

Poised in space: between mark and
maker, investigating the effects of
unknowing on my artistic practice

Caroline Clare Birch

Student Number: 852858723

DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfilment / partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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I, Caroline Clare Birch, declare that

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Student Name

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Dr Louise Hall
Name of Supervisor



Signature

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Abstract

The focus of this research is to investigate the effects of unknowing on my artistic practice. This encompasses finding ways to access unknowing, and ways of remaining open to unknowing.

Profound uncertainty, which disrupted my artmaking practice, was initially perceived as an artist's block. When the approach to this uncertainty was changed to one of curious enquiry, the close relationship between instability, uncertainty and transformation was revealed. This investigation unexpectedly found that the solution to this prohibitive uncertainty was not provided by knowledge but by deliberately turning away from knowledge (Morgan 2014: 111). Discovering ways to repudiate understanding or knowledge as a goal, revealed the generative potency of unknowing.

Unknowing appears to be a ubiquitous yet indefinable presence, whose influence was felt in this study as instability, uncertainty, or disorientation. Practice-led research (PLR) proved an invaluable means of embedding these experiences in artmaking methods. 'In-the-dark' artmaking methods were developed from PLR interweaving of artmaking practice and theory. This provided a means of moving away from understanding (Morgan 2014: 111) and of cultivating uncertainty and instability.

From 'in-the-dark' methods a new understanding emerged that artist, materials and unfolding interaction (Carter in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 21) together constitute a single artmaking intelligence. Referred to as energy density, this concept is underpinned by extended mind theory (Clark & Chalmers 1998), material thinking (Barrett & Bolt 2007: 19-20,30), Hannula's (2009: 4-5 of 20) "*democracy of experience*" and physics. Energy density embodies the spacious structure of atoms and all matter (Eddington 1948: 2; Niaz 1998: 534-537), indicating the lack of physical impediments hindering the transformative influence of 'spacious unknowing'.

Additionally, this research demonstrates that prior knowledge of an action was not required to be able to act or make art. Action embodies the transformative quantum of action (Bohr

1958: 17-18; Eddington 1948: 180,185; Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016: 11-12 of 25) and enabled the implementation of destabilising 'in-the-dark' methods. Instability and transformation are closely allied in this study. 'In-the-dark' methods, applied using PLR and "*postmodern emergence*" methodologies, have triggered radical change at all levels of my artistic practice.

Key words

Instability, uncertainty, unknowing, 'spacious unknowing', practice-led research (PLR), postmodern emergence, energy density, 'in-the-dark' methods, generative, installation, painting, printmaking.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
List of Illustrations.....	ix
Chapter One.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Background.....	2
Research objectives.....	4
Research questions.....	5
Literature review.....	5
Artmaking as research.....	5
Unknowing.....	10
‘Spacious unknowing’.....	15
Energy density.....	16
Action.....	19
Theoretical framework.....	21
Methodology.....	23
Practice-led research.....	24
Postmodern emergence.....	25
An array of methods.....	26
Structure of dissertation.....	28
Conclusion.....	29
Chapter Two: Poised in Space.....	31
Introduction.....	31
Indicating the change.....	31
Engaging with ‘I don’t know’.....	37
My experience of knowledge and ignorance in this research.....	40
‘Spacious unknowing’.....	46
Kinds of brain functioning.....	48
Physics.....	50
Conclusion.....	54
Chapter Three: Between Mark and Maker.....	55
Introduction.....	55
Marked change and instability.....	56
Removing reference imagery.....	57

A return to imagery.....	66
The spaciousness of matter	69
'In-the-dark' processes and using light to engage 'dark'	71
The matter of space	75
Energy density as an artmaking intelligence	86
Conclusion.....	88
Chapter Four	89
Introduction	89
Application of methodology	89
Challenges in this research	94
Limitations of this research.....	96
What emerged from investigating the research questions	97
Conclusion.....	100
Bibliography	101

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: <i>Shembe Circle</i> , (2014), ink and oil paint on canvas, 75 cm x 100 cm.....	32
Figure 2: Detail of <i>Off the Edge</i> , (2017), installation, dimensions variable.	32
Figure 3: <i>Whence? Where to? 1</i> , (2015), ink, pen and oil on canvas paper, 38 cm x 48 cm.	59
Figure 4: <i>Whence? Where to? 2</i> , (2015), ink, pen and oil on canvas paper, 38 cm x 48 cm.	60
Figure 5: <i>Whence? Where to? 3</i> , (2015), ink, pen and oil on canvas paper, 40 cm x 50 cm.	60
Figure 6: <i>Whence? Where to? 4</i> , (2015), ink, pen and oil on canvas paper, 40 cm x 50 cm.	60
Figure 7: early stages of <i>Outer Inwards</i> , (2016), ink, acrylic and oil on canvas, 100 cm x 150 cm. ...	62
Figure 8: early stages of <i>Outer Inwards</i> , (2016), ink, acrylic and oil on canvas, 100 cm x 150 cm. ...	63
Figure 9: Early stages of <i>Outer Inwards</i> , (2016), ink, acrylic and oil on canvas, 100 cm x 150 cm. ...	63
Figure 10: <i>Outer Inwards</i> , (2016), ink, acrylic and oil on canvas, 100 cm x 150 cm.	64
Figure 11: early stages of <i>Patterns of Chaos 5</i> , (2016), acrylic and oil on cardboard, 24 cm x 77 cm.	67
Figure 12: <i>Patterns of Chaos 5</i> , (2016), acrylic and oil on cardboard, 24 cm x 77 cm.....	67
Figure 13: early stages of <i>Patterns of Chaos 4</i> , (2016), acrylic and oil on cardboard, 21 cm x 30 cm.	68
Figure 14: <i>Patterns of Chaos 4</i> , (2016), acrylic and oil on cardboard, 21 cm x 30 cm.....	68
Figure 15: early stages of <i>Patterns of Chaos 3</i> , (2016), acrylic and oil on cardboard, 21 cm x 30 cm.	68
Figure 16: <i>Patterns of Chaos 3</i> , (2016), acrylic and oil on cardboard, 21 cm x 30 cm.....	69
Figure 17: <i>Posting from the Heap 1</i> , (2016), dry point etching on Fabriano,	70
Figure 18: Liza Grobler, <i>Barbed Wire Paradise</i> , (2016), installation, dimensions unknown.	71
Figure 19: drying layers of wood glue mixed with acrylic, (2016).	72
Figure 20: Penny Siopis, <i>Transfigure I</i> , (2017), glue and ink on canvas, dimensions variable.....	72
Figure 21: <i>Wierdling 4</i> , (2015), ink, acrylic and oil on board, 50 cm x 53 cm.	76
Figure 22: <i>Topple</i> , (2015), acrylic, pen and oil on canvas, 76 cm x 102 cm.	76
Figure 23: detail of <i>Landescape</i> , (2016), oil on canvas.	77

Figure 24: resin paint marks suspended in a mobile-like construction. *Whence? Where to? 1-4* (2015) are visible in the background. This was taken in my CVA studio space. 78

Figure 25: Wood glue and tempera paint marks suspended in my CVA studio. 79

Figure 26: black drawing in personal journal 2017: 214..... 80

Figure 27:drawing for *Off the Edge* in my CVA studio. 81

Figure 28: Detail of *Off the Edge* in the KZNSA Gallery, 2017..... 82

Figure 29: Bronwyn Lace, *God's Finger*, (2012), fishing line and glass shards, dimensions unknown. 83

Figure 30: Cornelia Parker, *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View*, (1991), installation, dimensions variable..... 84

Chapter One

Introduction

In this dissertation I present a journey of artistic exploration that shows how what I perceived initially as an artist's block proved to be just the opposite. Below I describe how the profound uncertainty caused by the phrase 'I don't know' hampered my artmaking. This research enabled me to change my approach to 'I don't know' when it appeared in my mind. This seemed to firstly liberate my artistic processes and then shape my research questions, as I describe. This investigation was enabled in part by my choice of methodology.

Using practice-led research (PLR) methodology together with some "*postmodern emergence*" (Somerville 2007; 2008) elements enabled transformations in my artistic practice. In other words, using the above methodology to make art in the face of the above difficulty seemed to generate new ways of understanding my own artistic practice. PLR was essential because it helped reveal these new insights. This occurred partly through a dual process of making art and using words – written or spoken – to investigate this process. Insights were additionally enabled by the PLR continuous integration of practice and theory.

The initial change in my approach to 'I don't know' led to further transformations in my artmaking process. There are two central aspects of PLR apparent in this project: the research questions were generated by my artmaking practice (Gray & Malins 2004: 16,103; Sullivan 2010: 119); and my body of art work and this dissertation provide complementary elements for this Master's submission (Gray & Malins 2004: 95).

This chapter provides the background to my research and presents the research objectives and questions. The literature review indicates the sources which contextualise and assist the investigation of the research questions. The theoretical framework is described. The research methodologies are introduced as are the methods used to examine the research questions. Finally, the overall structure of the dissertation is presented.

Background

This research project was triggered by the words 'I don't know'. This inner voice would appear involuntarily in my mind each time I began an artwork and would reappear throughout the process. I did not know what to do next. I felt that to make art I had to know in advance how I would instil meaning or emotional content into the work, and the steps I should take to do this. I felt I should know how and why I was making a work. I neither knew these things beforehand, nor could clearly answer any questions I posed myself. The result was destabilising uncertainty and self-doubt.

I thought the depth of my uncertainty was a strong indicator of my inability to make art. This confusion crippled my artmaking. For example, I would make a preparatory drawing. When I began to paint from this drawing, I was hampered by doubt as to the value of the drawing and my ability to make a worthwhile painting. My artmaking steps were so unsure that before long the painting process seemed to grind to a halt. I understood from conversations with contemporaries that most artists experience some kind of uncertainty in their artistic processes. Perhaps 'unpacking' the instability of artistic uncertainty would prove useful.

This and my own growing confusion motivated my return to the research environment of the Centre for Visual Arts (CVA). I studied Fine Arts at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and have been a practicing artist for seventeen years. As I began to examine 'I don't know' more closely I realised this profound doubt was unlikely to ensue from either lack of training or experience.

I perceived 'I don't know' as an artist's block in my practice. To approach this block, it was necessary to articulate the artmaking difficulty it caused me as described above. This enabled me to recognise certain unexamined assumptions that were affecting my artmaking practice. I assumed that 'I don't know' indicated ignorance on my part. I further assumed that the only alternative to ignorance was knowledge. Examining these assumptions, however, led to the discovery of the concept of unknowing. Unknowing might provide an alternative to my 'either/or' approach to knowledge/ignorance as mentioned above.

Unknowing (ed. Gallacher 1997; ed. Hodgson 1944; Morgan 2014; Vasudevan 2011; Zembylas 2005) is a way of describing something that is not ignorance, knowledge, or the unknown. Inherently, unknowing appears to be a complex matter in that it seems to be knowledge-generative (Morgan 2014: 1-2; Vasudevan 2011: 1154), yet apparently cannot itself be defined (Morgan 2014: 2-3).

In this research unknowing is an active ongoing engagement with the unknown (Morgan 2014: 1). Morgan (2014: 2) describes unknowing as affecting both state of being and artistic action. That is *“unknowing conditions a method of doing and a mode of being that together become a state of method of unknowing”* (Morgan 2014: ii). In this research I describe states of being that are generated by unknowing. In this context unknowing engenders states of instability, uncertainty, confusion, obscurity, doubt, disquiet, disorientation and unpredictability. In this project I found that unknowing did not seem to be directly accessible, in the way that for example definitions are by referring to a dictionary. However, being aware of unknowing meant I could avail myself of its generative force by cultivating one or more of the above states of being while making art.

Knowing about unknowing (Morgan 2014: 112) seemed to enable me to make art in the face of the deep confusion and uncertainty described. In this research I examine the effects of unknowing on my artistic process rather than attempting an in-depth definition of unknowing.

Significantly during this research my understanding of ‘I don’t know’ in my artistic practice changed. ‘I don’t know’ was initially a negative and severely hampering factor as described. By simply understanding this inner prompt differently I could overcome my perception that it was an artist’s block. This understanding enabled me to make artwork in a more open-ended and exploratory way. I can now recognise my inner voice as the precursor of the paradoxically destabilising yet knowledge-generative unknowing (Morgan 2014: 1-2; Vasudevan 2011: 1154). Below I introduce the research questions. In Chapter Two I investigate more thoroughly how the above transformation of attitude, in conjunction with action, gave rise to my research questions.

I posit that my *action* of making art – whether I know my way ahead in an art work or not – offers possible transformation. In other words, it is when I am *making* art, rather than when I am *thinking about* how an art work might develop, that many more possibilities of further action and thus transformation arise. Thrift says “...*changes in practice nearly always come about through involved experimentation rather than deliberative thinking*” (Thrift in Green 2015: 7 of 11).

Research objectives

- to investigate my inner voice prompt and my approach to it; how these affect my artmaking process; and how to sustain generative artmaking despite its presence.
- to investigate the ways in which ‘spacious unknowing’ might transform my artmaking processes and my artworks
- to consider indications of transformation in my artistic process and art works
- to investigate my process of making art in this research project thus evaluating transformation in my artistic practice.
- to extrapolate art making methods from literature sources
- to develop ways of being open to ‘spacious unknowing’
- to interrogate the need to *remain* open to ‘spacious unknowing’
- to find methods of refreshing openness to unknowing
- to explore the role of action in my art making process referring to the quantum of action (Bohr 1958: 17-18; Eddington 1948: 180,185; Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016: 11-12 of 25) as the transformational aspect of action.

Research questions

In what ways does working in 'spacious unknowing' transform my art making process and artworks?

How could I be open to, and remain open to 'spacious unknowing' during my research process?

Literature review

In this section the relevant literature contextualises the research project and constructs a theoretical framework. This literature review is organised into sub-headings to discuss the concepts that assist my examination of the research questions. My approach in this review is largely theoretical. It additionally introduces the artists referred to in the following chapters, where their relevant methods and approaches are discussed.

PLR is the prime methodology. I additionally use elements of "*postmodern emergence*" (Somerville 2007; 2008) which Somerville – currently Professor of Education at Western Sydney University – is developing into a research methodology. The methodologies and the concomitant literature are discussed below, and the research methods outlined.

Artmaking as research

Hannula (2009), in *Catch Me If You Can*, investigates the concept of good practice in artistic research. She claims that one should not expect definitive answers to research questions. Rather, the researcher should recognise the research may yield questions that are better articulated. In this regard she states that the researcher should maintain the openness of the research process (Hannula 2009: 8 of 20). This relates to my second research question because it addresses how it might be possible to maintain openness to unknowing.

Catch Me If You Can (2009) foregrounds two important aspects in artistic research – “*democracy of experience*” (Hannula 2009: 4-5 of 20) and “*methodological abundance*” (Hannula 2009: 5-7 of 20). The first indicates that in general, any experience within research is individual and situated. As such, there is no pre-existing hierarchy that recognises certain research experiences as more valuable than others. The concept of “*democracy of experience*” (Hannula 2009: 4-5 of 20) incorporates all experiences as equally valid regarding the source of the experience. Experiences are then evaluated in terms of their merit (Hannula 2009: 4) within an artmaking research context. This concept is referred to below as I reconsider my position as artist in this research.

A further aspect affecting my research stance is “*methodological abundance*” (Hannula 2009: 5-7 of 20). This concept embodies how we as humans negotiate the experiences of everyday life. The different ways in which we meet particular situations generates a variety of approaches to life. This translates directly into how artist/researchers navigate artistic research. The resulting multiplicity of approach, and its concomitant complexity and unpredictability, Hannula states are essential for artistic research: the “[p]lurality, openness, complexity and uncertainty are not a problem. They are a necessity” (Hannula 2009: 5 of 20).

“*Methodological abundance*” (Hannula 2009: 5-7 of 20) suggests that I could make art and experience the uncertainty of ‘I don’t know’ simultaneously. This approach might promote the “[p]lurality, openness, complexity and uncertainty” that Hannula (2009: 5 of 20) advocates. In Chapter Two I describe the change of approach ensuing from an investigation of my inner voice prompt.

The New Drawing on the Right side of the Brain (Edwards 1999) reviews research into the processing functions of both brain hemispheres. Edwards (1999: 38) claims that the two brain hemispheres function differently. The left hemisphere processing uses: verbal and symbolic language; step-by-step analysis; step-by-step sequencing in time; linear, rational and logical processes tending to convergent conclusions (Edwards 1999: 44). The right hemisphere: recognises non-verbally; sees the whole picture; sees things as they are; recognises similarities and understands metaphor; is not limited by a sense of time; is aware of relative

position of things in space; makes intuitive leaps of insight; views things holistically tending to divergent conclusions (Edwards 1999: 44).

Current research (Nielsen *et al* 2013) shows that the brain functions described above cannot always be ascribed to either one hemisphere or the other. It seems that the lateralization of these brain functions is subject to localised influences. This research (Nielsen *et al* 2013: 1) finds that the links are tenuous between right or left-brain hemisphere dominance and personality and cognitive characteristics. However, in this research I refer to Edward's (1999: 44) description of the different kinds of brain functions rather than their lateralization.

A better understanding of the above brain functions allowed me to recognise that I was unable to articulate verbally exactly what it is that 'I don't know'. Edwards (1999: 44) states that some knowledge is understood non-verbally. This confirmed that this research needed intuitive non-verbal strategies embedded in the research methods. I developed 'in-the-dark' methods, introduced below, to specifically engage such strategies. These are complemented by the differing brain functions embedded in the methods below of reflective and reflexive thinking, journaling and dissertation writing.

Mafe (2009: 58) corroborates the above literature that there is generally an inherent indeterminacy in artmaking. In *Art and the Sublime* (2009), he confirms that in both making and viewing art there is a "*profound and disturbing unknowing*" (Mafe 2009: 58). He argues that this unknowing is invaluable for depth of thought, and for pursuing any PLR-like methodology (Mafe 2009: 58). However, this does not mean that research methods should be indeterminate.

Maharaj (2009: 3,4 of 11) uses the term "*no-how*" which I interpret as the 'in-the-dark' methods mentioned below. In *Know-how and No-How: stopgap notes on "method" in visual art as knowledge production* (2009) Maharaj refers to the indeterminacy intrinsic to the practice of making art. Maharaj's "*no-how*" (2009: 3,4 of 11) is, he claims, an embodiment of this indeterminacy. Mafe (2009: 58) and Maharaj (2009: 3 of 11) argue that unknowing is inherent to making art.

Maharaj (2009: 3 of 11) implies that each artist works in an individual and distinctive way. He considers that research methods should reflect this idiosyncrasy or singularity. Singularity¹ here refers specifically to the kind of singular nuanced changes evident for example, in the constant shifting liveliness in the human face (Maharaj 2009: 2-3 of 11). This singularity bypasses the poles of either universal or particular ways of doing research (Maharaj 2009: 2 of 11). There is an alternative to the knowledge *or* ignorance binary if the role of unknowing is acknowledged while making art. This is discussed in Chapter Two.

The singularity embedded in artmaking requires a research paradigm that accommodates this idiosyncrasy (Maharaj 2009: 3 of 11). Artmaking begets knowledge (Maharaj 2009). “*Non-knowledge*” (Maharaj 2009: 1,3 of 11) – which I assume is unknowing – is discussed as a knowledge generating activity. In other words, making art is a non-verbal means of knowledge generation (Maharaj 2009: 4 of 11). Maharaj (2009: 3-4 of 11) calls this “*thinking through the visual*”.

Unpredictability is implicit in the above non-verbal artmaking activity. That is, artmaking provides “*an opening to otherness and difference that cannot be known in advance*” (Maharaj 2009: 5 of 11). In this respect artmaking could be seen as potentially open to the influence of unknowing. Maharaj (2009) confirms that I do not need to know what my next artmaking move will be to fruitfully conduct this research. This is an important aspect of the artmaking methods in this project.

Maharaj (2009 8 of 11) considers that little changes in a transfer of knowledge, where knowledge might be reformulated and presented in new combinations or formats. He considers this process does not produce new knowledge. Although this statement is contentious his questioning of knowledge transfer and knowledge production is useful. He states that knowledge *production* is different to knowledge *transfer* above in that it involves a “*transformative crossover*” (Maharaj 2009: 8 of 11) where the new and previously unthought-of emerges from the openness to unknowing in artmaking practice. Chapter Three

¹ No reference to technological singularity (Shanahan 2015) is intended.

includes an evaluation of this kind of transformational passage (Maharaj 2009 8 of 11) in this artmaking research.

In Chapter Three I ground my research practice by referring to the artmaking practices of Liza Grobler (b.1974), Penny Siopis (b. 1953), Bronwyn Lace (b. 1980) and Cornelia Parker (b. 1956). Here I introduce the literature on aspects of each artist's work that is relevant to this research project.

Although Lace and Parker both use found objects in their installations and I do not, I referred to their installations when I experienced problems with my own. I refer to renowned critic Mary Corrigan's article (<http://corrigan.blogspot.co.za/2013/09/pinning-down-intangible-bronwyn-lace.html>) on Lace's use of tensioned fishing line to suspend her objects in space. In Chapter Three I additionally refer to Koulla Xinisteris' (2017) article (http://www.everard-read-capetown.co.za/exhibition/81/press_release/) to compare Lace's interest in the element of 'darkness' with my own.

The Zeitz MOCAA Gallery's web site (<https://zeitzmocaa.museum/artists/penny-siopis/>)(<https://zeitzmocaa.museum/artists/penny-siopis/>) gave insightful information into Siopis' use of wood glue and ink as a medium. Her artistic approach to painting with this medium is discussed. I additionally refer to Jolly (2015) to discuss Grobler's approach to exhibiting her installations.

In considering my approach to my artmaking research I refer to Tickner's (2003) paper where she interviews Parker about her approach to her artmaking. Parker, like myself, views her artmaking as an enquiry (Tickner 2003: 370). I refer to Jolly's (2015) review of Grobler's exhibition *If You Go Down to the Woods Today* to further examine my approach to installation. Grobler's approach to showing her work is that her installation pieces provide the viewer with an experience not an explanation of her work. This corroborates my intention to offer a possible experience of unknowing when viewing my artwork rather than any kind of visual representation or explanation because unknowing is inherently indefinable (Morgan 2014: 2-3).

Unknowing

As above, when the inner words 'I don't know' appeared in my artistic process, as described above, I experienced it as confusing and disorientating. It made me feel 'in the dark' which provided me with a valuable research clue. It led me to the concept of unknowing (ed. Gallacher 1997; ed. Hodgson 1944; Morgan 2014; Vasudevan 2011; Zembylas 2005). Unknowing itself appears to be indefinable (Morgan 2014: 2-3), so in this section I indicate aspects of unknowing which could be relevant to interrogating my research questions. In this dissertation I use the words uncertainty, doubt, disquiet, disorientation, unpredictability, obscurity and confusion to describe my experiences associated with unknowing – including that of my inner voice prompt.

Morgan (2014: 1) considers unknowing to be an 'in-the-dark' and generative force. In *A State of Method: Unknowing* she describes it as a "*hidden, obscured originative force*" (Morgan 2014: 1). She states that creative activity, which I assume includes artmaking, emerges from the 'darkness' of unknowing. In the following quote Morgan (2014: 57) places 'darkness' and 'light' in close proximity: "*...as a place of darkness but yet also as the ultimate summit of enlightenment*".

My experience of 'I don't know' is 'dark', like Morgan's (2014: 1) description above. 'Darkness' and illumination are clearly closely related as Morgan (2014) pursues traces of unknowing through history. If I assume 'I don't know' as a research stance to investigate my research questions, this inner prompt might generate 'light' or understanding. In doing this, I assume that 'I don't know' emanates from unknowing. I refer to Morgan (2014) to reinforce this assumption.

Morgan (2014) investigates instances of unknowing throughout history. She then extrapolates these examples into potential ways of being open to unknowing. Morgan's (2014) paper is a rendering of unknowing, by writing without setting out a destination in advance: "*a method of making which is governed by a state of being*" (Morgan 2014: 2). Below I refer to those of her methods which I use in my artmaking research.

The Surrealists' and hence the Abstract Expressionists' use of automatism at first glance seems an obvious parallel to 'in-the-dark' methods. The Surrealists aimed to renew art through accessing the unconscious mind as described in *The Shock of the New* (Hughes 1980: 213). By using automatism to allow the unconscious mind to guide their artmaking, they hoped to express the world of the unconscious as an alternate reality (Hughes 1980: 213).

Automatist artmaking methods I consider might be loosely viewed as 'in-the-dark' methods. The artist relinquished conscious control of hand movement during the artmaking process in order to access the unconscious mind (*The Oxford Dictionary of Art* 1997: 35). This additionally introduced elements of chance and randomness. Although chance elements do occur in my artmaking research – as mentioned in Chapter Three – chance in itself has not been a guiding aspect of this research.

It seems that automatism was a means to the Surrealists' end of renewing art. In this study, 'in-the-dark' methods were specifically developed to ensure that I did not establish any kind of visual goal in my artistic process. In my experience, the efficacy of my 'in-the-dark' methods lay in their lack of a visual goal. In other words, 'in-the-dark' methods embedded uncertainty within my artmaking practice. This provided a way of opening my creative practice to the influence of unknowing. Changing 'in-the-dark' methods whenever uncertainty waned, further ensured that I would remain open to unknowing in this research.

In this research I relinquish my perceived role – which includes that of unconscious mind – as the primary guide of my artmaking processes. As detailed below, in this study I come to view energy density as the overarching guiding intelligence of my creative practice. In this way, as discussed in Chapter Three, my artistic research becomes open to the influence of unknowing.

My primary motivation is to evaluate how unknowing thus affects my artmaking practice. As my intention is not to access or express unconscious mind, I acknowledge but do not pursue automatism here.

In *An Invitation to Unknowing* Vasudevan (2011) considers that unknowing could provide a research stance that facilitates experience outside one's normal realm of understanding.

When I make art 'I don't know' is outside my usual sphere of understanding. Vasudevan (2011: 1162-1164) states that moving beyond one's normal sphere of understanding into an unknown one could open new ways of understanding.

In *Waiting in the Chaotic Place of Unknowing* Somerville (2008) refers to this process as "becoming-other-to-one's-self" (Somerville 2008: 209). I refer to both these sources (Somerville 2008; Vasudevan 2011) to validate 'I don't know' as an approach that is appropriate for exploring my research questions.

Postmodern Emergence (Somerville 2007) and the paper above (Somerville 2008) both suggest that becoming different to my usual self in my artmaking process could generate insights about how I make art. Below I discuss "postmodern emergence" (Somerville 2007; 2008) methodology in which she develops ways to do this kind of research.

PLR methodology requires the researcher/practitioner to apply theoretical concepts to their artistic process in a specific and integrated way. My interpretation of this is to develop artmaking methods from my theoretical sources. To do this I refer to the anonymous *The Cloud of Unknowing* – I refer to it sometimes as *The Cloud* – a Christian mystical text from the Middle Ages. I look at the introductions to the text (ed. Gallacher 1997; ed. Hodgson 1944) because the text itself is written in Middle English, and would take an inordinate amount of time to decipher. The text relates a process of contemplative prayer by which the practitioner hopes to unite with God. It is the *process* which interests me and from which I extracted artmaking methods.

Central to *The Cloud's* contemplative prayer is a process of renunciation. My interpretation of this process consists of renunciation of all imagery and concepts (ed. Gallacher 1997: 1 of 9; ed. Hodgson 1944: xxxv; Zembylas 2005: 143); renunciation of discursive reasoning (ed. Gallacher 1997: 5 of 9; ed. Hodgson 1944: xli; Zembylas 2005: 143) and renunciation of separate existence (ed. Hodgson 1944: xli). *The Cloud* provides me with the above theory to develop into artmaking methods.

Hodgson (ed. 1944: xli) does not mention renouncing separate existence above but this I interpret as being implicit in certain passages. By renunciation of separate existence, I mean that myself, the other artmaking materials, the artmaking action and their situation do not exist separately from one another in this research. This is corroborated by the spacious atomic structure (Eddington 1948: 2; Niaz 1998: 534-537) discussed below. Later in this chapter, I explain how renunciation of separate existence (ed. Hodgson 1944: xli) is especially relevant in how I come to view myself in my artistic research.

Zembylas (2005) refers to *The Cloud of Unknowing's via negativa*, that is the above processes of renunciation. Zembylas (2005), like Gallacher (ed. 1997) and Hodgson (ed. 1944) consider that this renunciation process places the practitioner in the kind of 'darkness' that is essential to approaching an ineffable God. I am rather attempting to interrogate the effects of indefinable unknowing on my artistic practice. To do this I might in Zembylas' (2005: 140) words need to "... 'un-know' the normal content of [my] awareness". If I make art using a renunciation process like the above, I might be able to experience unknowing despite not being able to understand it (Zembylas 2005: 140). This corroborates my recognition that I may not have to understand or resolve my inner prompt for it to become a generative influence in my artmaking.

Gallacher (ed. 1997) speaks of the inability of the mind to understand anything beyond experience that relates to the world as we know it. He considers that this "*failure of understanding*" (ed. Gallacher 1997: 6 of 9) indicates entry into unknowing. In other words, we "*know by unknowing*" (ed. Gallacher 1997: 6 of 9). The text implies that confusion might indicate entry into unknown terrain. Morgan (2014) and Maharaj (2009) corroborate that crossing into new territory in one's practice could well generate new and situated understanding. Gallacher's (ed. 1997) text suggests that the feelings associated with unknowing – confusion, uncertainty *et cetera* as mentioned above – might indicate generative potential. In my artistic practice 'I don't know' might show that transformation is possible, not that I am 'getting it wrong'. He additionally confirms my assumption that 'I don't know', indicative of a "*failure of understanding*" (ed. Gallacher 1997: 6 of 9), proceeds from unknowing.

Green's (2015) paper *Research, Practice, Emergence* is useful because it shifted my initial negative view of my inner prompt. Green (2015: 7 of 11) says "...even 'failure' is significant and interesting in itself, and productive". In considering 'I don't know' to indicate failure of some kind in my artistic process possibly my perception of my inner prompt as negative was at fault. Maybe my voice prompt indicates the above "*failure of understanding*" (ed. Gallacher 1997: 6 of 9) in my art making and thus the possibility of new understandings arising out of my artistic process.

Unknowing, says Morgan (2014: 1), is an ongoing engagement with the unknown. This is in line with Maharaj's (2009: 1,3 of 11) "*non-knowledge*" which he alleges is an activity rather than any kind of rational thinking process. Morgan (2014) describes unknowing as an activity, yet says it is a generative force preceding all movement (Morgan 2014: 1). I refer to Morgan (2014) and Maharaj (2009) to corroborate that action could provide a way of engaging with unknowing. If unknowing precedes all movement (Morgan 2014: 1), I assume that where there is action then unknowing is present. In this research I consider action to be any movement, either physical or the invisible movements of thoughts and feelings. However, the assumed presence of unknowing does not mean that I can assume I am open to it. Indeed, my second research question is: How might I be open and remain open to 'spacious unknowing'? In Chapter Three I will interrogate my practice to explore the research questions.

Unknowing, or understanding that one does not understand (Zembylas 2005: 144) could be a necessary stance when confronted with my experience of 'I don't know' because it necessitates dropping all preconceptions (Zembylas 2005: 150). The reader/viewer might not be able to experience 'I don't know' in the same way that I do. Yet I hope to offer a possible experience of 'spacious unknowing' through my combined writing and artwork.

‘Spacious unknowing’

The immanence of unknowing (Morgan 2014: ii) echoes the immanence of space described below. Ubiquitous space, however, does more than this. I consider it indicates that unknowing is physically present everywhere in the same way that space is. In other words, space and unknowing both exist everywhere and thus I assume cannot be separately considered in this research. I draw on the texts below to establish that this ubiquitous space is a physical reality. By coining the term ‘spacious unknowing’ I intend to suggest that unknowing is equally a physical reality. However, this concept is not researched further in this study.

Rutherford’s discovery of atomic structure showed that space is ubiquitous. In *From Cathode Rays to Alpha Particles to Quantum of Action*, (1998) Niaz describes the “*small anomaly*” (Niaz 1998: 533) in another experiment that piqued Rutherford’s curiosity. Rutherford’s further investigation of this anomaly led to his discovery of atomic structure. Without digressing into descriptions of his experiments, Rutherford realised that the above anomaly could only be accounted for if an atom’s positive charge existed in minute packages. In other words, “... *the main volume of the atom was entirely evacuated*” states Eddington (1948: 2). This is significant to my research because it demonstrates that space is physically ubiquitous. What appears to be solid matter is not solid at all. “[W]e have seen that substance [solid matter] is one of the greatest of our illusions” (Eddington 1948: xvi).

Both Somerville (2008) and Zembylas (2005: 139) use the words ‘space’ or ‘place’ and ‘unknowing’ in the same phrase. Somerville entitles her paper *Waiting in the Chaotic Place of Unknowing* (2008). Zembylas says “*creating spaces for embracing unknowing in educational settings is an act of ethical responsibility*” (Zembylas 2005: 139). The proximity of space and unknowing, in other words, ‘spacious unknowing’, is reiterated. Throughout this dissertation I use the terms ‘unknowing’ and ‘spacious unknowing’ interchangeably.

I refer to Rutherford’s discovery of atomic structure for two reasons. The first is the immanence of space indicated above. The second reason is *how* Rutherford made this discovery. Niaz (1998: 534-537) describes how Rutherford did not set out to investigate atomic structure; he almost accidentally came upon the evidence pointing to it.

Rutherford's is the indirect approach advocated by filmmaker Trinh Minh-ha (b. 1952): "*the heart of the matter is always somewhere else than where it is supposed to be*" (Trinh Minh-ha in Somerville 2007: 227). In *understanding* that he is seeing results he *does not understand* (Zembylas 2005: 144), Rutherford discovered the immanence of space throughout all atomic structures (Niaz 1998: 534-537). I consider this confirms that being open to 'spacious unknowing' could be generative in unexpected ways.

Energy density

Above I indicated that for this research I assumed a stance of 'I don't know' or unknowing. I then began to explore how I might become open to the influence of unknowing. As mentioned I had experienced my inner prompt as an artist's block in my artistic practice. Additionally, my research questions emerged from my artmaking practice. Thus any exploration of unknowing needed to extend beyond theoretical framework. It was crucial to me both personally and for my research that I could apply unknowing to how I made art. The notion of energy density has emerged as an important interweaving of theory and practice. Below I outline how the way in which I viewed myself within my research project shifted.

I consider myself as part of an energy density² when making art. It was a term I was already using in my personal journal (2015: 74-75) when I realised it is an existing term. It refers to the amount of energy available in a system (<http://www.dictionary.com>). However, I use energy density to indicate that the materials and I meet in an unfolding interaction. Carter calls this a "*forming situation*" (Carter in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 21) which to me implies that it is an active situation.

² Although energy density represents a shift in understanding resulting from this research, I am not able to fully investigate it in this project. I would very much like to research energy density in a future project. This potential for future research has emerged in part because I use PLR methods to develop artmaking methods from my theoretical framework.

When I embark on artmaking activity there seems to be an impetus that ‘gets me moving’. This takes the form of curiosity about what might happen if I for example, use materials in different ways. Thus, artmaking becomes a curious enquiry; Somerville’s (2007; 2008) wondering could similarly be interpreted as curious enquiry. In other words, my artmaking/curious enquiry follows the interest in an unfolding interaction (Carter in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 21). Bolt (in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 30) emphasises the practicality of material thinking it is better understood by artists when collaborating with their materials.

How my curious enquiry unfolds seems to be influenced by a combination of factors including: material thinking (Barrett & Bolt 2007: 19-20,30); a repudiation of separate existence drawn from Hodgson (ed. 1944: xli); Rutherford’s atomic model (Eddington 1948: 2; Niaz 1998: 534-537); the extended mind (Clark & Chalmers 1998); and Hannula’s (2009: 4-5 of 20) “*democracy of experience*”.

Central to energy density is the intelligence of materials (Barrett & Bolt 2007: 19-20,30) and their tendency to collaborate in an unfolding interaction (Carter in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 19). The intelligences in an energy density are contributed by the artmaking materials and artist. Carter’s theory of material thinking (Barrett & Bolt 2007: 19-20,30) states that the ‘voice’, in other words, the “*plastic and discursive intelligence*” (Carter in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 21) of materials plays an active part in making art. His theory of material thinking (Carter in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 19-20) was partly motivated by his recognition of the need for creative research that reintegrates *how* knowledge is produced with the *study of* this knowledge. According to Carter (in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 18) this means reassessing matter or materials. I return to this in Chapter Three.

In *Interest: The Ethics of Invention*, Carter (in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 21) discusses the “*forming situation*”. This unfolding interaction is the environment where the “*need to make*” (Carter in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 20), originating with materials and situation, makes sense. That this need arises in this way confirms that I am one of an array of materials. This additionally corroborates that I am not the only guiding intelligence when making art.

The notion of the extended mind (Clark & Chalmers 1998) contends that the human mind and its functions are not confined to the inside of the physical brain. *The Extended Mind* (Clark & Chalmers 1998) holds that our cognitive processes are caused in part by a combined action of internal and external environmental resources. Clark and Chalmers (1998) take this notion further. They consider that cognition and the contributing “processes in the environment” (Clark & Chalmers 1998: 10) are continuous, not separate.

The notion of the extended mind (Clark & Chalmers 1998) bears out the above unfolding interaction between the intelligences. The extended mind (Clark & Chalmers 1998) is itself corroborated by Rutherford’s atomic model (Eddington 1948: 2; Niaz 1998: 534-537). As all atomic structures are open and spacious, I assume there are no physical boundaries between internal and external causes of cognition. Similarly, I assume that no physical boundaries exist between the components of an energy density.

The above absence of physical boundaries implies there is an underlying continuity to cognition, which traverses perceived boundaries such as “*skin and skull*” (Clark & Chalmers 1998: 7). Clark and Chalmers consider this continuity of cognition to reside in the environmental resources being “... *always there if I need them...*” (Clark & Chalmers 1998: 11).

Cognition is the “*the process by which knowledge and understanding is developed in the mind*” (*The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* 2000: 229). *A Dictionary of Psychology* (2001: 140) defines cognition as “*the mental activities involved in acquiring and processing information*”. Remove the illusion of matter being solid and clearly the human skull is not a physical barrier for cognitive processes. It then becomes highly probable that the causes of the above cognitive processes reside partly in the environment. This is an important point that I return to in Chapter Three.

In my research I cannot consider as separate myself, materials, the art making activity and the situation in which we collaborate. I contend that I energy density is an indivisible whole. In energy density I consider that my identity as artist is not an entity separate from that of the energy density. Thus, I equate relinquishing separate identity with energy density. Having

relinquished separate identity, perhaps I cannot claim that the intelligence I contribute is more important than any other contributing intelligence in an energy density.

Considering the indivisibility of an energy density maybe I need to view the above intelligences in the light of Hannula's (2009: 4-5 of 20) "*democracy of experience*". Hannula suggests that all experiences which arise in research situations are equally valid in point of origin (Hannula 2009: 4 of 20). Perhaps I could consider all the intelligences present in an energy density to be equally valid in point of origin (Hannula 2009: 4 of 20).

Perhaps the role of my intelligence is to instigate curious enquiry while simultaneously being part of what is enquired into³. The interest or matter of enquiry I suggest is contributed by the materials' intrinsic nature – including my own curious enquiry – and how they interact with one another. I further speculate that curious enquiry could form an energy density.

Action

Intrinsic to any curious enquiry is action. The basic unit of action as we see it every day, is the quantum of action. In an active curious enquiry or unfolding interaction, the quantum of action provides atoms and all matter with stability (Bohr 1958: 17-18). Without action there would be neither curious enquiry nor energy density that is necessary for artmaking.

Action is thus the ability to take a step or 'make a move' in the research process. In this research action refers to physical, mental or emotional action. Action has proved to be the way to keep this research going despite the perceived block of 'I don't know'. Action is the constant factor or stability running through my research.

³ This is corroborated by Heisenberg's discovery of the unavoidable involvement of the measuring instrument influencing the results of his experiments enquiring into the simultaneous position and momentum of an atomic particle (Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016: 11 of 25). However, this could be pursued in my future research into energy density.

It seems that the quantum of action is indivisible (Bohm & Hiley 1993: 13) and at the root of all action (Eddington 1948: 180,185). Here I refer to Physics theory. Transformation or any change in state is apparently possible only if there is a whole quantum of action available to affect the change (Bohr 1958: 18; Eddington 1948: 186; Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016: 11 of 25). Whether at a microscopic or macroscopic level, I consider that the quantum of action is the agent of transformation.

The importance of the quantum of action is evident in its effect within a specific experimental situation. Bohr called such an effect a phenomenon: *“it is the resultant of a physical object, a measuring apparatus and the interaction between them in a concrete experimental situation”* (Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016: 11 of 25). This interaction must involve at least one whole quantum of action. Bohr viewed a phenomenon as *“an indivisible whole”* (Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016: 11 of 25). This interaction performed by the quantum of action renders the phenomenon indivisible.

Bohm and Hiley (1993: 12) confirm this indivisible effect. They additionally state that quantum (of action) effects are *“unpredictable and uncontrollable”* (Bohm & Hiley 1993: 12), implying that the results of all action have an element of unpredictability about them. This confirmed that I cannot and need not know where an artmaking action will lead. In this research, this has been further extrapolated to include that I do not need to know what an action will be before it is performed.

In *The Nature of the Physical World*, Eddington (1948: 181) states *“... the special importance ... [of action] on account of its absoluteness ...”*. Importantly, action provides direction and the potential for transformation in this project as I can act without knowing how the action will unfold.

Reference is made to a book of Bohr’s lectures (1958) because he was at the forefront of discovering the importance of the quantum of action in all atomic phenomena (Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016). The quantum of action is frequently referred to as a quantum (Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016: 11 of 25). In Chapter Four reference is made to Bohr’s view on the language in which quantum concepts might be expressed.

Theoretical framework

In building my theoretical framework I draw on the following theories: unknowing; Rutherford's atomic model; the quantum of action as the initiator of transformation; material thinking and extended mind in the context of energy density. These are introduced in my literature review above.

I propose that being open to 'spacious unknowing' during my art making research could lead to transformation in my artistic process, my understanding of this process and in my art works. I contend that such transformation might be possible because 'spacious unknowing' is immanent and action is central to my research, as I indicate below.

I consider that 'I don't know' or my inner voice prompt signals the presence of 'spacious unknowing' and therefore the possibility of opening myself to its generative influence. My experience of my voice prompt as 'dark' and confusing as described above, suggests that it is indeed the harbinger of unknowing.

Unknowing appears to be an immanent force that in general could generate insight. Space is similarly ubiquitous as demonstrated by Rutherford's atomic model (Eddington 1948: 2; Niaz 1998: 534-537). An atom comprises space and charge particles (Eddington 1948: 2; Niaz 1998: 534-537), implying that neither physical solidity nor physical boundaries exist. Like Eddington (1948) I speculate that the solidity of matter is an illusion. Space like unknowing (Morgan 2014: ii) is ubiquitous. I contend that space and unknowing are inseparable. I thus coin the term 'spacious unknowing', as indicated above.

The term implies that 'spacious unknowing' is generative, as mentioned. It implies that its generative force is real and exists everywhere. That is, no physical impediments stand in the way of its transformative potential. I do not intend to extensively define transformation in this research. In Chapter Three I speculate on what could indicate transformation. As a generative force, I assume that 'spacious unknowing' could generate transformations and

insights within my artmaking research. I further assume that immanent 'spacious unknowing' indicates the possibility of transformation being continually present in this research project. The key to engaging with unknowing seems to be two-fold.

Firstly, without action, transformation does not seem to be possible. This is confirmed by the quantum of action which is vital to all transformation (Bohr 1958: 18; Eddington 1948: 186; Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016: 11 of 25). Secondly, it seems necessary to go through a phase of being 'in-the-dark'. In other words, I expect this stage of my research could lead in unpredictable directions; generate insights into my artistic processes; and lead to the kind of art works which I could not have conceived of through logical thinking or planning processes. Therefore, I must find art making methods that place me in the above 'darkness'. This 'darkness' concomitant to unknowing is confirmed by *The Cloud of Unknowing* (ed. Hodgson 1944; ed. Gallacher 1997; Zembylas 2005).

These methods – which I call 'in-the-dark' methods – trigger further invisible or 'in-the-dark' processes. These arise from what Morgan (2014: 1) calls the "*hidden, obscured originative force*", that is, 'spacious unknowing'. It might not be possible to understand these 'in-the-dark' processes. However, they are essential to transformation in all aspects of my research.

The above 'darkness' could be perceived as such because of the mind's inability to comprehend it. I can, however, understand that I do not comprehend (Zembylas 2005: 142) how 'in-the-dark' processes lead to transformation. This transformation could be evident in artmaking processes, kinds of artwork, and understanding of artistic practice.

It seems no change in state – in other words, transformation – is possible without the quantum of action (Bohr 1958: 18; Eddington 1948: 185). It is not a particle but a discrete bundle of action (Bohr 1958: 18; Eddington 1948: 185). Thus, action is the key to possible transformation in my artmaking, in my understanding of this artmaking and the kind of artworks generated by this research.

Action is additionally central to my notion of energy density, described above. I posit that energy density is the coming together of art making materials of which I am one in an

unfolding interaction (Carter in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 21) because of the need of the artmaking materials to combine (Carter in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 20). This coming together could happen because a “*point of interest*” (Vasudevan 2011: 1158) is recognised and the interest followed. Carter’s (in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 17-18) interest as the driver of invention could instigate the “*forming situation*” (Carter in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 19).

PLR and “*postmodern emergence*” (Somerville 2007; 2008) are, I consider, particularly well suited, methodologically and theoretically, for an exploration of the possible transformative effects of ‘spacious unknowing’. Use of these methodologies might generate transformation in this research. Both accommodate the kind of research that cannot be described in words alone (Barrett & Bolt 2007: 31,34; Gray & Malins 2004: 165).

This research project was begun without pre-established research questions. In line with PLR the artmaking process yielded and refined my research questions (Gray & Malins: 16,103; Sullivan 2010: 119). All the questions that have arisen, are concerned with doubt, uncertainty and not knowing and the effect of this on my artistic practice.

Methodology

In this section I discuss PLR methodology and introduce the methods used to interrogate the research questions. Within the PLR methodology are methods taken from Somerville’s (2007; 2008) “*postmodern emergence*”. I indicate other methods developed from theoretical sources and those adopted from artists Lacey, Siopis, Parker and Grobler. Additionally, I outline my artmaking heuristic.

Practice-led research

PLR provides artist/researchers with a methodology that places artmaking at the centre of their research (Barrett & Bolt 2007; Gray & Malins 2004; Sullivan 2010). Their processes of making art and researching how they make art seems to generate insights in ways that are distinct from other kinds of research processes (Bolt in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 31; Sullivan 2010: 102).

A core feature of PLR is that the artmaking practice generates the research questions (Gray & Malins 2004: 16,103; Sullivan 2010: 119). These questions indicate the theories which could help to interrogate the research questions (Gray & Malins 2004: 90). The artist/researcher then finds ways to apply aspects of the theory to their artmaking practice (Gray & Malins 2004: 169; Sullivan 2010: 105). For example, I do this by developing artmaking methods from theoretical sources. The above application of theory to practice enables artmaking practice to grow. It could generate further questions. This development of practice, and additional questions indicate a direction for further theoretical investigation. What this return to theory yields is again applied to artmaking processes. In this way PLR provides an ongoing integration of practice and theory. Part of the PLR process is that this interweaving of practice and theory is recorded and better understood using specific PLR methods (Gray & Malins 2004: 108).

The artist/researcher can shape methods to investigate their research questions (Gray & Malins 2004: 72; Sullivan 2010: 111). My primary research method is making art as a means of generating and exploring my research questions (Gray & Malins 2004: 16,103; Sullivan 2010: 119). To document my research processes, I used journaling (Gray & Malins 2004: 113-114), photography (Gray & Malins 2004: 108) and writing this dissertation.

My personal journals (2015; 2016; 2017) – in conjunction with my body of artmaking research and this dissertation – provide an overall record of my research process. The journals incorporated the following methods: recording my artmaking processes; my photographs of these artmaking processes; my reflections on these processes; critical thinking about what works and what does not work in my artmaking.

A useful investigative visual method is making 3-dimensional models (Gray & Malins 2004: 112). This helped me to understand and develop 2-dimensional artwork into 3-dimensional artwork for the first time. Gray and Malins (2004: 111) state that use of a sketchbook is another such visual method. I used a visual research journal (2015-2017)⁴ rather than a sketchbook. This is simply a visual journal where I explore materials and different ways of using them. The pages are loose so I – or a viewer – could reconfigure them. Additionally, the visual research journal was a method of honing my ability to make art while experiencing the profound uncertainty of not knowing how my artmaking process might unfold.

All the above PLR methods I use in repeating cycles, however, not in any specific order. Which PLR method is used depends on what aspect of the above practice/theory integration I need to record. This choice depends too on the needs of the current energy density. I use the methods that I draw from Somerville's (2007; 2008) "*postmodern emergence*" below in a similar way.

Postmodern emergence

Somerville (2007; 2008) developed "*postmodern emergence*" because she recognised that research experiences of "*becoming-other-to-one's-self*" (Somerville 2008: 209) were a potential and valuable source of insights. If a researcher could in some way adopt a different way of being, new ways of understanding their research might emerge from this process. When making art I experience my inner prompt as outside my usual way of being. Thus, I found some "*postmodern emergence*" (Somerville 2007; 2008) methods helpful in exploring my research questions.

I borrowed two methods from "*postmodern emergence*" (Somerville 2007; 2008): "*becoming-other-to-one's-self*" (Somerville 2008: 209); and wondering (Somerville 2007; 2008). In accepting 'I don't know' as an alternative way of being when I make art, I accepted the

⁴ Visual research journal references cannot be specifically dated as the personal journals references are. The ongoing reconfiguring of its pages make this impossible.

confusion and uncertainty concomitant to 'spacious unknowing'. In other words, this is a method of opening to unknowing so that my artmaking itself becomes an enquiry into the effects of unknowing.

The second method I developed from Somerville (2007; 2008) was curious enquiry. She considers the quality of wonder to be essential in research. The Concise Oxford Dictionary (10th ed. 1999: 1644) says of wonder: "...a feeling of surprise ... caused by something beautiful, unexpected or unfamiliar ... feel curious, desire to know...". Thus, I interpret wondering as curious enquiry. Artmaking as curious enquiry was, as mentioned, my primary research method in this project.

An array of methods

Above I discussed how feeling 'in-the-dark' seems to be an intrinsic aspect of unknowing. I needed artmaking methods that placed me in this metaphoric 'darkness'. Below I list what I call 'in-the-dark' methods. I used them to investigate my research questions. It is important to note that these methods which seemed to be effective some of the time in my research, may not be so in other research situations. They appeared to provide temporary solutions (Maharaj 2009: 2 of 11) in my artmaking exploration.

I had been using what in my personal journal (2015) I refer to it as a game-of-chess type method. In this research, I call it my act/wait-for-response/act heuristic. This heuristic means that "*I make a move (with paint, pencil ...), then step back to let the work 'decide' its next move... I don't know where it is going until I am in the act of doing it (and then only one step at a time)*" (personal journal 2015: 2). That is, this heuristic deliberately avoids using thinking processes because it is intended to implement 'in-the-dark' methods that move away from knowledge (Morgan 2014: 111). My heuristic meant I could keep making art despite the instability inherent to 'spacious unknowing'.

“Methodological abundance” Hannula (2009: 5-7 of 20) claims is a research method. In other words, research methods should be drawn and/or developed from a range of sources. Applying this provided *“complexity and uncertainty”* (Hannula 2009: 5 of 20) in my research.

From Hodgson (ed. 1944), Gallacher (ed. 1997) and Zembylas (2005) I developed three artmaking methods. I removed all reference imagery from my artistic practice. During this study, re-introducing reference imagery becomes a method as well. That is, I eliminated pictorial subject matter from my artmaking process. This naturally led to removing discursive reasoning from my artmaking process. This was done by removing any kind of visual or mental planning of my artmaking process. This included restraining my mind from imagining my artmaking steps in advance. Additionally, this entailed not considering in advance the meaning an artwork might generate.

The third method was renunciation of separate identity. That is, I do not consider myself to exist separately from my materials when making art. Above I equate renunciation of separate identity with energy density. I am uncertain whether energy density is a method, a heuristic or something else. However, it helped me to explore my research questions.

The methods I use as a component of an energy density are: artmaking as curious enquiry; paying attention to and responding to the intelligence of materials (Barrett & Bolt 2007: 19-20,30); being aware of the equal value of the participating intelligences (Hannula 2009: 4-5 of 20). In other words, the intelligence of each material is equally important and necessary in an energy density.

From Morgan (2014: 111) I take moving away from not towards understanding. That is, I make art in ways that generate uncertainty, instability, disorientation, confusion or similar experiences.

When my artmaking action seemed to be a little tentative I exaggerated it. Exaggerating an action has become an artmaking method in this research.

Another 'in-the-dark' method is allowing time for understanding to mature. My 'in-the-dark' methods set in motion further 'in-the-dark' processes that take place in time and out of sight and seemed to be essential for the insights which have come from this research. Thus, I need to allow the time for this process.

Metaphor (Morgan 2014: 27,142) is used as a method to understand how insights emerge in this research. Compost is the metaphor I used for 'in-the-dark' processes triggered by 'in-the-dark' methods discussed above.

Artist Bronwyn Lace's installation pieces provided me with a way of suspending my paint marks in space as I discuss in Chapter Three. She uses tensioned fishing wire to suspend her objects in space. This is additionally a method of incorporating space as an element in her work.

In this context of suspended hanging I additionally investigate Cornelia Parker's installations. In Chapter Three I refer to several of her artmaking interests: transformation and the temporary or illusory nature of matter (Tickner 2003: 379,380).

I refer to Liza Grobler's intention (Jolly 2015) when showing her work. I additionally refer to her method of removing her drawn marks from the traditional medium of the paper.

Structure of dissertation

In Chapter Two I interrogate my inner voice prompt 'I don't know'. In this research I use inner voice, inner prompt or inner voice prompt to describe 'I don't know'. I demonstrate my changed approach to it initially by a comparison of an artwork made before this project with an artwork I made as part of this research. I investigate the unexamined assumptions that influenced my negative attitude to this inner prompt. Then I discuss the sources that influenced my change of approach. I devote an entire chapter to the transformation above

because it steered the direction of this research and I consider, enabled the transformations that followed.

In Chapter Three I examine how I used 'in-the-dark' methods in my artmaking. I interrogate the relationship between instability and transformation. I question whether the instability proffered by unknowing and accessed using 'in-the-dark' methods, does generate pronounced or marked change generally in my artistic practice. I consider how I might be flexible in my approach so that my artmaking methods remained effective. This chapter interrogates my research questions in the context of my artmaking practice. I refer to the artmaking practices of the artists above to ground this investigation.

Chapter Four furnishes a reflection on my research project. It provides an evaluation of how methodology was used to investigate the research questions. The limitations and challenges of the research project are considered. The findings of this project are presented, and areas of interest for further research are considered.

Conclusion

My conjecture was that 'spacious unknowing' could transform how I made art. I speculated that changes in my process could mean making different kinds of art. I could not however, anticipate what these transformations might be in my artmaking process or in my artworks.

How I think and feel about the artistic process is an ineluctable element of my artmaking. This is borne out by the concept of energy density and more specifically by the extended mind (Clark & Chalmers 1998) component. Hence, 'spacious unknowing' alters how I think and feel about artmaking, and the kind of questions posed during the process.

My sources as shown above provided some ways of being open to 'spacious unknowing', for example Morgan's (2014: 2) method of removing the goal from her writing process. My artmaking process was experimental as I attempted to turn their methods into my own

artmaking methods. Whatever methods I extrapolated must allow an openness to 'spacious unknowing'. These methods should not allow me to know in advance how my artmaking process would unfold. In other words, they were methods that placed the practitioner 'in-the-dark'. Additionally, any such methods provided only a temporary means of being open, as Maharaj (2009: 2 of 11) suggests. Finding how to remain open to 'spacious unknowing' while making art possibly added depth to my research.

I speculate that the continuity, that is, the stability of my experimental artmaking could be provided by action. Further, I contend that I do not have to know in advance what this action will be for it to provide stability. Seemingly stability or indivisibility is the essence of action or the quantum of action (Bohm & Hiley 1993: 13; Bohr 1958: 17-18; Eddington 1948: 180,185; Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016: 11 of 25).

Chapter Two: Poised in Space

Introduction

This chapter describes the various factors that seemed to change my approach to 'I don't know'. Action together with this change in attitude was seminal to the ensuing research. I examine my inner prompt as the harbinger of 'spacious unknowing', a concept discussed in Chapter One. 'In-the-dark' methods were developed to explore 'spacious unknowing' by making art in ways that allowed the outcome to be unpredictable. These 'in-the-dark' methods seemed to initiate further 'in-the-dark' processes discussed below.

Wrestling with my attitude to 'I don't know' in my artmaking process gave rise to the research questions. As discussed in Chapter One, these are:

- in what ways might 'spacious unknowing' transform my artistic process and art works?
- how might I be open and remain open to 'spacious unknowing'?

Indicating the change

To ground this discussion in my artistic practice I compare an artwork I made prior to this research and a work I made after the above-mentioned change of approach to my inner prompt. I endeavour to show through this comparison how my changed attitude to this inner voice led to me make art in different ways and to make different kinds of art.

Shembe Circle (2014) was inspired by one of the many *Shembe* worship circles I often drive past in Durban.⁵ I used the imagery of the trees and stones that are typically arranged in a

⁵ Shembe circles are outdoor sites of worship for members of the Nazareth Baptist Church. It is informally called the Shembe Church after its founder Isiah Shembe. The circles are defined by rocks that are painted white, and trees whose lower trunks are painted white as well.

circle and painted white to define the site of worship. This work is a close-up view of a Shembe circle and based on my observation and memory of the site.



Figure 1: Shembe Circle, (2014), ink and oil paint on canvas, 75 cm x 100 cm.



Figure 2: Detail of Off the Edge, (2017), installation, dimensions variable.

Shembe Circle is a two-dimensional mixed media painting on canvas. Initially I built up the surface with washes of ink, then layers of oil paint in glazes and scumbles. I used small brushes and loose brush marks to build up the imagery in layers, so the trees and rocks are not clearly depicted.

The rocks are suggested only by the small slightly lighter shapes in the bottom left-hand corner and towards the upper right-hand corner. Similarly, the difference in tone between the white-painted trunks and the darker bark is not clearly defined. The darkest areas are the negative shapes between the trees. The colours of *Shembe Circle* are mostly dark and sombre.

In small areas there are brush marks of brighter reds, yellows and blues. These brush marks are not confined to the trees but seem to move through the space between the trees. Overall, I find that the small and densely layered brush marks remind me how disorientated I felt when I made the work. The brushwork evokes in me a sense of claustrophobia. Only the light-coloured brush marks to the right of the central tree give me a feeling of breaking free from the constraints of imagery.

When I began *Shembe Circle* I did not intend to visually reproduce the reference imagery. For me this meant that I could not follow a planned step-by-step artmaking process. The uncertainty of this approach and my recurring inner prompt made me feel very disorientated. However, I decided to keep painting regardless of the intensity of these feelings (personal journal 2015: 9). It seemed that I could not silence 'I don't know' so I tried to give it as little attention as possible without disrupting my artmaking. When I painted *Shembe Circle* I intended to ignore and exclude my voice prompt from my process. Now I recognise my inner prompt as a vital aspect of my artmaking process. Perhaps this attempt to dismiss it was the cause of my anxiety at the time.

In comparing *Off the Edge* (2017) with *Shembe Circle* I discuss the changes brought about by my changed approach to my artmaking and my use of PLR. Below I consider my materials and

my working pace, the kind of artworks I was making, use of marks, use of space within the piece, scale of the work and my space of artmaking engagement.

In *Shembe Circle* I used ink and oil paint on canvas. In *Off the Edge* I used a greater variety of materials: compressed charcoal, graphite, pen and ink, paper, chicken wire and fishing line. The suspended black marks were made with tempera and wood glue. In *Shembe Circle* I built the oil paint up in layers, and as is typical of oil paint, each layer had to dry before applying the next one. In other words, the medium introduced a lapse of time within the process of making *Shembe Circle*.

In contrast, using compressed charcoal on paper in the *Off the Edge* black drawings meant I could immediately respond to an artmaking impulse with artmaking action. Thus, my choice of materials meant an immediacy of artmaking action. In responding to the impulse to draw there was no lapse of time while I prepared my surface or waited for layers to dry. I thus found that in my black drawings my choice of materials accelerated the pace of artmaking action.

The above change in the range of materials I used in *Off the Edge* was partly due to my use of PLR journaling and reflecting (Gray & Malins 2004: 113-114). In my PLR personal journal (2017: 210-215), prior to *Off the Edge*, I attempted to draw the feeling of intense uncertainty arising from my research. Reflecting on this drawing led me to develop it into an installation piece. Other factors influencing my change in media were material thinking (Barrett & Bolt 2007: 19-20,30) and the essentially spacious nature of matter (Eddington 1948: 2; Niaz 1998: 534-537). Carter posits that materials have their own inherent intelligence (Carter in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 21) and thus could fundamentally shape any artmaking process.

PLR reflective journaling (Gray & Malins 2004: 113-114) and the spacious structure of matter (Eddington 1948: 2; Niaz 1998: 534-537) made me wonder (Somerville 2007; 2008) whether the marks I make while immersed in unknowing could be situated in the same space as the viewer, for example in *Off the Edge*. This wondering is apparent in my PLR journal: "... let the fat paint [marks] do the thinking ... sometimes they leap forwards ... heading off..." (personal journal 2015: 48). Curious enquiry transformed the wondering into action by experimenting with materials. This experimentation, which meant being responsive to the intelligence of

materials (Barrett & Bolt 2007: 19-20,30), led to *Off the Edge* and its different range and use of materials.

As explained in Chapter One I used the theoretical sources above to develop my artmaking methods and the kind of art I was making. I began *Off the Edge* without reference imagery because it is one of the 'in-the-dark' methods I extrapolated from *The Cloud of Unknowing* (ed. Gallacher 1997: 1 of 9; ed. Hodgson 1944: xxxv; Zembylas 2005: 143). I had no idea what would appear on the paper as I drew. I worked in an open-ended manner developing the work through incremental step-by-step artistic decisions. In other words, I had no pre-determined route (Morgan 2014: 229) in mind with this work. This was made possible by removing any planning or reasoning process (ed. Gallacher 1997: 5 of 9; ed. Hodgson 1944: xli; Zembylas 2005: 143). In suspending the black marks, I was influenced by the work of Bronwyn Lace and Cornelia Parker, as discussed in Chapter Three. She places her installation objects in space using tensioned fishing line. In *Off the Edge* I tensioned the fishing line between two chicken wire constructions. I used chicken wire because for me as a material it was visually closer to the spacious structure of matter discovered by Rutherford (Eddington 1948: 2; Niaz 1998: 534-537).

One of the most visible differences between *Shembe Circle* and *Off the Edge* is that of the space. In contrast to the two-dimensional *Shembe Circle*, *Off the Edge* is a three-dimensional installation. The imagery of the trees in *Shembe Circle* to me constricts the dark negative spaces in between them. An act of imagination is required on the part of the viewer to appreciate the space within the painting. On the other hand, *Off the Edge* appears to draw the viewer into its physical space. The installation includes what I call my black drawings and a construction that suspends black paint marks in space. Of the drawings I here refer only to the six-metre-long drawing of which a detail is visible above. At the time of the above photograph the installation contained four other smaller black drawings.

The black shapes in the *Off the Edge* drawing seem to move across the white space of the paper. In this detail the suspended black marks to me seem to continue the movement of the drawing. The chicken wire and the fishing line I used to suspend the marks are partly painted black and white. I wanted to create the illusion that the lines of both disappear into the

drawing in places, and in other places emerge from it, although it is not so apparent in the above detail. I intended these kinds of tonal relationships to operate throughout the installation space. Another aspect of space is the space in which I make work, that is the space of engagement.

The space in which I made *Shembe Circle* was confined both because it was an easel painting and it was not very big in comparison to *Off the Edge*. The site of making *Off the Edge* extended from the CVA, where I made the drawings and assembled the installation, to my Durban studio, where I made the black marks and chicken wire constructions. Thus, my physical and conceptual engagement with space was much broader than it was with *Shembe Circle*. I made the biggest *Off the Edge* drawing on the CVA floor because it measures 150 cm by 600 cm. I was looking down at this drawing; or looking at it from its centre as I crouched on it to draw. As I assembled the installation I would be looking up at it, or down on it, or out from the middle of it. My view point constantly shifted as I made the work. I felt intensely engaged in and with the space. I felt like one of the materials undergoing whatever transformation was necessary to the art making (personal journal 2017: 216,218). In *Off the Edge* the viewer is drawn physically into the installation space and offered a view from within the work. For example, at a recent postgraduate 'critique' one of the participants described how disorientated she felt as she was drawn into the vortex of the dark marks (Bennetts, S., pers. comm., 21 July 2017; personal journal 2017: 240). It seems that being drawn into the installation space meant the viewer could experience some of what moved me to make the work.

The shift in how I engaged with space in making *Off the Edge* I surmise was because I had investigated 'I don't know', discovered its relation to unknowing (personal journal 2015: 67), accepted the apparent disorientation caused by my inner prompt, and allowed this feeling to propel the artistic process. Additionally, using PLR meant I could develop artmaking methods from my theoretical sources (Gray & Malins 2004: 169; Sullivan 2010: 105). I speculate that the above comparison shows these shifts in my artistic process. The kind of artwork I make has changed radically from *Shembe Circle* to *Off the Edge* as has my range and use of materials.

Further, the titles of the two works show a shift in how I think about my art making process. *Shembe Circle* refers to the subject matter, implying that the purpose of the work is to show the completed imagery. *Off the Edge* refers to my experience of 'spacious unknowing' as I made the work; my explorative artmaking process has become my subject matter. I consider it ironic that I work with visual language yet the inner process transforming my approach to 'I don't know' is non-visual and invisible. This research has enabled profound changes in these non-tangible aspects of artmaking. Another question for further research is: Where is this knowledge evidenced and located? The above irony is extended by drawing the viewer physically into *Off the Edge*. The viewer is offered an opportunity to experience the intangibility of uncertainty and unknowing within the space of this visual artwork.

On reflection, *Shembe Circle* evoked claustrophobia which evokes my negative attitude to 'I don't know', of how it made me feel and of how difficult it was to make *Shembe Circle*. I suggest that in releasing the dark negative shapes from the imagery and flat surface of *Shembe Circle* my installation became an exploration of space and spaciousness, and mark making. The above comparison shows my immersion in the extreme uncertainty of 'I don't know' when making *Off the Edge*. I no longer ignore my inner prompt. As shown above, this immersion has propelled the shifts in my artmaking and in the kind of art I make. In other words, as described above, my engagement with unknowing and its deep unpredictability and uncertainty became spatial.

Engaging with 'I don't know'

Before embarking on this research, I did not recognise my inner voice prompt for what it was – I have since realised that it indicates the presence of 'spacious unknowing', as I demonstrate below. I found it hindered my art making. For example, this inner prompt seemed to appear in response to facing blank canvas or paper and what I might make on the surface; or to thinking about how an artistic process might unfold. It was thus unsurprising that 'I don't know' was felt as a destabilising influence. This instability/uncertainty rendered me

apparently incapable of artistic action and left me overwhelmed by feelings of ignorance and failure. Yet the inner prompting would not be silenced.

My art making paralysis thus meant I held an unproductive view of 'I don't know'. At the same time, this inner voice seemed to be ineluctably part of my artistic process. I felt there must be more to this situation than I was aware of; and thus began this research project. In the remaining sections of this chapter I investigate the influences that rendered the change in attitude.

The transformation of my attitude was gradual, and I seemed to become aware of it through both the journaling and reflecting on what I had written. I use journal quotes to confirm that my approach to 'I don't know' has changed. I acknowledge that my experience of 'I don't know' as overwhelming is in part due to a fear of failure as an artist which is addressed later in this chapter.

I realised that seeking knowledge might not solve the tension between my inner voice and my creative inhibitions. Maybe the solution lay with 'I don't know' itself:

... 'I know' ... closes the senses, the mind, the door to discovery and expansion of understanding. Not knowing and unknowing could operate positively to expand understanding. (personal journal 2015: 71)

As the research advanced I realise I could choose how to respond to this inner prompt. 'I don't know'

...is not an indicator of ignorance (ignoring is a negation), but the influence of unknowing; of choosing to operate from a space of unknowing ... so a space of unknowing to me is unknowing unleashed, unknowing free to operate, inspire, drive. (personal journal 2015: 78)

Thus, I recognised that in choosing to accept ‘I don’t know’ as an important element of my research process, I became open to the “*originative force*” (Morgan 2014: 1) of ‘spacious unknowing’.

... I no longer take ‘I don’t know’ to be negative or threatening. It reminds me that spacious unknowing is present and available. It also reminds me of the dark or out of sight processes that are part and parcel of spacious unknowing.
(personal journal 2017: 220)

The above shift in attitude to ‘I don’t know’ I surmise was an indicator of the value of artmaking as research. This is confirmed in my reflective journaling, where I recognised my inner prompt as a driving force in my artmaking: “... *my ongoing ‘I don’t know’s’ – which caused such anxiety at the beginning ... – are propelling me continually*” (personal journal 2015: 73).

This places artmaking at the core of my research for this project. Sullivan claims that in a research situation⁶ making art has the potential to generate understanding which is a viable research goal: “...*art practice needs to be seen as a valuable site for raising theoretically profound questions and exploring them using robust research methods*” (Sullivan 2010: 119).

Sullivan (2010: 119) corroborates that PLR generates seminal insights, such as my new understanding of ‘I don’t know’ above. The kind of understanding generated by artmaking research can be allied with “*transformative theories*” (Sullivan 2010: 119) that promote individual or cultural change. Such transformative theory he suggests resides in the ideas, thoughts and actions of the artist/researcher. In other words, making art is a research process because of its potential to generate and critique a specific kind of knowledge.

⁶ It is necessary in this context to elaborate on the importance of the words ‘research situation’. My research situation is akin to Carter’s (in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 21) “*forming situation*”. As discussed in Chapter One, this forming situation is central to my notion of energy density. Energy density is how I come to view my artistic activity within my research situation. I posit that energy density both corroborates Sullivan, confirming that making art is research (Barrett & Bolt 2007; Gray & Malins 2004; Sullivan 2010), and demonstrates the “*originative force*” (Morgan 2014: 1) of ‘spacious unknowing’.

In this research my artmaking experience led me to investigate my inner prompt. Thus, I have gained insight into 'I don't know'. This insight allowed me to reconsider how I viewed my experience of knowledge and ignorance when I make art as I discuss in the following section. Sullivan confirms that the artist has the "...*capacity to create understanding and thereby critique knowledge*" (Sullivan 2010: 96).

My experience of knowledge and ignorance in this research

In this section I consider my experience of knowledge and ignorance in this study, and its bearing on my shift in attitude to my inner prompt. I mentioned above that my previous approach to 'I don't know' left me feeling ignorant and a failure. I examine my artistic training to understand how 'I don't know' led me to equate failure with ignorance. I interrogate my experience of knowledge and/or ignorance in my artistic process. I refer to my journals and Maharaj (2009) to investigate the realisation that in my artmaking I am not restricted to choosing between knowledge or ignorance. Maharaj's (2009: 3-4 of 11) "*thinking through the visual*" provides other possible ways of conducting my research and exploring these experiences.

Maharaj contrasts "*know-how*" to "*no-how*" (Maharaj 2009: 3,4 of 11), as discussed in Chapter One. "*No-how*" he claims, is an indeterminacy embedded in making art, giving rise to the unexpected and unanticipated (Maharaj 2009: 3,4 of 11). I interpret this to mean that we cannot know in advance how any art making process might unfold. Similarly, Mafe (2009: 58) states that the indeterminacy of meaning in art leads to a deeply unsettling unknowing.

'I don't know' is an inner expression of this destabilising unknowing. In other words, 'I don't know' and its ineluctable feelings of profound uncertainty can be understood to represent 'spacious unknowing'. 'Spacious unknowing' engenders uncertainty because it is beyond the understanding of the reasoning human mind (ed. Gallacher 1997: 5 of 9; ed. Hodgson 1944: xli; Zembylas 2005: 143). More specifically, Maharaj's (2009; 3,4 of 11) "*no-how*" confirms 'I don't know' as a valid artistic stance for me in this research.

Understanding that many artists are hampered by uncertainty in their creative processes further validates my attempts in this project to find ways of enriching my artistic practice despite this uncertainty. Moreover, this research aims to show that uncertainty or instability could be the element that enriches creative processes. This is possible but not by changing uncertainty to certainty – for example, by applying knowledge to an area of ignorance. By realising that I do not understand how uncertainty generates transformation, I have been able to accept my stance of ‘I don’t know’. This allowed me to access unknowing. Being open to unknowing in this research has seemed to generate new ways of both making art and of understanding my position as artist/researcher.

From this stance above, I examine notions of knowledge, “*non-knowledge*” (Maharaj 2009: 1,3 of 11) and ignorance. Although this research does not set out to define each term, the examination of my attitude to my inner prompt requires me to indicate my understanding of each.

Knowledge is “*the information, understanding and skills that you gain through education or experience*” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 2000: 714). Ignorance is defined as “*a lack of knowledge*” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 2000: 644). In my artistic practice prior to this research, I had come to view failure as indicative of ignorance: “*Unknowing in its ‘I don’t know’ form is sometimes taken to be failure and therefore ignorance*” (personal journal 2015: 67). Below I expand on this relationship between ignorance and failure.

A review of my formative training provides further clues to this experience of equating failure with ignorance. From 1985 to 1988 I studied in the Fine Arts Department – now the CVA – of the University of Natal. Additionally, my mother is an artist; making art is inherent to my upbringing and training. Using formal elements such as line, tone and negative or in-between spaces has been intrinsic to how I have made art from a young age. In other words, I have a lifetime of artmaking experience. This suggests that my sense of failure as an artist did not stem from ignorance, that is, experience of how to make art.

I have been a practicing and exhibiting artist for seventeen years. My understanding from this experience is that – as with any occupation – a degree of ignorance is inherent in the practice

of making art. I understand as an artist that I cannot know everything about art and making art. If I did or could, making art would not offer the appeal of ongoing discovery and inventiveness that it does. This inherent element of ignorance for me does not account for the presence of 'I don't know'. I acknowledge that my experience as a practising artist is ongoing, and therefore, lack of experience does not apply, and does not sufficiently account for the inner prompting either.

At the start of this research I realised that to break the stalemate of 'I don't know' as described, I could not simply identify and address a particular area of ignorance and/or failure in my artistic practice. Likewise, I recognised that expanding my experience might not in itself change my negative attitude to 'I don't know'. I needed to discover whether my artistic training had left me with any unhelpful assumptions about making art.

As mentioned, prior to this research, 'I don't know' for me indicated ignorance and probable failure. I assumed that finishing an art work was the first step to making a successful art work. However, I did not know beforehand how I wanted the finished work to look, so I did not know how to plan my art making steps in advance. When 'I don't know' then appeared in my mind I took it to mean that I was failing as an artist because of this perceived lacuna of knowledge in my artistic process.

To further investigate what failure might be I need to consider how I was trained as an artist. The Fine Arts Department at UKZN – now the CVA – had adopted attitudes and methodologies pertaining to British Modernism (Bucknall 2015: 5). In our South African context our response to British Modernism could be termed British Formalism states Bucknall (2015: 16). In my experience the departmental teaching in the 1980s was formal and modernist in its approach. We were taught that drawing formed the basis for all art making. My understanding of this was that through careful preparatory drawing and planning an artist could be assured of a successful outcome. For example, *"it was only through the discipline of drawing, whether in pencil or paint, that the composition could be constructed"* (Bucknall 2015: 109).

Dick Leigh was my painting lecturer from 1986 to 1989. I was trained to begin each painting with preparatory drawings to construct the composition and plan the use of line, tone, shape,

colour, and so on. Art should be made by *“disseminating the composition into each of his respective elements of line, tonal quality, shape, colour and arrangement”* (Leigh in Bucknall 2015: 104). As mentioned above, drawing was foundational in modernist artistic training as a *“skilled, essential, but preparatory medium”* (Hall 2013: 56). Drawing underpinned what were considered the major arts of painting, sculpture and architecture (Hall 2013: 125). Inherent to my understanding of this modernist approach is an assumption that the process of making art can be largely certain and predictable due to this kind of planning.

In other words, this kind of planning produces a goal towards which the artist works. Implicitly, I surmise that not only a goal but possible success or failure in achieving it are introduced by the kind of planning outlined above. Together with Morgan (2014: ii) I discovered in this research that situating oneself in unknowing could mean having no predetermined destination; *“... the means makes the end, the journey is the work; there is no goal, only immersion in the process”* (personal journal 2016: 131).

Prior to this research, if I did not plan and construct my art making in the way I had been taught, I felt that I was taking inadmissible short cuts and therefore I was failing as an artist. This research has helped me to recognise how misleading such assumptions have been in my artistic practice. Although the following quote refers to a comparison of gardening and my artistic process, it is nevertheless pertinent:

... I know I'm not in control of the [gardening] outcome ... because there is no perceived success or failure here... In my creative process I have battled with ... 'failure' ... This is when I'm wanting and expecting good [art making] results.
(personal journal 2015: 66)

I speculate that in my modernist training the strong emphasis on drawing as artistic planning, described above, led to the expectation that such planning would lead to a successful work. Implicitly, lack of planning would probably lead to the failure I feared.

According to Barolsky (1997), the history of modernism shows a close relationship between failure and art. This conjunction is a *“deep theme”* (Barolsky 1997: 1 of 5) of modernism.

Modernism sees the artist as an individual entity, who must “*distinguish himself through outstanding uniqueness*” (Gablik 1984: 24). The close relation of artmaking and failure suggests that failure, and concomitantly, success, are discrete and discernible qualities. Thus, I took my inner voice to mean that a viewer of my art would be able to discern my failure to plan – as I had been trained – and therefore successfully complete a work.

Although ‘I don’t know’ still triggers feelings of instability and uncertainty, perhaps the key to continuing and developing artistic action is not planning and knowing my artmaking process in advance. Maharaj claims that it is not knowledge, but “*non-knowledge*” or unknowing that is the key to artistic research (Maharaj 2009: 1,3 of 11). Nevertheless, I needed to recognise what I experience as knowledge in my artistic process.

Through this research I have come to recognise knowledge and ignorance as they appear when I make art. Further, I recognise that the potential for knowledge and ignorance appear together. For example, with respect to artistic materials: “*When I know or don’t know, and what I know or don’t know [about the materials] become fairly obvious as I work with unfamiliar materials. And it is the kind of knowledge that is fairly easily acquired*” (personal journal 2015: 73). This is a recognition of ignorance which can then become knowledge or “*know-how*” (Maharaj 2009: 3,4 of 11).

Prior to this research I was confused about what it is possible to know and what cannot become known. Through making art, the PLR journaling process (Gray & Malins 2004: 113-114) and theoretical sources I recognised that the binary pair knowledge/ignorance⁷ does not appear on its own in my artistic process. I surmise that my inner voice was attempting to articulate that in my research another possibility appears together with knowledge/ignorance. This possibility is unknowing.

⁷ Knowledge/ignorance could be termed a binary opposition or a binary pair. Binary opposition is ‘... *the principle of contrast between two mutually exclusive terms*’ (The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms 2008: 36). In my personal journals (2015; 2016; 2017) I make frequent reference to binary pairs; for example, chaos/order, right/wrong. I consider that binary pairs are in part responsible for shaping energy density. Further research into energy density and the apparent complementary nature of such pairs could require reference to Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle (Eddington 1948:220; Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016: 3-4 of 25) and Bohr’s notion of complementarity (Bohr 1958: 5,9-11,19,26-27; Hilgevoord & Uffink rev 2016: 11-12 of 25; Niaz 1998: 540).

Below, I describe how unknowing emerged in my journal distinct from knowledge/ignorance. I wrote this after a conversation with a colleague. *“We were talking about that mind-blowing feeling of not knowing at all. What emerged ... was ... some stuff we know; some stuff we realise we don’t know but can find out [and] come to know”*. This I consider demonstrates ignorance that becomes knowledge. *“... other stuff is unknowable ever; beyond the human mind’s grasp.”* This for me is ‘spacious unknowing’, whence ‘I don’t know’ arises. I continue with the entry as it is seminal to how my understanding of ‘I don’t know’ shifts:

When I am in [the above] situation, yet need to act, how do I make a move? For starters, don’t mix up the two kinds of unknown [“know-how” and “no-how” mentioned above]. The first for me, is all the technical and practical stuff; I know how to mix orange or how to glaze; I can learn how to etch. The second is the realm of what it’s not possible to know in its entirety; I don’t know how a piece of work will turn out, or even where it’s heading. So, having chosen to operate in/from this this place of unknowing, how do I act or generate creative action? Where do I turn? To what do I refer? I can refer to the first kind of knowledge... it’s possible to mix paint, pick up brush, approach canvas Then where brush meets canvas, in that place of meeting, I don’t know, can’t know in advance. I can’t blur the two [“know-how” and “no-how”] which freezes action. (personal journal 2016: 101-102)

Through investigating the simultaneous appearance of knowledge/ignorance⁸ and “no-how” (Maharaj 2009: 3,4 of 11) within my artistic process, my attitude to ‘I don’t know’ changed. I realised that ‘I don’t know’ indicates the presence of ‘spacious unknowing’, as discussed above. Additionally, I discovered that I can refer directly to knowledge/ignorance but not directly to ‘spacious unknowing’.

⁸ It is interesting to note how Eddington (1948: 229) views the relationship between ignorance and knowledge: *“An addition to knowledge is won at the expense of an addition to ignorance”*.

‘Spacious unknowing’

‘Spacious unknowing’ seems to be a ‘dark’ generative force (Morgan 2014: 1) that exists everywhere. The transformation of my approach to my inner prompt allowed me to recognise that I do not understand (Zembylas 2005: 142) how ‘spacious unknowing’ operates. In other words, on reflection I recognised the transformation of my attitude to ‘I don’t know’; but I was unable to witness this transformation. This confirms for me that transformation, prompted by being open to ‘spacious unknowing’, takes place beyond the ken of the logical human mind (ed. Gallacher 1997: 5 of 9; ed. Hodgson 1944: xli; Zembylas 2005: 143). Thus, any investigation into ‘spacious unknowing’ must be an investigation of the effects of ‘spacious unknowing’, and of the ways of accessing its generative (Morgan 2014: 1-2; Vasudevan 2011: 1154) ‘in-the-dark’ processes. In other words, the transformation of my attitude to ‘I don’t know’ led to my research questions as stated previously.

I realise that the ‘darkness’ of not understanding is intrinsic to the generative force (Morgan 2014: 1) of ‘spacious unknowing’ (personal journal 2017: 207). PLR journaling (Gray & Malins 2004: 113-114) continued to evolve my understanding of the importance of ‘in-the-dark’ processes. An element of this evolutionary process is time. A passage of time is inherent in the journaling; time passes between making art, and reflecting and journaling on that artmaking. Insight into my artmaking process mostly does not happen while I am making art. It seems as if a lapse of time is needed for such insight to emerge. As with the transformation of my attitude to my inner prompt, I am unable to see the insight take shape.

It is as if some ‘in-the-dark’ process takes place before the insight can emerge: *“Can’t write more now ... Need a bit of digestion and composting to happen. (Happens in the dark remember)”* (personal journal 2017: 209). In Chapter One I introduced ‘in-the-dark’ methods as a means of accessing ‘in-the-dark’ processes of ‘spacious unknowing’. Trinh Minh-ha confirms that knowledge approaches when it is ready to do so (Trinh Minh-ha in Somerville 2007: 227). There is another factor relating to time in the evolutionary processing of ‘I don’t know’.

It was through time and applying effort or action in my research that the above understanding evolved. This is confirmed by Eddington: “... *action has two ingredients ... energy and time...*” (Eddington 1948: 182). It took artmaking research and hence time to translate theory about unknowing into methods of placing myself in the metaphorical ‘darkness’ of ‘spacious unknowing’. It took more time to find ways of making art in this ‘darkness’, and yet further time to become partly accustomed to remaining in this ‘darkness’. I realised this when journaling and reflecting on the beginning of my *Off the Edge* (2017) drawing series:

Just wanted to cover all the light of the page. More and more ... until the darkness gathering on the paper became revealing. It is impossible to completely obliterate the light (of the paper, my situation) but I had to stay put in the darkness of spacious unknowing to realise that. Then suddenly I am aware that it is not only darkness and obliteration, but a begetting of something else. (personal journal 2017: 217)

I discovered that becoming entirely comfortable with making art in this metaphoric ‘darkness’ was counterproductive in my research. Paradoxically my artmaking then became habitual (personal journal 2016: 139). In other words, I was no longer inhabiting the ‘darkness’ of unknowing. I discuss this in the following section.

Somerville (2008: 209) says that stepping into a different way of experiencing research – that is, “*becoming-other-to-one’s-self*” – is vital in “*any process of making new knowledge*”. This is borne out by the discussion in this chapter of the transformational process which changed my attitude to ‘I don’t know’ and gave rise to my research questions. In PLR, the research questions are rooted in artistic practice (Gray & Malins 2004: 16,103; Sullivan 2010: 119).

In my artistic practice I am, as described above, now familiar with making art in the ‘darkness’ of ‘spacious unknowing’. For example, as I made the *Off the Edge* series of black drawings, my inner voice appeared. I felt in the ‘dark’, as though I could not see a sequence of artmaking steps ahead. Journaling and reflecting on this experience, further changed my understanding of ‘I don’t know’. “... *making art in ‘spacious unknowing’ and its accompanying ‘darkness’ is essential to generating insights about the art making itself*” (personal journal 2017: 221). I

interrogated methods of entering the 'darkness' of unknowing and how this could transform my artmaking.

Although *Off the Edge* and the ensuing insights arose out of a familiarity with PLR and working in metaphorical 'darkness', I do not try to theorize these 'in-the-dark' processes. This example further illustrates how a deeper understanding of my artistic processes and attitudes – generated by both unknowing and PLR interweaving of practice and theory (Gray & Malins 2004: 169; Sullivan 2010: 105) – helped to interrogate the questions raised by making art. Moreover, both PLR and 'spacious unknowing' are shown here to generate the potential for further research.

Kinds of brain functioning

An additional factor that facilitated my artistic process is related to the different kinds of functions performed by the brain. In Chapter One I discussed these differing tasks. Certain activities make use of intuition, subjectivity, non-verbal perception (Edwards 1999: 39). Other kinds of activity use analysis, step-by-step planning, logic, words (Edwards 1999: 38).

When working optimally, brain functions complement one another (Edwards 1999: 31). However, I did not consider how different kinds of brain functions are aroused by different ways of engaging with the various aspects of making art. I realised this lack of understanding could have been partially responsible for my negative response to my inner prompt. Perhaps 'I don't know' was indicating a need for intuitive response. In this situation my attempt to respond with verbal answers left me confused.

I would consider my artistic practice to fall largely within an intuitive 'thinking' process. The following extract describes intuitive brain functioning. It additionally demonstrates the role of journaling in facilitating understanding:

Can't describe the feeling of being engulfed in spacious unknowing – the great doubt and uncertainty ... Just scribbled and darkened [my drawing], and scribbled and darkened ... until the darkness gathering on the paper became revealing. (personal journal 2017: 217)

Additionally, I better understand that 'in-the-dark' processes of unknowing are a metaphor for the instability of unknowing I experience in my artistic process (personal journal 2017: 217). Edwards claims that understanding metaphor (Edwards 1999: 44) is a specific brain function. *"Leaving aside judgement and appraisal"* (personal journal 2015: 81) similarly employs a specific kind of brain processing (Edwards 1999: 44). Likewise, insights arrived at all-in-a-moment result from intuitive and non-verbal brain processing (Edwards 1999: 44). For example: *"What makes me make art ... cannot be 'pinpointed'. If I can 'pin point' it ... which involves thinking ... [I] don't want to express it; or it doesn't move me to make art ..."* (personal journal 2016: 124).

The kinds of questions I previously asked myself about my artistic process were of a rational linear nature (Edwards 1999: 44). When my inner prompt appeared in response to such questions I was confused. For example, *"Why do I paint what I paint?"* (personal journal 2015: 3). This question ensues from logical and verbal brain processes. When applied to my intuitive artmaking process I could not respond verbally. This caused confusion as I was not fully aware of the relationship between types of activity and correlated kinds of brain processing.

I was trained to plan an artwork in advance, as discussed in the section above, which is in part a rational brain activity (Edwards 1999: 38). When my inner prompt appeared within any such rational activity, I had found the resulting confusion paralyzing.

Currently, as I recognise and do not confuse the varying brain functions, these functions do not appear to be inhibiting one another's processing. The kind of questions I now pose in relation to my artmaking are questions that begin with 'how'. These are the kind of practical questions to which my intuitive processing can respond with artmaking *"no-how"* (Maharaj 2009: 3,4 of 11) or curious enquiry as discussed in Chapter One. This is a clear indicator that my attitude and response to 'I don't know' had changed.

In the light of the above differing brain functions (Edwards 1999: 37-39), it is interesting to reflect on how I was making art before I began this research. I was very loosely using an act/wait-for-response/act kind of heuristic, which I discuss in Chapter One. I arrived at this method by intuition which is a specific kind of brain function (Edwards 1999: 37). I did not realise at the time that 'I don't know' might be in part a natural response to the confusion between my intuitive heuristic and the tendency of the verbal and rational brain functions to dominate.

The above heuristic additionally provides a way of working from the 'darkness' of 'spacious unknowing'. Maybe my methods of situating myself in this metaphorical 'darkness' all fall within intuitive brain processing modes. Maharaj's (2009: 3-4 of 11) non-verbal "*thinking through the visual*" is probably an intuitive mode. Additionally, I now understand that how I experience my inner prompt is a matter of choice: "*I can choose my response to 'spacious unknowing'. I do not have to let my negativity bulldoze my response to 'I don't know' into inertia ... [The] most important thing is to act. It's the key...*" (personal journal 2017: 207). It seems that having chosen how I respond to 'I don't know', the subsequent action confirms and reinforces that choice be it negative or positive.

Physics

In the paragraph above I show the importance of action in responding to my inner voice. In this section I consider how action, ubiquitous space and the uncertainty of the relationship between binary pairs affects my attitude to 'I don't know'.

Action as the moving force behind transformation is confirmed by physics (Bohr 1958: 18; Eddington 1948: 185; Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016: 11 of 25), as briefly discussed in the literature review. Despite being aware that I can choose how I respond to 'I don't know' I found that nothing changes without action (personal journal 2016: 113,122,125; 2017: 207). Moreover, action, for example in the form of my heuristic (personal journal 2015: 2,9,11,16-17; 2016: 111), is a continuing thread or stabiliser throughout my artmaking research. No

matter how 'in-the-dark' I might feel as I make art, I am now able to take one step, or action, at a time. Bohr claims that the quantum of action does indeed provide stability to all atoms (Bohr 1958: 17-18).

Both Heisenberg and Bohr consider the effects of the quantum of action as indivisible which explains its intrinsic stability. Thus, because the quantum of action produces effects which are indivisible and stable (Bohm & Hiley 1993: 12) and at the same time transformational (Eddington 1948: 185), action could possibly provide the key to making art when I do not know what to do (personal journal 2016: 157).

Additionally, Bohm and Hiley (1993: 12) claim that the quantum of action means that results are "*unpredictable and uncontrollable*". Like the transformational nature of the quantum of action, this is obvious at a microscopic atomic scale and still holds true at a visible macroscopic scale though it is not so noticeable because of the huge number of atoms involved (Eddington 1948: 183). This is significant because in this research the transformational, stable and unpredictable properties of the quantum of action are not metaphorical. They are referred to as having a real effect on my research process. In other words, artmaking *action* introduces transformation, stability and unpredictability into my artistic process. Perhaps then making art step-by-step or one action at a time in the face of profound uncertainty was the simplest way for me to change my attitude to 'I don't know'.

Another aspect that has a bearing on my artmaking action is the relationship between binary pairs. I assume that momentum and location – the particle properties referred to by the uncertainty principle – are such a binary pair. Heisenberg and Bohr discussed the experimental set-up that attempts to measure momentum and location of a particle in a single experiment. It seems neither element of this binary pair, momentum/location, can be isolated and accurately measured in a single experiment. The more accurately one element was measured, the less could be known about the other property.

From this Heisenberg developed the uncertainty principle (Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016: 3-4 of 25). Two distinct experiments would be required to measure location and momentum.

In describing the above particle, it is necessary to describe both experiments⁹ as together they provide a complementary yet ambiguous view of the particle. This is the essence of Bohr's complementarity (Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016: 11-12 of 25). In the same way, maybe success/failure, knowledge/ignorance or any such binary pair should be considered in relationship to one another with an inherent degree of uncertainty or ambiguity. The more that is known about one of a binary pair, the less is known about the other.

Thus, the uncertainty principle and complementarity contributed to change my either/or view of my inner prompt. I realise that 'I don't know' does not indicate *either* ignorance *or* the possibility of knowledge because the knowledge/ignorance relationship is indeterminate and uncertain. 'I don't know' additionally came to represent uncertainty of binary relationships in general.

The inherent uncertainty above – apparent in my personal journals (2015; 2016; 2017) – together with the spaciousness of matter (Eddington 1948:2; Niaz 1998: 534-537) led me to question my relationship to my materials when making art. If neither myself nor my artmaking materials are physically separated, what is our relationship to one another? How do we influence one another by our physical proximity? Thus, my changing attitude to 'I don't know' led to the notion of energy density discussed in Chapter One.

The reason why separate experiments are required to measure location and momentum is that the presence of a measuring instrument in these experiments altered the experimental results. That is, the measuring instrument was an ineluctable part of the experiment. This was due to the exchange of a quantum of action with the measuring instrument. This exchange allowed the instrument to measure but affected the experimental results (Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016: 11-12 of 25).

It was this consideration that led me initially to consider my own position as researcher or 'measuring instrument'. Without reinforcing assumptions about physical separation, I sought

⁹ The results of the two experiments cannot be combined. This is because the indivisible nature of the quantum of action means each experiment and its results are a whole and indivisible phenomenon (Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016: 11 of 25).

to accurately describe my own position as researcher/practitioner. This started the development of energy density.

I consider that energy density is partly shaped by such binary relationships. I posit that each instance of artmaking is an energy density (personal journal 2017: 251). In the literature review I examine the theory supporting energy density – Rutherford’s atomic model (Eddington 1948:2; Niaz 1998: 534-537), extended mind theory (Clark & Chalmers 1998), material thinking (Barrett & Bolt 2007: 19-20,30), Hannula’s (2009: 4-5 of 20) “*democracy of experience*” and the quantum of action (Bohr 1958; Eddington 1948; Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016).

Having established the central role of action, I return to the notion of artistic success. Here physics is referred to in relation to the concept of success/failure. Gablik’s (1984: 24) view is that modernism required the individual artist to “*distinguish himself through outstanding uniqueness.*” If this indicates ‘success’, implicitly it is possible to fail in this endeavour. At the time it seemed that this is what artists strove for. This concept of an artist either succeeding or failing I understand to be a modernist approach. Below I note the implications of spacious atomic structure (Eddington 1948: 2; Niaz 1998: 534-537) for individual entities and thus for the success/failure of an individual.

Rutherford’s atomic model (Eddington 1948: 2; Niaz 1998: 534-537) implies that physically individuals do not exist as entities separate from all other entities. The immanence of space implied by Rutherford’s atomic model indicates that physical separation of seemingly solid entities or objects does not exist at an atomic level. According to Eddington (1948: 183) what exists at an atomic level exists equally, though less obviously, on a macroscopic scale. Perhaps the existence of individual entities is thus an illusion as Eddington (1948: xvi) claims.

Gablik (1984) allies the notion of artistic success/failure to individual existence. The physics above in undermining individual existence, equally undermines the success/failure concept. If individual entities are illusory, and energy density is temporary and specific to situation, and the quantum of action is unpredictable and uncontrollable, is the modernist notion of success/failure (Barolsky 1997; Gablik 1984) even a consideration regarding artmaking? I do

not intend to answer these questions here. Rather, my questioning serves as a factor in liberating my attitude to 'I don't know'. Thus, when I make art I might be free from "... *some kind of (self-applied) pressure and expectation to produce a successful result*" (personal journal 2015: 66).

The above liberation from notions of success/failure, the confirmation of action as indivisible and transformational, and the uncertainty intrinsic to the relationship between binary pairs further helps in the transformational process of 'I don't know'. This is in part due to the ongoing PLR reflecting and journaling. I reiterate that in this research I find the key to transformation is action (personal journal 2016: 113,122,125; 2017: 207).

Conclusion

The change of attitude to my inner voice prompt had three outcomes seminal to this research. I recognised 'spacious unknowing' as a generative force; I realised that nurturing instability by using 'in-the-dark' methods could provide a way of accessing 'spacious unknowing'; my research questions arose from these insights.

My acceptance of 'I don't know' meant I came to acknowledge my inner prompt as the harbinger of 'spacious unknowing'. My shift in attitude did not however, change the feeling of deep uncertainty that seems to accompany unknowing. My changed approach meant that I did not need to understand how 'spacious unknowing' operated in my artistic process to be able to make art. The disquiet, instability *et cetera* then experienced no longer inhibited my artmaking practice. This became seminal to the direction of my research when I realised that this could be a way of exploring 'spacious unknowing'. At the end of this research project, I better understand how to access unknowing.

Above I discussed how my approach to my artistic process changed. In the following chapter I attempt to interrogate the ways in which 'spacious unknowing' has transformed my artistic process and art works; and how might I be open and remain open to 'spacious unknowing'.

Chapter Three: Between Mark and Maker

Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of my investigation into ways of accessing the generative force (Morgan 2014: 1) of unknowing and maintaining this access. My artmaking exploration and this discussion investigate how the above openness might have caused marked changes in my approach to making art, in my artistic practice, and thus in my artworks.

In the literature review I established through theoretical sources that experience of unknowing encompasses instability of some kind. My artmaking investigation demonstrated that 'in-the-dark' methods are so-called because they trigger uncertainty, instability, disorientation or something similar. In line with PLR these 'in-the-dark' methods were developed from theory and applied in my artmaking practice. The PLR-like movement between practice and theory is embedded in the discussion.

This chapter firstly considers the relationship between instability and transformation. With reference to the 'in-the-dark' methods underlying instability, it is necessary to note that it is not clear where one such method ends, and another begins. In this research they cannot be considered as distinct and separate from one another as one segues into another. For example, taking reference imagery away from my artistic process provides a means of removing a goal (Morgan 2014: 2) towards which I might work. This 'in-the-dark' method simultaneously ensures that I move away from understanding (Morgan 2014: 111), another 'in-the-dark' method. Removing planning processes – although there are other ways of applying this 'in-the-dark' method – is implicit in removing reference imagery.

In application 'in-the-dark' methods interweave. Using this writing to interrogate their effect is challenging because I cannot view one 'in-the-dark' method as distinct from the others. The discussion below investigates a curious enquiry that used my research heuristic to implement 'in-the-dark' methods.

Marked change and instability

In this section I discuss the relationship between marked change, or transformation, and instability. An apt definition of transformation is “*any alteration in form, character or substance*” (A Dictionary of Psychology 2001: 752). In my research context, I find a better definition to be: any marked change in character or form. This implies that the definition encompasses change over the research period.

In this project I have found that unknowing is most generative when my artmaking is destabilised by uncertainty, disorientation *et cetera*. This confirms Somerville’s (2007: 232) implication that instability in research processes is likely to generate change: “... *there are times of transformation and times of stability ...*”.

In the context of creative research Maharaj (2009) compares knowledge production to knowledge transfer. Maharaj surmises that research which produces knowledge is marked by a “*transformative crossover*” (Maharaj 2009: 8 of 11). This is a crossing over into previously uncharted terrain resulting in something (Maharaj 2009: 8 of 11) that was not known beforehand.

Reference to knowledge as “*information, understanding and skills*” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 2000: 714) gained through experience is useful here. Gaining new insight and/or skills and/or information demonstrates the above transformational passage (Maharaj 2009: 8 of 11).

Maharaj (2009: 8 of 11) goes on to suggest that when in visual art practice and research this kind of transformational passage happens repeatedly it leads to uncertainty and instability¹⁰. Continuing instability, that is, “*divergence and disequilibrium*” (Maharaj 2009: 8 of 11) could bring unexpected outcomes: “... *over a period of time [it] makes vital room for the appearance of something different or unforeseen*” (Maharaj 2009: 8 of 11) or lead to “... *new objects and ways of knowing*” (Maharaj 2009: 8). According to Maharaj (2009: 8 of 11), instability

¹⁰ Instability here refers to a feeling and not to the quantum of action.

promotes marked change in artistic practice and/or research. Importantly, instability may generate knowledge as described above.

In this project, an artwork, artmaking process and/or research could demonstrate transformation if it in some way embodies some element that has not appeared in what preceded it. Later in this chapter I will investigate my creative practice and artworks for evidence of this kind of transformational crossover (Maharaj 2009: 8 of 11). At times, the underlying instability might be more evident than marked change.

Repeated forays into unknown territory (Maharaj 2009: 8 of 11) – or recurrent moves away from understanding (Morgan 2014: 111) – fostered instability in this project. That is, ‘in-the-dark’ methods were developed to promote the instability that leads to transformation.

Removing reference imagery

In the following discussion, the destabilising effects of ‘in-the-dark’ methods are interrogated to see if they do indeed lead to marked change in this research project. This section additionally scrutinizes whether these ‘in-the-dark’ methods remain effective in this way, and how they might be adapted when necessary.

The instability caused by using ‘in-the-dark’ methods inevitably and repeatedly led to confusion. Some aspect of steadiness was required in this research if I was to complete it. This steadiness was provided by knowing that ‘spacious unknowing’ is immanent, and by the action inherent to my research heuristic.

Debilitating confusion was caused by my approach to ‘I don’t know’. In Chapter Two I discussed how my changed approach led to discovering the transformative potential of unknowing. My research grew around this paradox: ‘spacious unknowing’ simultaneously proffered turmoil and stability. The influence of unknowing destabilised my artmaking while its immanent generative force provided a continuing thread of stability.

The form that this turmoil took initially in my artistic practice meant that I had no idea how I would begin an artwork. This disorientation was untenable unless I could find a way of taking action without having to know beforehand what the action would be. The stability of immanent unknowing took form in my act/wait-for-response/act heuristic. My heuristic enabled me to take artmaking action without prior knowledge of what the action would be. In this way, the act/wait-for-response/act heuristic embodied a journey away from prior knowledge, and the stability of continuing artmaking action. This stability, or ability to act despite extreme uncertainty or instability, enabled me to conduct this research.

Before embarking on this research, to take an artmaking action I first had to know what it would be. Not knowing aroused extreme disorientation. I would then try to generate prior knowledge of the impending action. This did not work, leading only to greater confusion and an inability to act at all.

My heuristic embodies a different use of and a different kind of knowledge. This kind of knowledge is different to prior knowledge above. I refer to it as experiential knowledge. It is implicit in how I used my research heuristic to respond to the cues offered by the art piece I was working with. This response was compounded of all my previous artmaking experiences into a wordless, intuitive knowledge.

The above experiential knowledge, embodied in my heuristic, could not be disengaged. How might I then use my heuristic to maintain instability? That is, how might I consistently move away from (Morgan 2014: 111) rather than towards knowledge? As a figurative painter, if I removed the figurative – that is, reference imagery – my experiential knowledge might engage without the artmaking heading towards already known visual imagery.

This artmaking research was begun using reference imagery. In my late modernist artistic training – discussed in Chapter Two – I was taught to refer to an image in my artistic process. Whether I was referring directly to life, for example in life drawing, or painting from preparatory drawings, or from a photographic reference, I referred to imagery when I made art. I understood that the purpose of the imagery was to guide my artmaking, that is, give me a visual reference as an approximate goal to work towards. At the start of this project I used

imagery of trees and templates of the human figure to represent concepts of identity versus individuality¹¹.

Dissatisfaction with my imagery quickly grew because I felt it was at odds with the concept of space as ubiquitous. Using templates with hard and unavoidable edges no longer made sense.

In the *Whence? Where to?* (2015) series below, in my desire to obliterate this discomfort I scumbled over each of the four paintings with black paint. Surprisingly this seemed to resolve the colour problems I was experiencing with the paintings. More importantly, in *darkening* the paintings, I realised that ‘darkness’ could be fertile (personal journal 2015: 22). In other words, when I used black scumbling to conceal what I had painted, the process revealed that using the element of ‘darkness’ gave unexpectedly productive results. “*I did it [the black scumble] to obliterate. But it didn’t ... I was re-presented with this work I’d wanted to extinguish*” (personal journal 2016: 104).

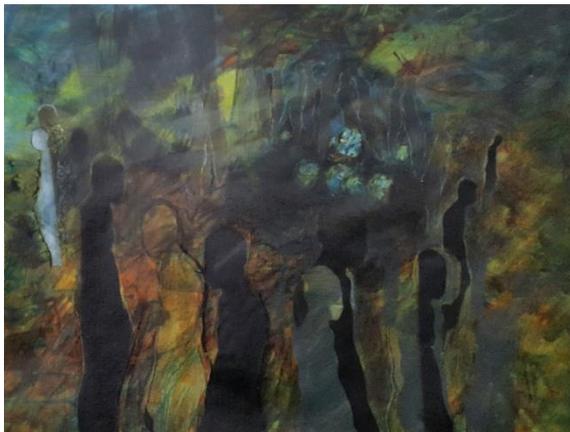


Figure 3: *Whence? Where to? 1*, (2015), ink, pen and oil on canvas paper, 38 cm x 48 cm.

¹¹ It is relevant to show the decided change in the focus of this study. This research project began with what I now recognise to be synonymous with Gallacher’s “*inner*” and “*outer man*” (ed. Gallacher 1997: 6 of 9). My initial idea was to investigate the relationship between identity (which I assume is the “*outer man*”) and individuality (which I assume is the “*inner man*”).



Figure 4: Whence? Where to? 2, (2015), ink, pen and oil on canvas paper, 38 cm x 48 cm.



Figure 5: Whence? Where to? 3, (2015), ink, pen and oil on canvas paper, 40 cm x 50 cm.

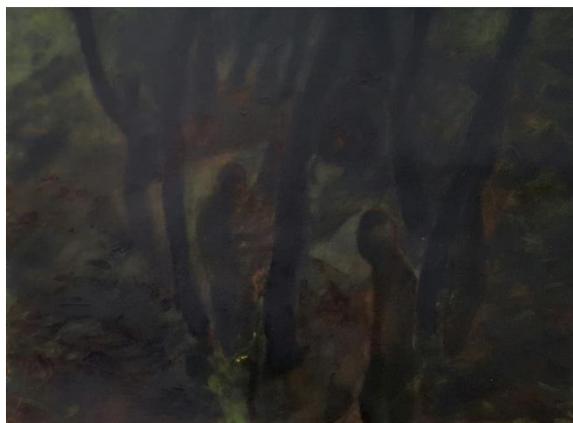


Figure 6: Whence? Where to? 4, (2015), ink, pen and oil on canvas paper, 40 cm x 50 cm.

This pivotal insight into the potential offered by 'darkness', changed the direction of my research. Reading Gallacher (ed. 1997) and Hodgson (ed. 1944) at this point focused the new understanding and my dissatisfaction with imagery into a specific artmaking method. Thus, my first 'in-the-dark' method – moving away from reference imagery – came into being.

Removing reference imagery was an 'in-the-dark' method developed from *The Cloud of Unknowing* (ed. Gallacher 1997; ed. Hodgson 1944). Theoretical sources (ed. Gallacher 1997: 1 of 9; ed. Hodgson 1944: xxxv; Zembylas 2005: 143) indicate that renouncing imagery of any kind is an important aspect of *The Cloud's* renunciation process. This renunciation process is intended to trigger illumination (ed. Gallacher 1997: 2,4 of 9).

I began painting without referring to any kind of imagery, either from life, from photographs or from imagination. This was very daunting at first. For example, in *Scattering* (2016) I approached the canvas with paint on my brush but not knowing what I was going to do with it. Remembering the transformative nature of action (Bohr 1958: 18; Eddington 1948: 186; Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016: 11 of 25) enabled me to lay the paint on the canvas without a plan in mind. From this point I could use my heuristic as there was something on the canvas to draw out a responsive action.

This response, as mentioned, was partly informed by my experiential knowledge. It additionally grew from the awareness of my materials and their natures. My willingness to be guided by their intelligence (Barrett & Bolt 2007: 19-20,30; personal journal 2016: 147?) as well as my own meant that the heuristic response to the artwork could not in any way be planned. Planning would have excluded the 'voices' of materials (Bolt in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 30) and of the artwork. Planning would have disabled my heuristic.

Once I began an art piece there was some kind of emerging imagery albeit non-figurative. This required a change in how I worked without reference imagery. In using my heuristic as described above, I could not steer the artmaking in a specific direction, for example, towards the familiarity of a visual goal. My heuristic did mean it was possible to respond to the emerging imagery without the imagery becoming a goal (Morgan 2014: 2) of the artmaking.

Accepting this turn away from the known (Morgan 2014: 111) – that is, from the familiarity of reference imagery as a visual goal – ironically seemed to generate insights (personal journal 2015: 81). Eddington (1948: 229) claims that increasing knowledge increases ignorance: “*an addition to knowledge is won at the expense of an addition to ignorance*”. Perhaps this operates conversely – an increase in not knowing may lead to greater depth of understanding. This study strongly suggests that this is where the fecundity of unknowing lies. This project additionally demonstrates ways in which unknowing might be accessed.

To illustrate this, I discuss the making of *Outer Inwards* (2016). It was the second painting I began without reference imagery. When I approached the canvas to prime it, I realised that priming the canvas white would be a habitual action. Habitual action implies familiar activity in familiar terrain. With Maharaj’s (2009: 8 of 11) transformational passage in mind I replaced the white with a clear priming. I then very rapidly laid down an ink wash to overcome the uncertainty of how I was going to start.

Thereafter, I used my act/wait-for-response/act heuristic. In other words, removing reference imagery worked at the start of the painting. From that point, I had to respond to whatever imagery was appearing on the canvas. Using my heuristic to do this additionally meant choosing to work intuitively (Edwards 1999: 44; personal journal 2016: 105). Thus, “*at no point did I know what was coming next with any clarity. I fumbled my way*” (personal journal 2016: 105).



Figure 7: early stages of *Outer Inwards*, (2016), ink, acrylic and oil on canvas, 100 cm x 150 cm.



Figure 8: early stages of *Outer Inwards*, (2016), ink, acrylic and oil on canvas, 100 cm x 150 cm.



Figure 9: Early stages of *Outer Inwards*, (2016), ink, acrylic and oil on canvas, 100 cm x 150 cm.

Reflexive evaluation of this removal of reference imagery, necessitated the adjustment of this method discussed above. I view myself as a visual artist who in this research uses artmaking as a means of interrogating my artmaking processes. That is, I *“think through the visual”* (Maharaj 2009: 3-4 of 11). How might I conduct such a visual enquiry yet not have a visual goal? The research heuristic discussed above allowed me to work in a visual medium and step into unpredictable visual terrain.

Maharaj (2009: 8 of 11) states that transformation takes place in the process of arriving in previously unknown terrain. Massumi (in Green 2015: 5 of 11) concurs that if you know where your research will lead then possibly you have discovered nothing: *“If you know where you will end up when you begin, nothing has happened in the meantime”*. Perhaps removing a goal by removing reference imagery necessitated moving into unknown terrain. This move generated significant change in how I was making art and the resulting artworks. Hence, I

assume this was a shift into unknown terrain. That is, removing reference imagery as mentioned, resulted in the transformations discussed below.



Figure 10: *Outer Inwards*, (2016), ink, acrylic and oil on canvas, 100 cm x 150 cm.

In my journal (personal journal 2016: 103-106) I recorded the process of making *Outer Inwards*. This process involved successive layers of glazing and scumbling, including the black scumble mentioned above. After laying down a black scumble:

I just stopped and looked, and suddenly it dawned on me that maybe all it needed was one single brush stroke more. Then I considered what kind of brush stroke and where. My habitual response ... would have been big fat. And that was right, but the dawning was in the scale... what would a smaller big fat mark do? It would have a completely different relationship with the surrounding space; it would exponentially expand [it]... as though the mark expanded the space. But now as I look, it feels as though the expanding space put the mark there ... the space made the mark, not the mark the space. (personal journal 2016: 103-104)

My habitual thinking said that the paint mark qualified the scale of space. The above reflection in my journal showed that it was the other way around; ubiquitous space rather influenced the size of the brushstroke. It seems this insight was generated by a process that began with removing reference imagery, at the start of the painting, and as a visual goal.

The above quote shows that in my artistic process the 'darkness' of the black scumble provided potential for change. This quote indicates 'in-the-dark' processes at work because it demonstrates insight emerging from the use of 'in-the-dark' methods. This shows a transformative process in operation over time. Both 'in-the-dark' elements – my 'in-the-dark' methods and the hidden process of understanding maturing in time – I consider necessary for greater depth of understanding in this research. As Trinh Minh-ha states, understanding appears when it has sufficiently matured (Trinh Minh-ha in Somerville 2007: 227). Additionally, this quote demonstrates space coming to the fore as an artmaking interest, a point discussed further in this chapter.

The series, *Patterns of Chaos* (2016), was started without reference imagery as well. These paintings were not begun as a series but were made in response to a period of concentrated academic writing. It was as though I sought in artmaking the disorientation of unknowing, as both an antidote to the ordered, reflexive thinking required for writing, and as a catalyst for further curious enquiry.

However, I found that starting and continuing without reference imagery no longer had the same destabilising effect. There seemed to be no clear response coming from the *Patterns of Chaos* paintings. However, this did mean that I looked more closely at what did occur when a response was triggered by the artwork.

It seemed that what such a response offered was a "*point of interest*" (Vasudevan 2011: 1158), or an intimation of the curious enquiry which might be set in motion. In a curious enquiry, artmaking action would follow the clues in an ongoing interaction between materials – including myself as one of the materials (personal journal 2017: 216,218). Inevitably in a curious enquiry I would reach a point where I did not know what to do next. 'I don't know' might then appear in my mind, or there would be an intuitive recognition of knowing that I

did not know (Zembylas 2005: 142). In the *Patterns of Chaos* process of enquiry, no response seemed to be coming from the paintings.

Repeated use of this 'in-the-dark' method had rendered it familiar and apparently stable. If working without reference imagery had initially triggered instability – and unexpected insights and changes in my artistic practice – what would be the effect of returning reference imagery to my artmaking process?

A return to imagery

Returning imagery to my artistic process needed to be done in a way that did not re-instate it as a visual goal. How might I refer to imagery, yet simultaneously move away from my previous and familiar usage? This conundrum resembled the paradox at the heart of my research, where unknowing is destabilising yet transformative. This central anomaly might indicate another way of using reference imagery.

In my personal journals I use compost as a metaphor, where 'solid' matter disintegrates and then in its new form (compost), fuels new growth. Morgan (2014: 2) contends that metaphor establishes a bridge between knowing and unknowing. She further claims that metaphor should encompass the essence of that which it represents (Morgan 2014: 27). The compost process is similar to my experience of unknowing in this study. They both encompass the dissolution of the known and familiar, in a dark, out of sight process, whence emerges the potential for new growth.

Over the preceding two years I had taken many photos of flood debris in my garden. This imagery represented the metaphor above, and the apparent chaos inherent in such processes. In my personal journal (2016) I refer to the visual evidence of these processes as patterns of chaos.

Love the ... patterns of chaos ... making me wonder ... Although I've deliberately moved back from either starting from or heading towards an image, these patterns of chaos make me wonder. Could it be a point of re-introducing not an image but a pattern [from the imagery]? (personal journal 2016: 138)

The flood debris became a visual metaphor for the “*obscured originative force*” (Morgan 2014: 1) of unknowing. I increasingly referred to the negative or in-between spaces of this imagery. When painting the series, I found these in-between spaces were “*the doorways to chaos amid the order of an image*” (personal journal 2016: 146). In other words, I intuitively recognised ubiquitous space as an opening to the influence of ‘spacious unknowing’. Rendering the dark in-between spaces with single brushstrokes of thick paint kept the reference imagery form becoming a visual goal. Additionally, responding to the visual spaces between – that is, immanent space – meant that the force of ‘spacious unknowing’ was driving the painting process. Referencing ubiquitous space had become embedded in the above painting process. Perhaps in this lay the importance of once again using imagery in my artmaking process.



Figure 11: early stages of *Patterns of Chaos 5*, (2016), acrylic and oil on cardboard, 24 cm x 77 cm.



Figure 12: *Patterns of Chaos 5*, (2016), acrylic and oil on cardboard, 24 cm x 77 cm.



Figure 13: early stages of Patterns of Chaos 4, (2016), acrylic and oil on cardboard, 21 cm x 30 cm.



Figure 14: Patterns of Chaos 4, (2016), acrylic and oil on cardboard, 21 cm x 30 cm.



Figure 15: early stages of Patterns of Chaos 3, (2016), acrylic and oil on cardboard, 21 cm x 30 cm.



Figure 16: *Patterns of Chaos 3*, (2016), acrylic and oil on cardboard, 21 cm x 30 cm.

The spaciousness of matter

Prior to *Patterns of Chaos* I began an exploration of dry point etching. The *Posting from the Heap 1-5* (2016) series of etchings was begun three months before *Patterns of Chaos*. I used dry point etching and began without reference imagery.

At that time two influential elements emerged in my visual research journal (2015-2017). Firstly, the element of line was becoming “*more dominant, wilder, less controlled*” (personal journal 2016: 97; visual research journal 2015-2017). The use of translucency and light to layer line was the second element (personal journal 2016: 97; visual research journal 2015-2017). From this emerged the possibility of layering prints in a lightbox. This possibility developed into the lightbox installation *Posting from the Heap* (2017). The prints titled *Posting from the Heap 1-5* refer to the individual prints not the final installation. Most of these prints I have not used in the installation, although they were necessary to its development.

I returned to *Posting from the Heap 1* after reintroducing reference imagery in the *Patterns of Chaos* paintings. As with *Patterns of Chaos* I reworked this first dry point etching using compost heap imagery to further interrogate the concept of ‘in-the-dark’ processes. The ensuing process became a curious enquiry into how compost might operate as an enlightening metaphor in my artmaking process.



Figure 17: *Posting from the Heap 1*, (2016), dry point etching on Fabriano,

Traditionally in printmaking I understood that the uniform edge of the plate is an important aspect of the print edition. I wondered (Somerville 2007; 2008) about breaking through the edges of my etching plates (personal journal 2016: 168). My curious enquiry led me to cut my polycarbonate plate into an irregular shape. In one place this curiosity led to sanding away the edge so the boundary between the printed etching marks and the paper seemed as insubstantial (personal journal 2016: 173) as the solidity of matter.

The *process* to which I submitted my plate seemed to be more important than the ensuing prints (personal journal 2016: 169). This process of disrupting the edges of my plates was significant because it altered how the structure of the lightbox developed. The theoretical sources that influenced the lightbox form were Rutherford's 'open' atomic structure (Eddington 1948: 2; Niaz 1998: 534-537), metaphoric (Morgan 2014: 27,142) imagery of the compost heap and 'spacious unknowing'.

The body of the lightbox I made from chicken wire (personal journal 2016: 184). Its open structure echoed both the 'openness' of atomic structures and the ubiquitous space that remains unchanged by the composting process. As mentioned above I considered compost as a visual metaphor for 'spacious unknowing'. I wanted my lightbox to provide the viewer with a possible experience of 'spacious unknowing'.

In presenting my work to a viewer I consider that Liza Grobler's approach to showing her work confirmed my intention regarding the lightbox installation. I wanted an immersive experience where the viewer could step into an environment of unknowing. Lucinda Jolly's review of Grobler's show *If You Go Down to the Woods Today* (<https://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/arts-portal/visual-arts/experiential-mixed-media-in-the-woods-1847771>) describes Grobler's intention when exhibiting. Grobler wants to provide the viewer with an experience of her artmaking rather than an explanation (Jolly 2015). This was close to my intention with the installation pieces. I wanted to offer the viewer a possible experience of the disorientation and confusion experienced while making art in 'spacious unknowing'.

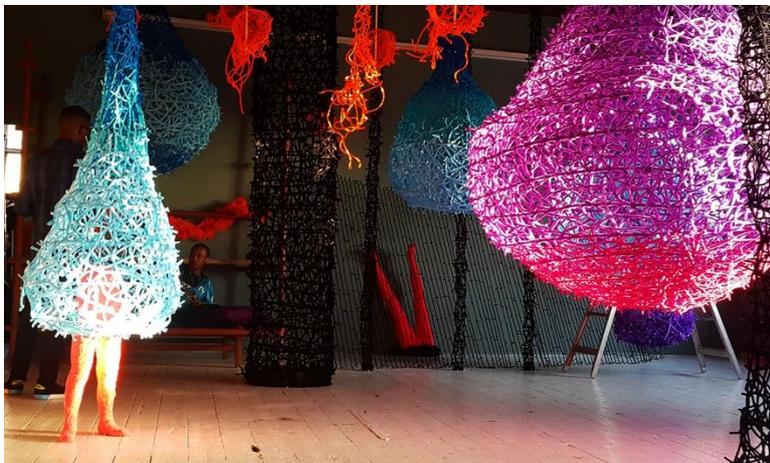


Figure 18: Liza Grobler, *Barbed Wire Paradise*, (2016), installation, dimensions unknown.

'In-the-dark' processes and using light to engage 'dark'

Offering an opportunity to step into a potential experience of 'spacious unknowing' meant I had to reconsider whether the form of the lightbox should be a box. I felt I should rather make the lightbox into an amorphous wrap-around form. However, rigid glass or plastic could then not be used for the translucent lightbox surface. Other aspects of my artmaking research – such as trying to remove paint marks and glazes from their canvas/board substratum – shaped my thinking here.

Another developmental thread which I trace below, is transferring paint marks from canvas to space. I mention this here because in trying to find ways of placing paint marks and possibly

glazes in space, I had experimented with wood glue. I remembered these wood glue experiments when pondering the lightbox structure. I mixed ink or acrylic with wood glue and layered it to make a wood glue sheet of varying colours. When set, the glue/paint sheet could be peeled off the acetate it had dried on.



Figure 19: drying layers of wood glue mixed with acrylic, (2016).

In South Africa, Penny Siopis has pioneered the use of ink and wood glue as a painting medium. In this discussion of white wood glue as a medium, I refer to Siopis' *Transfigure I* (2017) below, hanging in the new Zeitz MOCAA Gallery, Cape Town. The way in which Siopis uses the translucency of wood glue as an element in her recent work is relevant here.



Figure 20: Penny Siopis, *Transfigure I*, (2017), glue and ink on canvas, dimensions variable.

The translucency of this medium appears to represent a stance of openness for Siopis. She opens herself to the influence of her materials (<https://zeitzmocaa.museum/artists/penny-siopis/>), in my view echoing Carter's material thinking (Barrett & Bolt 2007: 19-20,30). This openness, which allows her materials to partly guide her artmaking, Siopis refers to as the "*poetics of vulnerability*" (<https://zeitzmocaa.museum/artists/penny-siopis/>). In her "*poetics of vulnerability*" (<https://zeitzmocaa.museum/artists/penny-siopis/>) I found a resemblance to the instability that for me triggers 'in-the-dark' processes.

Siopis additionally uses the glue's transparency to open the process of her artmaking to the viewer (<https://zeitzmocaa.museum/artists/penny-siopis/>). This visibility of process renders her open or vulnerable to the viewer, yet similarly invites the viewer to engage deeply with the work. Likewise, I intend my use of the medium's translucency to leave the viewer vulnerable to an experience of instability and unknowing.

Like Siopis, I used my experiential knowledge of wood glue as a medium. In considering the elements required by a lightbox's screen, I referred to the following properties of the glue. I regarded its most relevant characteristics as the way in which it flows when wet, the way it dries and peels off plastic in a single sheet, and its ensuing receptiveness of screen-printed imagery. This, together with the translucency and flexibility of dried wood glue, indicated it as a potential material for the lightbox surface (personal journal 2017: 201).

This characteristic translucency of the dried glue allowed backlit imagery to be visible. I had screen-printed non-figurative imagery onto sheets of dried wood glue. The instability of the glue – wet wood glue dissolves dry wood glue (personal journal 2017: 201) – suggested further possibilities for both screen and imagery. I used this inherent instability to fuse the screen-printed layers of glue into a composite image. The imagery was thus embedded in the screen itself. Like Siopis, translucency of medium plays a crucial role in my artistic process. However, clearly my response to the medium differs from that of Siopis. The glue's translucent property meant it could be used as the lightbox screen, with the imagery embedded in the wood glue.

This way of using wood glue emerged from ‘in-the-dark’ processes (personal journal 2017: 201). Layering the translucent medium in this way made the clarity of the imagery variable across the surface of the screen. In making imagery that was partly out of focus, I intended to involve the viewer in an attempt to focus on that which is inherently indefinable. Being able to see but not focus on all the lightbox imagery might leave the viewer open or vulnerable to some kind of ‘in-the-dark’ processes. I hope that destabilising the viewer’s usual ability to focus might proffer a spatial experience of unknowing.

When initially considering wood glue, I was concerned about keeping the wood glue surface smooth and flat. However, I recognised that referring to the smooth surface of a ‘traditional’ lightbox was a habitual way of thinking. Maybe the kind of layering I pondered above would give an irregular surface (personal journal 2017: 252) that might be better suited to experiencing unknowing.

I consider it ironic that in this work, light is needed to illuminate what I hope might provide an experience of the ‘darkness’ of unknowing. The above elements that influenced *Posting from the Heap* came together in unexpected ways. The resulting installation surprised me, both in the solutions that emerged *en route*, and in its final form. The unpredictable process of making this work evidences both ‘in-the-dark’ processes and transformational passage (Maharaj 2009: 8 of 11).

According to Koulla Xinisteris (2017) Lace is interested in the ‘darkness’ inherent to life. She describes Lace’s artmaking as an attempt to “*encompass and ameliorate the dark*” (http://www.everard-read-capetown.co.za/exhibition/81/press_release/). I could loosely ascribe my research interests to the above ‘darkness’ as well. In this I find a similarity between the intangibility of Lace’s interests and my own. I speculate however, that our attitude to such ‘darkness’ differs somewhat.

Lace, as implied in the quote above, seems to find something threatening about ‘darkness’ that for her could be incorporated into her artmaking thus improving her experience of it. My research hinges on unknowing being ubiquitous, and its intrinsic ‘darkness’ being apparently generative. As such I consider my view of ‘darkness’ to differ from Lace’s. I conjecture that

she attempts to situate 'darkness' within her artmaking practice. Whereas I have attempted to situate my artmaking practice for this research within the darkness of 'spacious unknowing'.

According to art critic Mary Corrigan, Lace pursues the invisible in her work. However, says Corrigan, in doing so the result – the visible artwork – becomes a replacement for the invisible (<http://corrigan.blogspot.co.za/2013/09/pinning-down-intangible-bronwyn-lace.html>). This led me to ask whether the lightbox has become a visual replacement for unknowing in this research?

The lightbox installation is not an attempt to make unknowing visible. Yet perhaps I cannot prevent this from happening. Unknowing cannot be fully described verbally or visually so the lightbox offered an immersive experience of 'spacious unknowing'. The installation used light to engage the 'darkness' of unknowing.

The matter of space

Below I examine my artmaking investigation into removing brush marks from canvas and re-situating them in space. This curious enquiry is additionally a further interrogation of the research questions. In this section I examine the methods and theoretical sources I drew on to solve the problem of how to suspend paint marks in space.

This line of enquiry began with painting. In the paintings below, the intelligence of paint marks quickly became apparent. This recognition of the intelligence implicit in artmaking materials was due to material thinking (Barrett & Bolt 2007: 19-20,30). Considering this intelligence of paint in *Wierdling 4* (2015) (personal journal 2015: 26), *Topple* (2015) (personal journal 2015: 38) and *Landescape* (2016) (personal journal 2015: 58) below, led to an exploration of how to place paint marks in space.



Figure 21: *Wierdling 4*, (2015), ink, acrylic and oil on board, 50 cm x 53 cm.

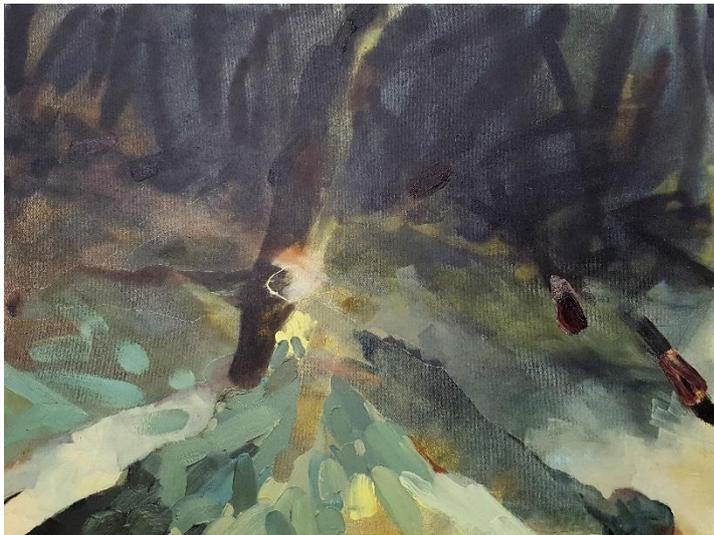


Figure 22: *Topple*, (2015), acrylic, pen and oil on canvas, 76 cm x 102 cm.

The spaciousness of Rutherford's atomic model (Eddington 1948: 2; Niaz 1998: 534-537) implies that on my canvas there is space between canvas and paint. The space is so minute it cannot be seen with the naked eye. Perhaps by using installation to suspend my paint marks *"the installation is an exaggeration, or a making visible of the spaces between or ubiquitous space"* (personal journal 2017: 237). I felt that in this way exaggeration might prove to be an

invaluable method. Thus started a curious enquiry into making paint marks. I had no idea how I would make them, how I would suspend them, or if the idea would work.



Figure 23: detail of Landscape, (2016), oil on canvas.

The first attempts with clear resin and acrylic paint were too pretty to work as paint marks (personal journal 2015: 65). The initial attempts at suspending them in space resulted in mobile-like constructions that looked merely decorative (personal journal 2015: 92). They did not in any way invoke the feelings of confusion or uncertainty that I experience when destabilised by 'spacious unknowing'. In the following attempts I built up paint marks with layers of acrylic paint. I did not consider these as successful either because they sagged when suspended. My ongoing experimental exploration with these paint marks is recorded throughout my personal journals (2015; 2016; 2017).



Figure 24: resin paint marks suspended in a mobile-like construction. Whence? Where to? 1-4 (2015) are visible in the background. This was taken in my CVA studio space.

The wordless intuitive way I explored materials in my visual research journal (2015-2017) helped find a solution for my paint mark dilemma. I needed to find a way of making paint marks that were light yet would not flex when suspended. These paint marks additionally were not intended to be attractive. Rather, I intended them to be evocative of their source – ‘spacious unknowing’.

The way the glue behaved when used in a collage (visual research journal 2015-2017) led me to experiment with mixing paint and glue (personal journal 2016; 2017). Perhaps the light weight of dried glue could be useful in making paint marks. A mixture of wood glue and powder paint gave paint marks that were light enough to hold their shape when suspended. These paint marks I used in the *Off the Edge* installation.



Figure 25: Wood glue and tempera paint marks suspended in my CVA studio.

Off the Edge began with the black drawings discussed below. I have titled the series *Off the Edge* as a reference to the disorientation I was feeling in my research at the time (personal journal 2017: 209,217). My supervisor suggested that I attempt to draw this feeling of what was probably unknowing.

Can't describe the feeling of being engulfed in spacious unknowing – the great doubt and uncertainty that are symptomatic of it. Just scribbled and darkened, and scribbled and darkened ... Sometimes fast and wild, sometimes slower, more rhythmically. Just wanted to cover all the light on the page. More and more ... until the darkness gathering on the paper became revealing. It is impossible to completely obliterate the light (of the paper, my situation) but I had to stay put in the darkness of spacious unknowing to realise that. Then suddenly I am aware that it is not only darkness and obliteration, but a begetting of something else. (personal journal 2017: 217)

I covered six pages of my journal in this way. It seemed that being willing to continue drawing while experiencing intense self-doubt and uncertainty meant I was open and could stay open to 'spacious unknowing'. My second research question is: How might I be open and remain open to spacious unknowing?

This insight was seminal and changed how I made art, and how I will continue to make art. The role of PLR was significant here. It allowed me to develop ‘in-the-dark’ artmaking methods. It enabled embedding of the ‘voice’ of my materials (Bolt in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 30) and ubiquitous space as vital elements in my creative process.



Figure 26: black drawing in personal journal 2017: 214.

On reflection I realised that a shift had taken place in my approach to artmaking. I recognised that although present, the uncertainty and doubt expressed above no longer hindered the artmaking action. Making *Off the Edge* confirmed that unknowing, in the guise of instability/uncertainty/disorientation, is a strong formative force in my artistic process (personal journal 2017: 222). The title *Off the Edge* simultaneously refers to instability and to Morgan’s (2014: 111) admonition to move away from what one has come to know.

In pursuing the enquiry begun with the black drawings, I was actively engaged in space while making the 150 cm x 600 cm black drawing below. The size of the paper meant I was constantly adjusting my position in space. This active engagement in and with the space – as discussed in Chapter Two – reinforced the understanding of space as immanent. At this point the energy of the mark-making converged with my spatial understanding. I recognised that the marks of the drawing and the paint marks belonged together (personal journal 2017: 222). By poising the viewer in the same space as the drawing and the paint marks – where I had

been poised in making *Off the Edge* – an experience (Jolly 2015) of ‘spacious unknowing’ is offered.



Figure 27: drawing for *Off the Edge* in my CVA studio.

I interpreted Morgan’s (2014: 2) removal of a predetermined goal as not having a visual goal to work towards. Thus, I needed to be especially careful not to plan how the artwork would look. As I worked I referred to a feeling of disorientation or uncertainty rather than to any visual interpretation of these feelings (personal journal 2017: 245).

At no point when making the black drawings did I feel sure of the next artmaking step. I surmise that because of this unknowing propelled the drawing action. Additionally, drawing at speed, an ‘in-the-dark’ method, overcame the inertia of not knowing the way ahead.

As I had already found in response to the second research question, some methods became less effective with repeated use. Removing discursive reasoning or planning – as with renouncing reference imagery – worked up to a point. With installation as an artmaking method I could no longer discard planning altogether because I had to consider how I would put *Off the Edge* together and the tools I would need to do so.

However, I did attempt to plan how I would construct *Off the Edge* without setting a visual goal. I needed to plan the installation because of the difficulty I had experienced when previously attempting to suspend paint marks in space. At this point it was necessary to refer to how other artists had tackled similar problems. The problems I faced in planning the assembly of *Off the Edge* were: how to suspend the paint marks in space; and how to provide an experience of 'spacious unknowing'.



Figure 28: Detail of *Off the Edge* in the KZNSA Gallery, 2017.

In some of her installations Luce uses fishing tensioned fishing line to place her objects in space, for example, below in her *God's Finger* (2012). In this piece it seems to me that space becomes a deliberate element in her work. Because her installation objects are held still by the tensioned fishing wire one is equally aware of the coloured glass shards as of the space between the shards. With my initial mobile-like attempts the movement of the paint marks distracted from the element of space (personal journal 2016: 190). Luce's tensioned hanging could provide a way of suspending my paint marks motionless in space thus emphasising their poise in space.

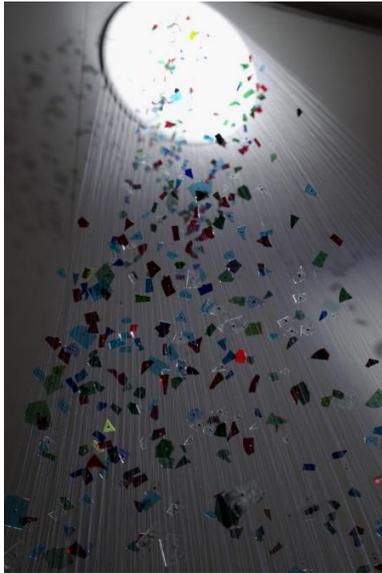


Figure 29: Bronwyn Lace, *God's Finger*, (2012), fishing line and glass shards, dimensions unknown.

In many of her installation pieces Lace tensions her fishing line between Perspex plates (<http://corrigan.blogspot.co.za/2013/09/pinning-down-intangible-bronwyn-lace.html>). In Chapter One I referred to the use of 3-dimensional models (Gray & Malins 2004: 112) as an artmaking research method. I used tensioned fishing line in a small-scale test installation of the paint marks. I found that although transparent the hard-edged appearance of the Perspex plate reminded me of the boundaries and therefore the illusory 'solidity' of matter (Eddington 1948: xvi; Tickner: 380).

In this context it was useful to refer to Parker's interest in the illusion of 'solidity'. Tickner (2003: 380) notes that Parker is "*fascinated by the provisional nature of matter*". Cornelia Parker, a British installation artist, uses tensioned fishing line to situate her objects in space. Below, Parker, like Lace, uses found objects. In *Cold Dark Matter* (1991) Parker had orchestrated the blowing up of a garden shed and its contents. She had selected the objects to be placed in the shed before the explosion. She then suspended the resulting debris in the installation below. She thus captured a moment (Tickner 2003: 370) in the explosion.



Figure 30: Cornelia Parker, *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View*, (1991), installation, dimensions variable.

Parker's reconstructed explosion additionally demonstrates her interpretation of the "provisional nature of matter" (Tickner 2003: 380). My interpretation, like Parker's, needed a strong visual element of space to emphasise the actual spaciousness of solid matter. Chicken wire to me seemed to feel closer to the spacious atomic structure discovered by Rutherford (Eddington 1948: 2; Niaz 1998: 534-537). This is because the spaces between the wire strands are visually as noticeable as the wire. Thus, I tensioned the fishing line between chicken wire constructions. Keeping track of my artmaking experiments and my thinking helped me to reach the above understanding of my materials (personal journal 2016: 190-192).

Parker's interests like mine, include space. On the Tate Gallery website (<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/parker-cold-dark-matter-an-exploded-view-t06949/story-cold-dark-matter>) Parker states: "I've never made a solid sculpture; I am more interested in the space with and around the mass, in atmosphere". However, unlike *Cold Dark Matter*, *Off the Edge* does not represent any kind of object in the way that Parker's above work presents an exploding garden shed. Rather my installation I hope offers an experience of 'spacious unknowing'. Above I referred to Grobler's similar intention. As stated, she

exhibits her immersive installations to offer an experience not an explanation of her work (Jolly 2015).

Like Parker, I view my artmaking process as an enquiry. Additionally, this is corroborated by Massumi's (in Green 2015: 5 of 11) view that discovery in research means ending up in unexpected places. In this regard Parker states:

I want the work to tell me things, to surprise me, so that the work is a kind of waste product from a process, an inquiry you started when you didn't know the answers at all. Later, in retrospect, you can talk eloquently about it but when you're in the middle of it you can't. (Parker in Tickner 2003: 370)

This quote additionally notes the importance of time in gaining insight into one's own artistic process. One of the insights that this research process has yielded for me is the importance of time in PLR. To even partly understand one's own artmaking process and its relation to theory, it seems that a passage of time is necessary. That is, a time lapse between the artmaking and any attempt at understanding it might allow insights to mature (Trinh Minh-ha in Somerville 2007: 227; Parker in Tickner 2003: 370).

The time lapse between making the different elements of *Off the Edge* and assembling the installation was thus an important part of the research process. From assembling *Off the Edge*, I more clearly understood the fluid nature and 'on-the-spot' intelligence of energy density. Energy density when making the installation elements was different to energy density when assembling both the installation pieces. My experience of it changed again when I engaged with the installations as a viewer.

Useful feedback was gained from colleagues engaging with *Off the Edge*. Their experience of the work was disorientating and drew attention to the space in which they were situated. Being immersed in the work seemed to trigger for them an experience of understanding that they did not fully understand (Zembylas 2005: 144) what the work was about. *Off the Edge* seemed to offer some kind of experience of 'spacious unknowing'.

In assembling *Off the Edge*, I was again very aware of my location in space. By operating as an energy density component, it was possible to assemble the installation without knowing beforehand how I wanted it to look. It was seemingly not necessary to instil meaning into *Off the Edge*. Meaning seemed to emerge from the viewers experience of the work. Perhaps meaning is produced in part by the energy density of viewing an artwork.

Energy density as an artmaking intelligence

In Chapter One I referred to 'in-the-dark' methods that allowed access to unknowing's generative potential (Morgan 2014: 1). In this section I indicate how 'in-the-dark' methods appeared to trigger further 'in-the-dark' processes. These seem to occur out of sight. I have learnt to recognise 'in-the-dark' processes from the insights that I assume emerge from them. The notion of energy density was one such emergent understanding.

I began to view my artmaking in the context of Rutherford's atomic model (Eddington 1948 :2; Niaz 1998: 534-537), material thinking (Barrett & Bolt 2007: 19-20,30); Hannula's "*democracy of experience*" (Hannula 2009: 4-5) and Clark and Chalmers extended mind theory (1998). These sources aided the recognition that I am not the only intelligence guiding my artmaking. My artmaking action seems to arise from a communal and situated intelligence (personal journal 2017: 251).

This artmaking intelligence appears to override perceived physical boundaries between objects and/or people. Eddington (1948: xvi,2) understood from Rutherford's atomic model that the appearance of solid matter is an illusion. The theory of extended mind claims that some cognition processes¹² occur across perceived boundaries of "*skin and skull*" (Clark & Chalmers 1998: 7). I assume that similarly, intelligences can collaborate across perceived boundaries of solid matter.

¹² As mentioned in Chapter One this is the only context where the word cognition appears, so I do not attempt to discuss it at length in this research.

Each contributing intelligence in an energy density is of equal importance. Hannula's (2009: 4-5) "*democracy of experience*" confirms this. These intelligences meet in an unfolding interaction (Carter in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 21). In this research they seem to unite into a single artmaking intelligence (personal journal 2017: 251). This artmaking intelligence I surmise comes into being when a "*point of interest*" (Vasudevan 2011: 1158) is recognised and followed. This appears to occur in a particular time and place: a place which in this context is geared for artmaking activity; and a time when a certain interest/problem is presented to the materials/intelligences at hand (personal journal 2017: 251).

During this research my understanding of energy density has shifted as insights generated by PLR methods seem to do (Bolt in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 31; Sullivan 2010: 102). When I first tried to articulate energy density I understood it as an unfolding interaction (Carter in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 21) where I was one of an array of materials responding to the intelligences of the other materials. Curious enquiry is the way in which energy density engages to follow the interest. Now I speculate that energy density transforms a range of intelligences into a single indivisible artmaking intelligence. Could artmaking intelligence and energy density be interchangeable terms?

The interest that engages curious enquiry I suggest is 'interesting' because how an artmaking intelligence responds cannot be known in advance. This interest could come in the guise of a problem that needs to be investigated. For example, the problem of removing paint marks from canvas and suspending them in installation as discussed above.

It seems evident that energy density is an understanding generated from the PLR imbrications of practice/theory and the use of the other PLR methods mentioned above. This insight I consider provides evidence of 'in-the-dark' processes. Additionally, it indicates transformation in that it demonstrates a marked change (*A Dictionary of Psychology* 2001) of understanding over this research period. The energy density insight constitutes a "*new ... way[s] of knowing*" (Maharaj 2009: 8 of 11) resulting in this previously unthought of viewpoint.

Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter demonstrates a marked change in my artmaking practice over this research period. The evidence of transformation is additionally apparent in the marked change in the kind of artworks seen at the beginning and at the end of this project. The emergence of the concept of energy density shows a radical change in my understanding of how I am situated as artist and/or researcher within an artmaking context.

Having begun using reference imagery as a visual goal, and preparatory drawings to aid the process, this research meant discarding these methods. In other words, my ways of accessing unknowing needed to be fluid and open to change. My heuristic provides me with a way of making art when I have no idea what the impending action will be. Uncertainty, instability *et cetera* are sought out as ways of accessing unknowing. I am aware of 'in-the-dark' processes, allowing time for these to operate in my artmaking practice. My role as the perceived wielder of artmaking materials I have yielded to the artmaking intelligence of an energy density.

This dissertation, in combination with my personal journals (2015; 2016 2017), visual research journal (2015-2017) and my body of artwork, are presented as the interrogation of the research questions.

Chapter Four

Introduction

In this final chapter I evaluate my use of methodology to investigate the research questions. I reflect on the limitations of the research and the challenges presented by the project. I consider the outcomes yielded by my investigation of the research questions.

Application of methodology

PLR was an unfamiliar methodology when I began this research. My understanding of it has grown from applying relevant aspects of PLR to my artmaking practice. My overall understanding of PLR is that it centres on a specific integration of practice and theory. Elements of artmaking practice that need investigation indicate the appropriate theory. Aspects of this theory are then deliberately applied to artmaking processes.

In my research the integration of practice and theory began with verbally articulating both the difficulties I experienced when making art, and the areas of theoretical interest reflected in my practice. This double articulation drawn from practice and theory enabled me to find my research questions and further theory relevant to investigating them. I interpreted this theory into artmaking methods which I then applied and tested in my practice. The ensuing changes in my artmaking practice indicated a return to theory. Further theoretical research enabled me to further refine my investigative artmaking processes. It seems to be an ongoing integration of practice and theory that empowers the kind of knowledge production specific to artmaking research.

PLR journaling (Gray & Malins 2004: 113-114) was vital in reflecting on how my inner prompt was paralysing my artmaking (personal journal 2015: 2). "*Postmodern emergence*" (Somerville 2007; 2008) confirmed that 'I don't know' could provide a view very different from my habitual way of thinking. Somerville claims that espousing markedly different approaches

while conducting research (Somerville 2008: 209) is a viable research stance. This “*postmodern emergence*” (Somerville 2007; 2008) method of “*becoming-other-to-one’s-self*” (Somerville 2008: 209) I consider completely altered my understanding of ‘I don’t know’.

Through PLR journaling I could recognise that the effect my inner voice had on my artmaking was due to my inhibiting response to it, not due to ‘I don’t know’ itself. This insight empowered me to think and journal reflexively about this inner prompt. Perhaps I could choose my response to it. The uncertainty I felt regarding ‘I don’t know’ might present possibilities other than my previously inhibiting experience. These possibilities presented new areas of exploration or new approaches and processes of making art which yielded new kinds of artwork.

At the start of this study, when making the *Whence/Where to?* series, I very unexpectedly discovered that the black scumbling discussed in Chapter Three transformed these paintings instead of obliterating them (personal journal 2015: 22). Applying PLR reflective and reflexive journaling, I questioned whether the seeming ‘darkness’ of ‘I don’t know’ could hold a similar transformational potential as the black scumbling.

This PLR process appeared to facilitate the above insight into perceived ‘darkness’ and provide the methods to focus the research (Gray & Malins 2004: 72; Sullivan 2010: 111). PLR journaling (Gray & Malins 2004: 113-114) moreover allowed me to find other words for ‘I don’t know’, for example, unknowing. I could then appropriately research ‘darkness’ and unknowing. The artmaking giving a direction for the theoretical research is a core aspect of PLR (Gray & Malins 2004: 90).

This relationship between artmaking practice and theory (Gray & Malins 2004: 31; Sullivan 2010: 102) generated more than the above theoretical direction. I needed to weave the theory I found on unknowing into my artmaking. I did this by developing ‘in-the-dark’ artmaking methods from the theoretical sources. This ongoing interweaving of theory and practice (Gray & Malins 2004: 169; Sullivan 2010: 105) I understand to be at the heart of PLR. It seems to be this interlacing process that provides the kind of insights peculiar to artmaking research (Bolt in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 31; Sullivan 2010: 102). PLR additionally provides the

methods to rigorously record and document this core research process (Barrett & Bolt 2007; Gray & Malins 2004; Sullivan 2010).

These are the 'in-the-dark' methods used to explore the research questions in my artmaking practice. The first is removing reference imagery (ed. Gallacher 1997: 1 of 9; ed. Hodgson 1944: xxxv; Zembylas 2005: 143), which largely encompasses removing planning (ed. Gallacher 1997: 5 of 9; ed. Hodgson 1944: xli; Zembylas 2005: 143). Reintroducing reference imagery as an 'in-the-dark' method follows from the first method. This second method meant referring to ubiquitous space as an 'in-the-dark' artmaking method. Renouncing separate identity (ed. Hodgson 1944: xli) is an 'in-the-dark' method whence grew the concept of energy density. Moving away from understanding (Morgan 2014: 111), speed of artmaking action, and exaggeration of artmaking action are other 'in-the-dark' methods.

Using these 'in-the-dark' methods to make art seemed to cultivate the instability or uncertainty concomitant to unknowing. However, after using them for a while they appeared to become less effective in this way. This necessitated a return to theory. I found confirmation that explorative artmaking methods were likely to be temporary and would probably need to be reforged (Maharaj 2009: 2 of 11). Furthermore, accessing unknowing seemed to require moving away from understanding (Morgan 2014: 111). Thus, to keep open to the influence of unknowing, I needed to discard or evolve artmaking methods as I became used to them.

Above I have indicated the kind of practice/theory interlacing that this research occasioned. The research questions emerged in a rudimentary form from my artmaking practice. It was this PLR practice/theory relationship that enabled me to them (Gray & Malins 2004: 104).

Another important practice/theory relationship in my research emerged from action. My inability to freely make art in the face of 'I don't know' changed as mentioned above. This transformation was facilitated by theory. Theory states that action is transformative (Bohr 1958: 18; Eddington 1948: 186), and that I might move away from understanding (Morgan 2014: 111). In this context moving away from understanding meant I had no visual goal to work towards (personal journal 2016: 102). In conjunction the above theories allowed me to clearly express and then apply my artmaking heuristic.

My act/wait for response/act heuristic incorporated aspects of theory (Gray & Malins 2004: 169; Sullivan 2010: 105). In other words, to act I did not need to know in advance what the action would be or where it would lead. There was no need for a predetermined goal (Morgan 2014: 2). As mentioned in Chapter One, my heuristic was developed to bypass logical thought processes, thus triggering the kind of artmaking responses that could not be arrived at through thinking procedures (personal journal 2015: 2,9). Because of this I surmise it remained an effective way of implementing 'in-the-dark' methods. In this way theory was an intrinsic aspect of my artmaking research.

Without action, enabled by my heuristic, my artmaking and research could not have unfolded. This seems to be so obvious that at first, I hesitated to say it. However, the reflexive journaling process led me to understand that it was my approach to action that needed examining. As described in Chapter Two, I had previously assumed that action must be preceded by knowledge of the action. 'I don't know' made me feel that I lacked this knowledge. The PLR practice/theory relationship allowed me – through developing and using my heuristic – to recognise this as a false assumption. This research has shown that for me knowledge of the action does not have to precede the action. Maybe action, not knowledge is an especially appropriate prerequisite for disrupting my artmaking process to enable the marked change discussed in Chapter Three. Action thus empowered this investigation into the effects of unknowing on my artmaking practice.

As stated by Eddington (1948: 186) and Bohr (1958: 18), action is transformative. In this regard I consider that spacious atomic structure (Eddington 1948:2; Niaz 1998: 534-537) allows the transformative effects of action to move freely through what is normally perceived as solid matter. In other words, there is nothing in physical atomic structure to impede transformation. This implies that space is ubiquitous. Morgan (2014: ii) states that unknowing is ubiquitous as well. In Chapter One the term 'spacious unknowing' is coined to emphasize that no physical impediments stand in the way of the transformative potential of unknowing.

PLR practice/theory relationship additionally promoted a marked change in the kind of artworks I made in this research. Material thinking (Barrett & Bolt 2007: 19-20,30) meant I was aware of the intelligence of my materials. I noted that the movement of brush marks for

example, in *Topple* and *Landescape*, seemed to be heading off the canvas and into space. This, together with immanent 'spacious unknowing' led to a process of developing paint marks (personal journals 2015; 2016; 2017) that could be suspended in space. The culmination of this process was the installation pieces *Off the Edge* and *Posting from the Heap*. Because of the proximity of practice and theory in PLR, 'spacious unknowing' additionally influenced my choice of my materials and my process of making these installations. This is fully discussed in Chapters Two and Three.

The notion of energy density arose from reflexively considering how I might apply insights gained from theoretical sources to my artistic practice. This has been discussed in Chapters One and Three. The parameters of this study meant that I could not conduct an in-depth investigation of energy density, that is, artmaking intelligence. However, I will interrogate this in future research. This is in line with PLR, which is intended to generate further research. This emergent insight additionally demonstrates that my research vigorously interweaves practice and theory, and that therein largely lies the knowledge generative nature of PLR.

In Chapter One I interpret Somerville's (2007; 2008) wondering as curious enquiry. In this research my artmaking became a curious enquiry. For example, as mentioned previously I experimented with screen-printing onto sheets of dried wood glue for making the translucent face of the lightbox installation. I had no idea if this was possible. The experimentation process was a curious enquiry into if and how this might work. I speculate that my heuristic enabled my artmaking to become a curious enquiry. Using the heuristic enabled my artmaking to move away from understanding rather than towards a known destination (Morgan 2014: 2,111). In line with Maharaj (2009: 8 of 11), I consider that this heuristic provided repeated transformational passage or "*transformative crossover*" in my artmaking process.

My heuristic, as a combination of practice and the above transformative theory, I suggest constituted an effective means of investigating the research questions. Likewise, 'in-the-dark' methods, developed from theory, provided an additional way of interrogating my research questions. In this way I consider that the PLR practice/theory interweaving generated transformation generally throughout this project.

PLR reflective and reflexive journaling together with photographic documentation constituted rigorous methods of keeping track of the research. In writing this dissertation, my journals (personal journal 2015; 2016; 2017) proved to be an essential reference.

My visual research journal (2015-2017) additionally proved invaluable as an arena for applying material thinking (Barrett & Bolt 2007: 19-20,30) to artmaking practice. Experimenting freely with materials allowed me to discover the nature of these materials and how we responded to one another when making art. Working in my visual research journal (2015-2017) additionally honed my heuristic. Unexpectedly, this journal (2015-2017) provided the solution to making paint marks for my installation pieces.

As evident above, words were necessary and useful in articulating my artmaking difficulties and my research heuristic. However, another important aspect of PLR is the complementary aspect of the body of artwork and the written dissertation. My research project comprises a body of artwork and an accompanying dissertation that investigates the making of this artwork. It does this through the particular focus of the research questions. The written element cannot stand in place of the artwork. Neither is it simply an explanation of the artwork. Likewise, the artwork was not made merely to explain the theory. These two aspects together are intended to offer a full expression and experience of the research project (Bolt in Barrett & Bolt 2007: 31).

Overall in this project I found that PLR and "*postmodern emergence*" (Somerville 2007; 2008) did more than provide methods for this investigation. I conjecture that both methodologies allowed transformation in this research.

Challenges in this research

I found the element of time to be intrinsic to PLR in a particular way. A core aspect of PLR is that one's research questions issue directly from one's artmaking (Gray & Malins 2004: 16,103; Sullivan 2010: 119). This takes time. I had to make art until my questions appeared in

an initially rudimentary form. Then I had to keep making art, finding relevant research – in the form of literature, theory and artworks – and applying it to my artmaking (Gray & Malins 2004: 169; Sullivan 2010: 105). This was done by spending time developing artmaking methods from these sources.

These ‘in-the-dark’ methods seemed to bring about insight or understanding either in their particular context or generally in this research. This understanding seemed to emerge sometimes immediately but usually after a period of time. Additionally, this kind of insight could not be rushed in any way (Trinh Minh-ha in Somerville 2007: 227). This process refined my research questions as well as my artmaking practice. This took further time. Perhaps the time limit set by universities for practice-led research (PLR) should be open-ended enough to accommodate the time factor inherent to this methodology.

Sometimes I experienced the kind of academic language and punctuation required for writing the dissertation as a limitation. I found that having to couch my intuitive insights in verbal language was a very useful aspect of the research process. For example, as described, articulating my heuristic allowed me to understand it and apply it in my artmaking. However, I felt that in this research there were moments where the depth of certain experiences drove transformation yet could not be amply described in academic language. Such moments then remain unsaid in this paper. Bohr pondered on the radical implications to classical physics of Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle. He considered that the ensuing quantum theories should still be expressed in the everyday language of classical physics (Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016: 11 of 25). Similarly, perhaps the scope of academic language could include emotive everyday language in arts-based research papers. Possibly an acceptable way of doing this might be to allow extensive quotes from PLR personal research journals.

Limitations of this research

Could this research be applicable to other arts-based research, or even other fields? This project was focused on my specific artmaking problems. The specific ways forward I discovered in doing this research would not be applicable in their entirety to other research situations. However, I consider that there are aspects that could be applied in other research projects, both theoretically and practically.

As mentioned in this dissertation, many artists experience disquiet, uncertainty and similar emotive forces when making art. What this project provides firstly, is that the source of this uncertainty *et cetera*, is potentially the source of transformation. Generally in research, uncertainty or ignorance has required resolution through the application of knowledge. This research is an example of the resolution of uncertainty by applying unknowing. This was done by finding ways of being and staying open to 'spacious unknowing'. This theoretical aspect of referring to unknowing rather than knowledge could be appropriate to other artistic research.

Similarly, from this research understanding that 'in-the-dark' methods triggered 'in-the-dark' processes could be applied to other arts-based research. This could be done by allowing time for 'in-the-dark' processes to generate understanding within the research. Recognising the fruitfulness of 'in-the-dark' methods in this research could lead other researchers to develop their own specific 'in-the-dark' methods. Practically, some of my 'in-the-dark' methods could be transferred to another research project. However, this would have to be done with the expectation that different results would be yielded.

Another concept that could be transferred is that of energy density as a single intelligence uniting the intelligences of materials and practitioner in an unfolding situation. This concept I intend to transfer to my next research project.

What emerged from investigating the research questions

This section is intended to provide a summary of what was important in this research, and what emerged from these pivotal moments. At the start of this research I found my artmaking was crippled by my negative attitude to the disquietude and confusion aroused by 'I don't know'. From theoretical sources I realised that unknowing could productively engender feelings of profound uncertainty: "*uncertainty and ignorance is an invitation to take up the truth of unstable and changing realities*" (Morgan 2014: 82). Therefore, I relinquished the approach of trying to find knowledge that might dispel this uncertainty. To interrogate the research questions, I found it more useful to cultivate disorientation, uncertainty *et cetera*. This was done by drawing on theory to fashion 'in-the-dark' artmaking methods.

Both my understanding and approach to action shifted in this research. I embarked on this project assuming that I needed to know what an action would be and where it would lead before I could make it. This assumption changed with my understanding that, because action is itself transformative, I could act without prior knowledge of the action. This was embodied in my act/wait-for-response/act heuristic.

This heuristic proved to be a sturdy tool of enquiry. It provided the means of applying theory – in the form of 'in-the-dark' methods – to my artmaking practice. Importantly, I further found that this heuristic was a means of gauging whether I was open to 'spacious unknowing' or not. My heuristic meant I acted in response to the artwork, or materials, or situation. When something seemed to impede the action/response interchange, this indicated to me that I had probably closed the door to unknowing.

Through this heuristic I better understood how to make art in 'spacious unknowing'. I realised that knowing of the existence of unknowing did not mean I was open to its force. In this research I experienced that being initially open to unknowing did not guarantee that I would remain open to it. I recognised that its generative force seemed to beget a fluidity of approach to opening the door to unknowing and keeping it open. In this way I found that the action embedded in my heuristic was central to transformation in this research.

Developing 'in-the-dark' methods was a turning point in my artistic practice. Possible ways of exploring unknowing *via* artmaking were evident in theory. Gallacher (ed. 1997), Hodgson (ed. 1944), Morgan (2014), Vasudevan (2011) and Zembylas (2005) provided clues to how I could make art differently. The actual development of 'in-the-dark' methods was driven primarily by my artmaking practice. In my view, this additionally demonstrates the efficacy of PLR as a methodology.

Because 'in-the-dark' methods, developed from theory, were pivotal in my artmaking, I gained deeper insight into PLR. A major change was generated when I removed reference imagery from my artmaking processes both as a starting point and as a visual goal. This had far-reaching effects on my artmaking, understanding and artworks.

From implementing this, I realised it was possible to make art in a way that made 'spacious unknowing' accessible. This additionally rendered the way ahead unforeseeable and meant planning an artwork was not possible. Deliberately removing such planning from the artmaking process became another method evolved from theory (ed. Gallacher 1997: 5 of 9; ed. Hodgson 1944: xli; Zembylas 2005: 143) understood through practice. I began to call these 'in-the-dark' methods because of their effect on my artmaking. With this process grew the understanding of 'I don't know' as an 'emissary' of unknowing.

It seemed that 'in-the-dark' methods opened the door to the generative force (Morgan 2014: 1) of unknowing. This became evident because 'in-the-dark' methods appeared to trigger insights, but not immediately. Clearly, an out of sight development of understanding was occurring. This was evident afterwards when reflecting on how 'in-the-dark' methods affected my artistic process and the visible outcomes of this process. In this research I referred to these invisible evolutions of understanding as 'in-the-dark' processes.

I found that 'in-the-dark' processes additionally seemed to indicate whether I was open to 'spacious unknowing' while making art. However, insights initiated by 'in-the-dark' methods diminished noticeably at times. I assumed this was because these methods were no longer triggering the hidden processing of insight. I realised a re-evaluation of 'in-the-dark' methods was necessary. For example, having removed reference imagery, when I returned it to my

artmaking process, new understanding again seemed to emerge from this shift. It seemed that appropriate adjustment of artmaking methods allowed me to remain open to 'spacious unknowing'. It seems that 'in-the-dark' methods are only temporarily effective in accessing unknowing. This confirms Maharaj's (2009: 2 of 11) claim that in artmaking research solutions are temporary and methods need ongoing adjustment.

Morgan (2014: 111) validates the view that to access unknowing it is necessary to move away from what has become known. It was important to move away from 'in-the-dark' methods when I became accustomed to them. I found, however, as with the above example, that I could return to methods that I had not used for a while. When I again referred to reference imagery when making art, I found that I used it differently. I referred not to the image but to the feelings or experiences triggered by it. In the compost heap images, the dark in-between spaces initiated curious artmaking enquiry.

Attentively pursuing the above thread of interest led to the *Posting from the Heap* installation. By following where the interest led, I found that I used materials in an unanticipated way. *Posting from the Heap* was the kind of work I had not seen before. I did not set out to do this; it seemed to result from the curious enquiry. Curious enquiry, developed from Somerville's (2007; 2008) wondering, led to a crucial shift in how I understand my own position as artist/researcher.

Curious enquiry, in picking up and following the above thread of interest, meant an active artmaking engagement of the intelligence of myself and other artmaking materials. Each curious enquiry I found to be unique, unfolding in a way unlike any other curious enquiry in this research. This singularity seemed to be nourished by the above intelligence of materials, and the way in which these attentively followed the interest of that specific situation. In this project I called this singular or idiosyncratic engagement energy density.

In exploring this notion, I drew on the spaciousness of matter (Eddington 1948: 2; Niaz 1998: 534-537), extended mind theory (Clark & Chalmers 1998), material thinking (Barrett & Bolt 2007: 19-20,30), and quantum of action theory (Bohr 1958: 17-18; Eddington 1948: 180,185; Hilgevoord & Uffink rev. 2016: 11-12 of 25). The quantum of action means an energy density

is indivisible and unpredictable (Bohm & Hiley 1993: 12). Moreover, I consider that energy density unites the intrinsic knowledge and understanding of materials in a cognitive process that cannot be separated out into its causal components. In other words, energy density generates knowledge and insight as it is in part a cognitive process. Further, it is in this research an active generating of knowledge through artmaking. I posit that an energy density is a single and indivisible artmaking intelligence. This is a core outcome of this research which I intend to research further.

I found this transformative influence of 'spacious unknowing' permeating through all areas of this project. In Chapter Three I described the ways in which 'spacious unknowing' altered my artmaking processes. The discussion of artistic practice demonstrated that the research methodologies changed how I make art, thus shifting my understanding of how I make art. Both these shifts inevitably yielded artworks different to those I made at the start of this research.

Conclusion

In this project I have realised that PLR interlaces the study of knowledge with the processes that generate it. The ways in which this was done – primarily developing from theory and then applying 'in-the-dark' artmaking methods – has originated marked change throughout my artistic practice. I developed a capacity to allow the experience of great disquiet or uncertainty to drive my artmaking. This meant I did not need to know what my next artmaking move would be, for action to be transformative.

What began in this research as a very inhibited creative practice shifted to artmaking processes that triggered radical evolutions in my approach to how I might make art. By applying PLR to the thing that shackled my artmaking, the 'shackles' became the transformative force, 'spacious unknowing'. This study – and most especially the body of artwork – show that accessing and remaining open to unknowing, transfigured my entire artistic practice.

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