough to be able to find something you weren't aware of, like an expedition partner who can see things you can't. The hand is experiencing the same world in a different way. It's you but not you" (p. 13). Allowing space for marks to emerge without my critical interference has resulted in creating a collection of drawings with marks that surprised me. I physically made the marks and yet I feel they arranged themselves. For an artist who has been taught to improve my skills and demonstrate mastery, releasing control has been liberating. Langer's (2005, p. 36) concept of mindful creativity is that:

> … to be a true artist is to be mindful. Even if someone has all the skills in place, a mindlessly executed work of art is in some sense dead … if the art is mindfully engaged, the end result should lead to a positive outcome.

In adopting this mindful mindset creatively, I am excited about future creative potentials. I feel I have moved beyond my old art class judgments and it is my hope that others who engage in mindful drawing may experience a similar shift.

With poetic inquiry I have traversed analysis and representation by making poetry that can progress a study's research aims. I have developed a greater appreciation of the power in a small poem that can touch the essence of experience in only a few lines. In combining drawings with poetic text, I have come to understand the potency of visual poetic inquiry in representing experience and its potential in providing a contemplative space from which to view research.

Although researching during the Covid-19 pandemic added many difficulties, it also provided the opportunity to practise mindfulness through an increasingly stressful and uncertain time. In drawing mindfully, I have found a sustainable and engaging practice that has enriched my life in unanticipated ways, through the release of judgment, the deeper sensing of small details of daily life and embracing the present moment. Thus, through the process of mindful drawing, I have experienced opening myself up to the possibility of developing a more mindful life.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: AUTEC approval letter

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

26 November 2019

Welby Ings
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Welby

Re Ethics Application: **19/423 Exploring mindfulness through drawing practice**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 25 November 2022.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Please ensure that the invitation includes the AUT logo and the AUTEC approval wording.

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted. When the research is undertaken outside New Zealand, you need to meet all ethical, legal, and locality obligations or requirements for those jurisdictions.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics

Yours sincerely,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Manager
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: egannon@aut.ac.nz; Amabel Hunting

Appendix 2: Information sheet for prospective participants

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

January 2020

Project Title

Exploring mindfulness through drawing practice.

An Invitation

My name is Eleanor Gannon and I am a PhD student at Auckland University of Technology. I am trying to find out if drawing with pen, pencil and paper may be considered a mindfulness practice. Would you be willing to help me? I am looking for adult non-professional drawers who are open to the possibility of using drawing as a method to increase mindfulness. Skill in accurate drawing or having a current drawing practice is not required in order to take part in this research. There are three parts to the project which include a face-to-face pre-interview, drawing activities done in private and a face-to-face post-interview of the experience.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to gain insight from people into how drawing might be used as a mindfulness activity. With the help of participant reflection, I seek to understand relationships between drawing and mindfulness. The contribution of my research will be adding to understanding of how creative activities may be used as an alternative mindfulness practice. While formal mindfulness practices such as breathing meditation may work for some, I believe that a creative mindfulness practice may work more effectively for some people. The data may also be used for academic presentations and writings. All of the data that will be published with no identifying information. I will use a pseudonym in order to protect your identity and ensure confidentiality.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You are invited to participate in this research if you are an adult non-professional drawer who has some knowledge of mindfulness or mindfulness practices. You may have contacted me because you expressed interest in taking part in the study or because someone else passed on my details to you.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

You agree to participate by signing the consent form. We will then arrange a time, date and location for our first face-to-face interview. Both me as the researcher and you as the participant will have a copy of the signed consent form. Your participation in this research is voluntary. The study will neither advantage nor disadvantage you whether you choose to participate or not. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

- The first discussion will be informal and one-to-one between me as the researcher and you as the participant. You will be asked about your experience of drawing, your experience and understanding of mindfulness and whether you think drawing could be considered a mindful activity. Both discussions will be audio recorded so they can later be reviewed by the researcher for analysis.
- The two-week period of drawing activities is to be completed in private, in a location and time of your choosing. You will select which exercises you wish to try. With suggested time durations between 2 and 20 minutes, it is hoped that you will have a chance to try a variety of them, ideally on a daily basis. But the frequency and duration of completing the activities will be chosen by you.
- You will be asked to try the drawing activity for two weeks and record your interactions, feelings and thoughts about each activity in a journal that I will provide for you. You can decide how much information you wish to share with me. You have the choice to keep your journal and drawings private and you will make your choice known via the consent form.
- After two weeks of drawing, there will be the second discussion session so you can share your overall experience and opinions about the drawing activities.

What are the discomforts and risks?

There is no potential risks or discomforts associated with this research. The data will be gathered through discussions and audio recordings, and any information you wish to share from the drawing journal about your experience of drawing. I will not collect sensitive information.

What are the benefits?

The research aims to contribute new understanding of how mindfulness may be explored through a drawing practice. It will benefit the public because it will contribute new insights into present-moment focused action that seeks to find contentment in the present. The results will provide further understanding of which kinds of drawing activities allow mindfulness to occur.

The information collected from these interviews will benefit me in obtaining my Doctor of Philosophy degree. I will also gain a deeper understanding of drawing as a tool for mindfulness.

How will my privacy be protected?

The nature of this research is not sensitive. You have the freedom of choosing what information you wish to share with the researcher as well as not answering questions that you feel uncomfortable with. You can terminate the sessions or interviews at any time. To protect your confidentiality, you can decide what information you wish to be shared in the research and what information you wish to have excluded. I won't use any of your drawings without your permission. Your personal details and information will not be mentioned in the research. The audio recordings will be only used for transcriptions and analysis. They will not be published or exhibited. I will take full responsibility to protect these transcriptions and keep them secure at AUT premises.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The discussion will involve your time. The estimated length of the first interview will be between 30 minutes and 1 hour.
The demonstration and answering of questions will follow this discussion and will take approximately 15 minutes.

The drawing exercises will take place in private, over a 2-week period, at a location and time convenient to you.

The second discussion will occur after two weeks and will take approximately 30 minutes.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You can consider participating in this research after you read this information sheet completely. I would appreciate knowing your decision within one month of receiving this document. You have the right to withdraw from taking part in this research even after agreeing to participate.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

If you wish to receive a summary of the research findings, please tick 'Yes' on your consent form.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Welby Ings: welby.ings@aut.ac.nz +64 9 921 9999 #8621

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, *ethics@aut.ac.nz*, 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Eleanor Gannon: egannon@aut.ac.nz +64210 234

Project Supervisors Contact Details:

Dr Welby Ings: welby.ings@aut.ac.nz +64 9 921 9999 #8621

Dr Amabel Hunting: amabel.hunting@aut.ac.nz +64 9 921 9999 #8762

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 25th November 2019, AUTEC Reference number 19/423.

Appendix 3: Instructions and reflections prompts for participants

What is mindful drawing?

Mindful drawing is the awareness of marks being made in the present moment, without judgment and with an open attitude. If judgmental thoughts do arise while drawing, that is okay. Being mindful does not mean having no judgmental thoughts at all. Instead, it's about noticing them with curiosity if they do arise, but then returning your attention back to the drawing.

Instructions

Find a space on your own where you won't be interrupted. Put your phone on silent/ airplane mode and give your full attention to the activity when you're drawing.

Use a pencil or pen of your choice to draw with. Try experimenting with both.

There is no one right drawing style and no wrong way to draw.

You're not trying to perfectly replicate something and what your drawing ends up looking like visually doesn't matter at all. It's about the process of making marks and squiggles, wobbles and 'mistakes' are all welcome.

Time durations are all suggestions. If you wish to spend more or less time, please do.

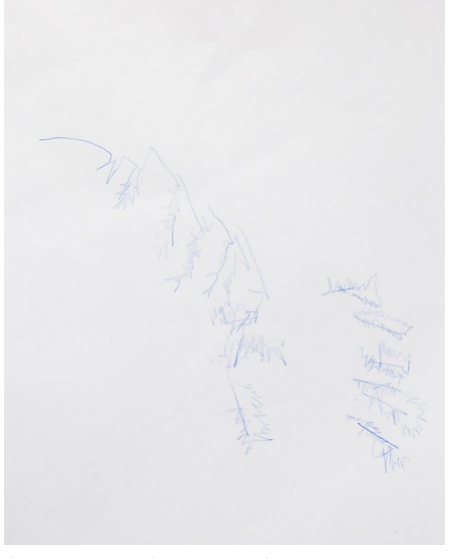
As soon as you have completed each drawing, use the journal provided to write about your experience. Use the prompt questions below to guide you, or write whatever comes to mind.

Enjoy experimenting!

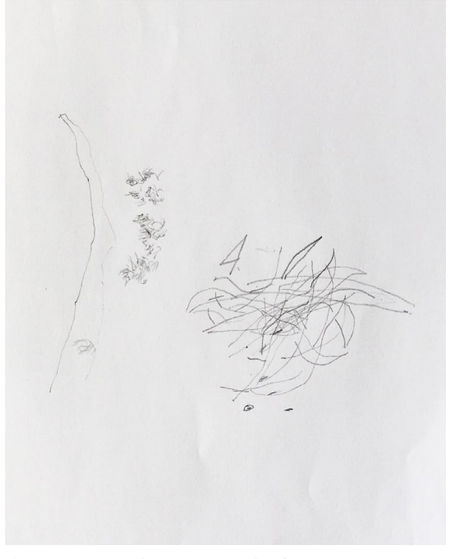
Prompt questions for reflections and observations

What did you notice? In your mind? In your emotions? In your body?
What surprised you?
What parts of the experience were pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?
How did you decide if you liked or didn't like something?
What were you curious about?
What did you learn?
What urges or impulses did you notice?
What changed… before, during, and after the activity?
When might be helpful to you to use the activity in your daily life?

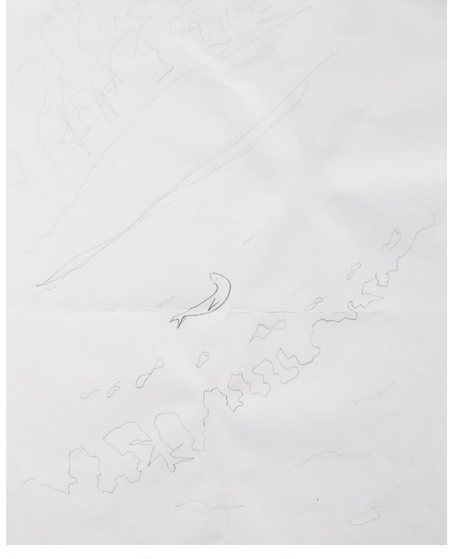
Appendix 4: A selection of participants' drawings



Seeing/drawing (Participant C. March, 2020).

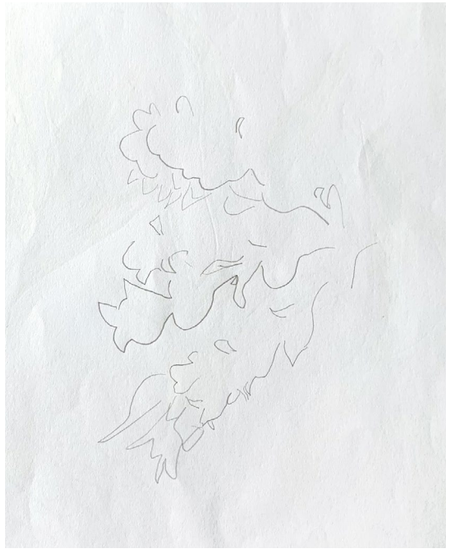


Blind drawing (Participant E. October, 2020).



Rapid drawing (Participant A. February, 2020).

Continuous drawing (Participant C. March, 2020).



Touching nature (Participant D. March, 2020).

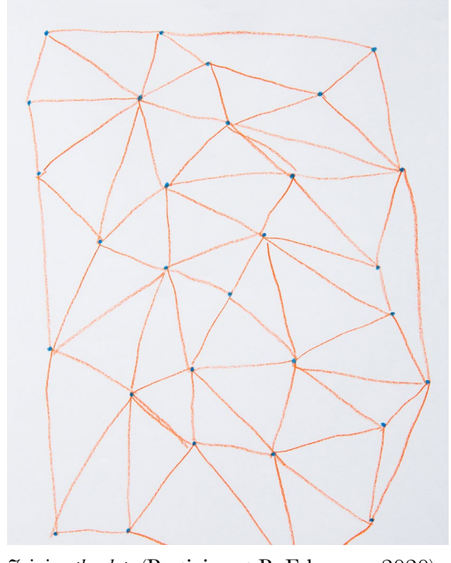
Using your non-dominant hand (Participant A. February, 2020).

Using your foot (Participant B. February, 2020).

Using a bundle of tools (Participant C. March, 2020).

Tracing (Participant A. February, 2020).

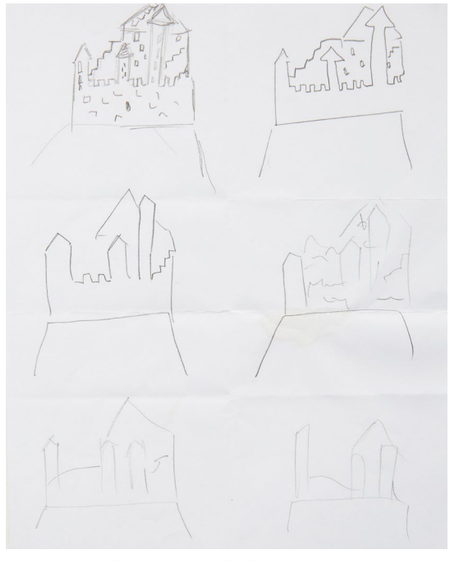
Colouring in (Participant B. February, 2020).



Joining the dots (Participant B. February, 2020).

Travelling (Participant E. October, 2020).

Monsters (Participant A. February, 2020).



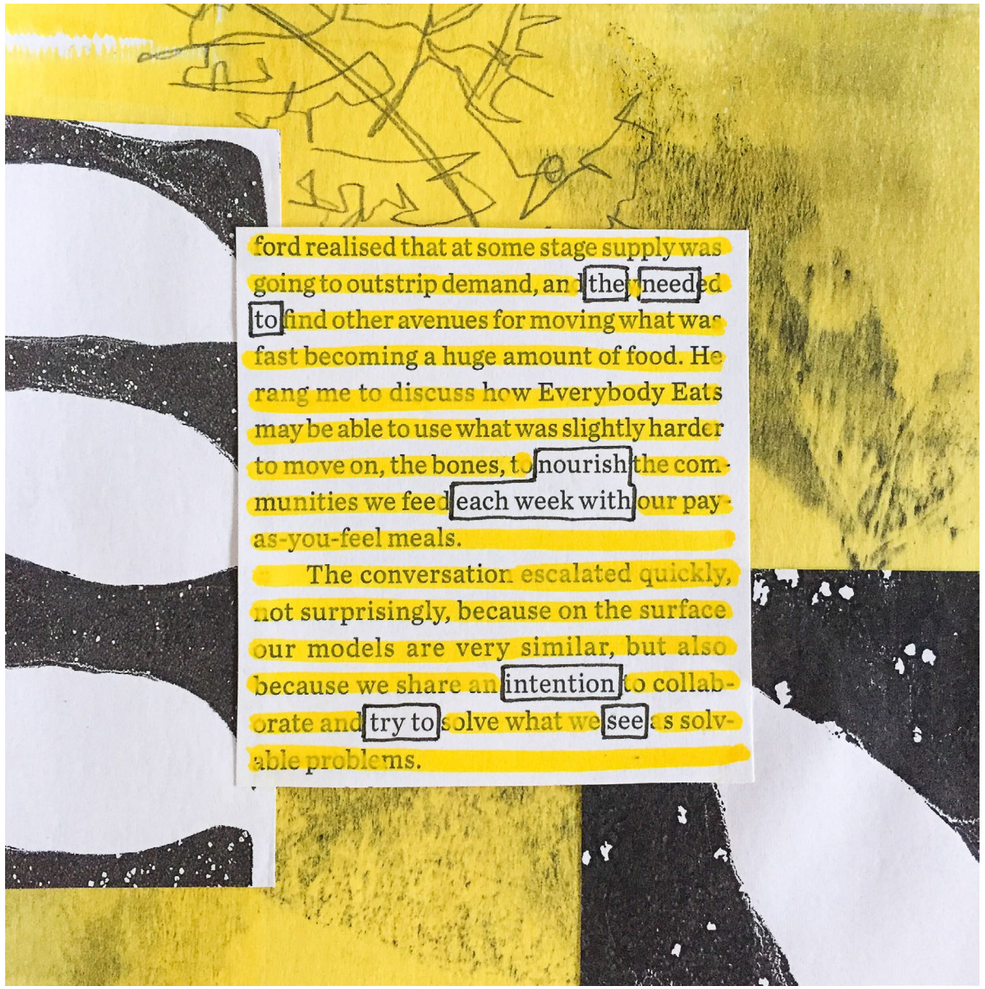
Time lapse (Participant B. February, 2020).

Using blind layers (Participant D. March, 2020).

Invent your own (Participant A. February, 2020).

Appendix 5: A selection of the researcher's experiments combining printmaking and poetic text


the most slow-it-down
super intentional hand
be-here-now, being present


ford realised that at some stage supply was
going to outstrip demand, an the needed
to find other avenues for moving what was
fast becoming a huge amount of food. He
rang me to discuss how Everybody Eats
may be able to use what was slightly harder
to move on, the bones, to nourish the com-
munities we feed each week with our pay-
as-you-feel meals.
The conversation escalated quickly,
not surprisingly, because on the surface
our models are very similar, but also
because we share an intention to collab-
orate and try to solve what we see as solv-
able problems.


see closer, notice
this leaf is weathered, battered
holes, tattered edges

Thank you