

**INSIDE OUT / OUTSIDE IN
(SEXUAL DIVERSITY: A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY OF TWO POST-
SECONDARY VISUAL ART STUDENTS)**

by

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ABSTRACT

While a number of recent studies have addressed the overall educational experiences of larger groups of gay and/or lesbian students within institutions of higher learning, there are no in-depth studies which address the experiences of a small number of gay men and/or lesbians who are students in programs of visual art. This comparative case study of two gay male students of visual art considers three primary questions: what are the ways in which individual subjectivities and cultural practices of white, gay, male artists inter-relate; what is the impact of each artist's cultural productions on the broader culture in which they are located; and, what are the experiences of each subject within the post-secondary visual art's program in which each was enrolled. Data was collected through formal interviews, participant-observation, and an examination of the art practices of each subject.

This study draws on the contributions, and the inter-relationships, of feminist, postmodernist, and queer theory literatures. In response to the first primary question, this study identifies: a range of denominators by which the subjects name themselves; four categories by which affiliated communities might be identified; a strong positive relationship between individual subjectivities and the practices of art. Second, this study concludes that: public response to the art practices of *dissident* subjects may vary in terms of mediums and methods; the relationship between language and visual art is variant between the two artists but the embeddedness of language in visual art is recognized; the subjects hold opposing views with respect to the role of the *art object* within culture, but, in both cases, the art object is seen as being integral, positively or negatively, to individual identities; art is a means to cultural knowledge, that is, visual art may serve as a means of articulating various queered theoretical standpoints; and finally, that the possibilities of *camp* are a means by which queer identities may be articulated and constituted in visual art

practices. In response to the third primary research question, this study concludes that: there is either a lack of gay or queer content matter and expertise, or a strong negative reaction against queer experience in the programs of visual art presently considered; and finally, that the university is a site of cultural practice which continues to be a major legitimizer of social authority.

In general terms, with respect to epistemologies, research methodologies, and texts, a number of necessary adaptations emerge which reflect the unique experiences of queer researchers engaged in the production of social knowledges with queer subjects. The research findings suggest that the incorporation of the needs of queer students into the Academy and the Arts would prove valuable, not only to students who so define themselves, but, because different perspectives reflect different and expanded knowledges, would contribute to the learning/living experiences of all post-secondary students of visual art. Recommendations for further research include continuing inquiry which similarly considers the experiences of lesbians in visual arts programs, and for larger scale studies with gay and/or lesbian students which may provide alternate kinds of data.

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CHAPTER I: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Introduction: Visual Art Practices and Cultural Authority

As a means by which knowledge is confirmed, refuted, or generated, the myriad visual representations of a culture may reflect or ignore, promote or challenge, conceptions of social reality. The visual arts are practices by which an individual and/or a society can legitimate conceptions of the way the world is, or, alternately, the way that it is deemed it ought to be. In questioning hegemonic cultural interests, as an example, a visual artist may attempt to shock or push the dominant culture toward an examination of the beliefs and values it appears to uphold. Accordingly, a particular instance of visual art may be an act which affirms or challenges, modifying individual awareness and sensibility, and/or serves as an impetus which either reinforces cultural values and beliefs or contests societal ideologies in ways which allow for, and contribute to, the possibilities of collective cultural change. Hence, visual images figure in the construction, circulation, and control of cultural values and *truths*, and are, therefore, irrevocably linked to the structures of power which confer legitimization and decree access to cultural authority. The aesthetic and the political thereby become conjunctural practices where the outcomes of the former always serve a function of the latter.¹

Any consideration of the apparatuses of representation is then ineluctably tethered to an understanding of the ways in which the beliefs, values, and activities of a society are determined and authorized. Struggles around permissibility and legitimization of visual representations, with their power to construct meaning through confirmation or challenge, occur within an intricate cultural field which has privileged particular images and image makers over others. Elaborate cultural rationalizations have been devised to block, prohibit, or invalidate visual art which is not commensurate with the ideas and values of the dominant culture (Berger, 1992; Lippard, 1990; Pollock, 1988; Chadwick, 1991). In

the conception, production, and reception (viewing and consideration) of visual representations, it is culturally-constructed relationships of power which define the terms of authority and which then, by that authority, justify and enact the exclusions. The cultural productions of non-dominant groups are thereby marginalized, limiting access to both sanction within the art world, and, as well, recourse to a more broadly defined social legitimization.

Research Questions

Since the 1970s, conceptions of art production, history, and criticism as ideologically neutral disciplines and the monolithic hegemony of white, upper-class, Euro-American heterosexual males has been challenged (Berger, 1992). As a result, the factors of race, gender, social class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, as they impact issues of visual representation, have been afforded increasing aesthetic and critical attention. Some art educators, historians, and critics are endeavoring to now include artists whose work has been marginalized by official history: "the colonized, the working classes, people of color, women, gay men, and lesbians have begun the process of writing their own histories, more or less independent of the hierarchies of academic patrimony" (Berger, 1992, p. xx). Owens (1992) notes:

It is precisely at the legislative frontier between what can be represented and what cannot that the postmodernist operation is being staged - not in order to transcend representation, but in order to expose that system of power that authorizes certain representations while blocking, prohibiting, or invalidating others. (p. 168)

In extending the boundaries of the aesthetic, while homosexuals have long been interested in the visual arts, historians, critics, and educators have been particularly tardy in their reciprocal expressions of curiosity. As an example, full biographies of homosexual artists have often not been completed, and the omission is a dismissal of the full potentialities of art, not only as forms of self-revelation, but, as cultural practices

undertaken to liberate from the various prohibitions of society against those it considers deviant (Weinberg, 1993). In a similar vein, the historical biographies of homosexuals have often neglected to name or discuss homosexuality, and, in that elision, have avoided any consideration of the significance of (homo)sexuality to the work and careers of their subjects.

While art educators have named sexual orientation as relevant to the production and consideration of visual art (Chalmers, 1992; Garber, 1990; Hicks, 1991), the ramifications of (homo)sexuality have received scant detailed attention in the discipline.² Alternatively, Kosofsky-Sedgwick (1990) suggests that "virtually any aspect of modern Western culture must be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition" (p. 1). Homosexuality, as such, "is not merely a personal characteristic to be alternately ignored or celebrated...but a significant influence on the lives of individuals and on patterns of cultural organization" (Chauncey, Duberman, & Vicinus, 1990, p. 3).

Babuscio (1993) notes:

The feelings and creative productions of artists, gay or straight, are the sum total of their experiences - education, relationships, repressions, fortunes, and misfortunes - which have entered their lives...Certainly it is true enough that gays do develop a unique perception of the world, just as do all members of minority groups which have been treated, in essential respects, as marginal to society. And since sexuality can be divorced from no aspect of the inner workings of the human personality, it cannot be divorced from creativity. What one wants to know is this: Given the nature of our unique situation, what special insights does the gay artist have to offer? (p. 34)

Congruent with Babuscio's query, this investigation considers three central questions which consider the reciprocal implications of sexual orientation, art practices, and education in the visual arts:

- 1.) What are the relationships between individual subjectivities and the contemporary art practices of gay male artists?
- 2.) What relationships do contemporary art practices of gay male artists have to the social practices of the broader culture?
- 3.) How do cultural institutions of post-secondary education in visual arts both locate and address the experience of gay artists?

This inquiry is concerned first with the ways in which individual subjectivities and cultural practices of white, gay, male, artists inter-relate, that is, with the nexus of identity and representation. While this study undertakes an examination of the experiences of white, gay, male artists, it is recognized that differences in the experiences of lesbians, and in the lives of homosexual men and women who are poor, or of colors other than white, have often been overlooked. Congruent with the realities of the broader culture, it has often been the voices of white, class privileged, gay, men that have been heard the loudest. As lesbians, bisexual women, poor homosexual men, and homosexual men of colors other than white challenge the exclusionary coherence of *gay* identity, a more multiply-inflected reading, accounting for differences of race, gender, and social class will replace the specifics of a coherent and stable gay identity which has been constructed as white, male, and middle class. In the present study, while both gender and sexual orientation were used in the selection of subjects, the factor of race was not. As it happens, all research participants are white. However, race, along with gender and class, are acknowledged as significant variables and are therefore named in order not to presume to construct a research project and to report its results as necessarily applicable to the experiences of others differently situated. While this inquiry may appear to further represent the relative privilege of white, gay, men, its limited focus is necessitated by a refusal of the otherwise - that is, of the indignity which is inherent in endeavoring to speak on behalf of others.³

Secondly, as identity is embedded within particular cultural and institutional practices, this study considers the impact of the art productions of these artists on the

social practices of the broader culture in which they are located. Finally, since the two research subjects⁴ were, at the time of the data-collection, students of visual art at Canadian post-secondary educational institutions, the social positioning of the subjects to this aspect of the institutional organization of society will be addressed.

Researching Homosexualities: Locating the Inquiry

Any research interest in homosexual artists and their cultural activities must provide a set of common terms by which the subject(s) may be considered. In addition, such an inquiry cannot proceed without mention of the prevalence or aetiology of homosexualities, or from the cultural perspectives which reflect and determine the meanings ascribed to variant sexualities. Finally, a basic consideration of the epistemological, academic, and personal grounds which provide the parameters within which this study proceeds is warranted.

Definitions of Terms

While the word *sexuality* is frequently used in a variety of contemporary discourses, it conveys different meanings in diverse circumstances. Grosz (1994) suggests that there are at least four different senses in which the term sexuality may be considered. Sexuality may be understood as: a drive toward an object; an act, or series of practices or behaviors involving the body and its pleasures; and, a set of orientations and desires. Sexuality, in contemporary culture, is "an especially dense transfer point for relations of power" (Foucault, 1978, p. 103), the language of which "not only intersects with but transforms the other languages and relations by which we know" (Kosofsky-Sedgwick, 1990, p. 3). As such, sexuality is a diffuse notion which inflects other positions of subjectivity (gender, race, ethnicity, social class, etc.) making it difficult, perhaps impossible, to separate behaviors and motivations which are sexually infused from those which are not (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

While the terms *sexual orientation* and *sexual preference* are often used interchangeably, they are here used as non-synonymous. Sexual preference is used to describe favored sexual practices, while sexual orientation concerns erotic dispositions. While clearly concerned with eroticism, sexual orientation is further viewed not as an isolated characteristic which only impacts sexual desire and behavior, but, as an aspect of human experience which involves *higher* intellectual functions. While the activities of biomaterial research are ongoing and results remain inconclusive, in considering the cognitive profiles of homosexual men compared to heterosexual men and women, as an example, McCormick and Witelson (1991) report that the "patterns of cognitive skills of homosexual men was different from that of heterosexual men: homosexual men had lower spatial ability relative to fluency" (p. 459). Lindsay (1987) reports a left shift in cerebral dominance in homosexual men and a general shift towards non-right-handedness.⁵ Accordingly, particular sexual practices or public identification alone are seen as unnecessary to affiliations with, and consequences of, a particular sexual orientation: a man or woman may be homosexual while never having been seen by others as such, or, as having engaged in homosexual relations.

The terms *homosexual* and *homosexual identity* are recent phenomena. Having been first paired with the term *normalsexual*, the term *homosexual* came into use during the later part of the nineteenth century, preceding in popular usage, the word *heterosexual* (Halperin, 1990). While there may be ambiguity and disagreement about meanings, when homosexuality is named, it refers to the sometimes ambiguous and usually contested relationship to the complexities of same-sex desire (expressed or unexpressed) as well as "same-sex genital sexuality, love and friendship, gender non-conformity, and a certain aesthetic or political perspective" (Chauncey, Duberman, & Vicinus, 1990, p. 8).⁶

The terms *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual*, and *queer* have more recent histories as descriptors of sexual diversities, and, as such, reflect accompanying historically and

geographically informed social/political contexts where the political struggles of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, etc. have impacted naming practices. Gay and lesbian sexualities,⁷ as emergent cultural forms, are still "fuzzily defined, undercoded, or discursively dependent on more established forms" (de Lauretis, 1991, p. iii). While the relevant communities are themselves divided on the acceptance and efficacy of particular terms, outside communities are often hostile to whatever terms are chosen. As an example, as common as the term *gay* may be today, there has been a significant historical struggle around its insertion into various forms of discourse. In noting that the word *gay* had been appropriated as the adjective for homosexual, and that homosexuals might derive secret amusement from its *incorrect* use by heterosexual or *straight* speakers, *The New York Times*, following a hostile 1963 article, refused to use the word *gay* in its publications for the next twenty-five years (Duberman, 1991).

The *gay* subject is now, at least in some quarters, being re-written as *queer* (Edelman, 1994). While it is perhaps even more difficult to disentangle the word *queer* from its pejorative history and the denunciative mythologies which surround it,⁸ its adoption is an effort to avoid the "ideological liabilities" (de Lauretis, 1991, p. v) of other terms associated with sexual diversity, and is, alternatively, a means by which to "transgress and transcend them - or at the very least, problematize them" (p. v). While the stability of the term is in doubt, and the mechanisms of its resignification ambiguous, the term is mutating and is being reclaimed by those long despoiled by its derogating accusations - individuals and a community now more vigorous in an insistence on an end to both narrow categorizations and repressions based on sexual diversity.⁹ As a postmodern linguistic gesture, *queer* is not a monolithic construct and what it means to be *queer* is being contested by homosexuals and non-homosexuals, queers and non-queers. In a developing scholarship and political movement which has reclaimed the word, *queer* is now coming to refer to both same-sex identified women and men, but allows that

homosexuality or bisexuality need not be an exclusive or even necessary prerequisite. Those who choose to use the word affirmatively do so in refusal of the inexorable cultural constraints which have otherwise constituted the limits and (de)valuations of homosexualities. In the past, *homosexuals* have been primarily defined by the discourse of others on the basis of medical, legal, or religious terms; *queers*, on the other hand, pivotally participate in their own *constitutions*.¹⁰

Prevalence and Aetiologies of Homosexualities

While the prevalence¹¹ and aetiologies of homosexualities, here to be articulated within essentialist and social-constructivist perspectives, are acknowledged as significant subjects for investigation, they are not deemed to be more or less so than comparable investigations of heterosexuality. The decision to investigate or discuss the incidence or cause(s) of homosexuality, in isolation from a desire to understand human sexuality in all its manifestations, can, in itself, be considered homophobic.

During the past decade, there has been an extensive literature developed around what has been termed the essentialist/constructivist debate. The essentialist considers sexual orientation as the consequence of some immutable combination of biological/experiential factors, independent, at least to some degree, of culture.¹² From this perspective "humans are differentiated at an individual level in terms of erotic attraction, so that some are more attracted sexually to their own gender, some to the opposite gender, and some to both, in all cultures" (Boswell, 1992, p. 137). Many lesbians and gay men, often very early in life, recognize a *difference* which later comes to be understood as early manifestations of sexual variance. It is common to hear lesbians and gay men claim simply: "I *know* I was born homosexual (queer)." For the past twenty years, investigators have sought evidence for biological mechanisms, particularly around male homosexuality, which may support those *common-sense* claims (LeVay & Hamer, 1994; Bailey & Pillard, 1991; LeVay, 1991).

Challenging an essentialist position, MacIntosh (1968) conceptualized homosexuality as socially constructed: homosexuals were seen as "playing a social role rather than as having a condition" (p. 184). Foucault (1978) detailed the nineteenth century transition wherein the sodomite, previously a perpetrator of forbidden acts, became, through a process which Hacking (1992) calls "making up people" (p. 69), the homosexual "a personage, (with) a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and a possibly mysterious physiology" (Foucault, 1978, p. 43). Under these terms, culture had taken persecuted sexual behavior and specified a particular homosexual individual, his sexuality "written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away" (p. 43). The "homosexual was now a species" (p. 43). Particularly popular in the Academy, social constructivists argue that sexuality is an artifact of the society in which it is encountered and as such, can not be considered separate from its cultural context (Greenberg, 1988; Butler, 1993). In noting that particular sexual practices and the manner in which these sexual behaviors are organized vary significantly from society to society, Greenberg (1988) notes: "Today, most scholars who carry out historical or cross-cultural studies of homosexuality accept the constructivist axiom that propositions concerning sexual acts and actors inevitably make use of conceptual categories that distinguish some acts and actors from others" (p. 484-485).

Either position offers some significant advantage. An essentialist argument reinforces the feeling that the struggle for achieving a gay or lesbian identity is necessary and productive based on ineliminable biological/experiential factors. A constructivist perspective, in proposing that the boundaries and constitution of sexuality can be altered, suggests that the social consequences of what it means to be gay or lesbian might be modified or escaped entirely. Resolution in exclusive favor of one perspective over

another is unlikely, and, as both are relevant, an interactive position most effectively describes the complex aetiologies of all sexualities.¹³ Epstein (1992) concludes:

Once we abandon both the strict essentialist notion of identity as forever fixed within the psyche, as well as the strict constructionist conception of identity as an arbitrary acquisition, we can recognize that a gay or lesbian identity might have a clear resonance for individuals without necessarily binding them to any specific definition of what that identity "means." (p. 274)

While a full discussion of the strengths and limitations of either position is beyond the scope of this investigation, the terms and the implications of the debate are significant. In congruence with Epstein's (1992) assertion, this inquiry admits an inherent essential quality to sexuality (LeVay & Hamer, 1994) and, as well, draws extensively from a social-constructionist perspective in recognizing the role of social experience in the construction and consideration of gay and lesbian (queer) identities (Greenberg, 1988). In other words, in the conceptualization of this inquiry, a somewhat coherent and stabilized gay male identity is made necessary in order to interrogate that identity against the constraints, and within the opportunities, of various sociocultural practices.

Cultural Perspectives on Homosexualities

Any cursory examination of historical documents suggests that negative attitudes towards same-sex interactions are prevalent. Attitudes towards homosexuals are infused by deeply engrained cultural belief systems which, in the West, have made same-sex genital activity a legal problem,¹⁴ a medical issue,¹⁵ a religious or moral matter,¹⁶ or a matter of national security.¹⁷ Although religious and legal proscriptions continue to be challenged, and while medical models of homosexuality as an illness have largely been disregarded, all are frequently resurrected in response to any call for an end to discrimination against lesbians and gay men based on sexual diversity. Such long-standing denunciative attitudes towards homosexuality, generated by religious, medical, and legal discourses, have contributed to an often physically hostile, sometimes murderous climate

for lesbians and gay men. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in Washington reports that anti-gay violence has increased 127 percent over the past six years in the six American cities which the group monitors (Bissinger, 1995). "There is no question that the threat of this violent, degrading, and often fatal extrajudicial sanction works even more powerfully than, and in intimately enforcing concert with, more respectably institutionalized sanctions against gay choice, expression, and being" (Kosofsky-Sedgwick, 1990, p. 18).

Epistemological Grounds for Studying Homosexualities

Knowledge is acquired in particular contexts through processes of enculturation which provide the conceptual frameworks by which the world may be considered (Hawkesworth, 1989). While the role of theory is to explain, discourses are located in a particular set of social and political circumstances (Ferguson, 1990) which have constrained the speaking, writing, and, thereby, the creation of discourses which might reflect the multiple narratives and histories of culturally and politically subordinated groups (Giroux, 1994). As noted, the beliefs and values which are deeply embedded in knowledge continue to exclude, or make perverse, the conceptualizations, or experiences, of, non-heterosexual subject(s). Predictably, the epistemological position assumed in the development of social knowledges around homosexualities, like the authorizing or prohibition of particular art practices, may also either affirm or confront the powers of value-laden hegemonic discourses which have determined the limits of that which may be known, who may be the knower, and how that knowledge comes to be determined.

Any research into the subject(s) of homosexualities remains the product of the delimiting representations and discourses which have, so far, indelibly soiled the identities which the inquiries seek to make legible. Those with the power to create and disseminate certain discourses and to silence others have operated within an obligatory heterosexual order which has limited the possibilities of alternatives. Wittig (1989/1992), as an

example, argues that heterosexuality is always assumed. Heterosexuality is not only *the* social contract, but a political regime, and, as such, it is difficult to think outside of the mental categories which it constructs. "These discourses of heterosexuality oppress us in the sense that they prevent us from speaking unless we speak in their terms. Everything which puts them into question is regarded as elementary" (p. 25). Seen in such exclusionary terms, the knowledges and cultural productions of heterosexuality are vigorously maintained as the categories of legitimacy and integrity while, because homosexuality has lacked a sanctioned discourse of its own, homosexual men and women are constructed as outside of art, as outside of culture, as outside of history. The powerful and privileged heterosexualized theories and practices have been constituted as the entirety of epistemology and praxis, its meanings so ratified, its claims so assured in their rectitude, so obdurate in their refusals, that nothing other than itself has been envisioned. Heterosexuality has been so perdurable and verified in discourse in fact, that heterosexual history and culture are read, not as partial accountings of cultural history but, as Kosofsky-Sedgwick (1993) notes, as History and Culture themselves.

Academic Grounds for Researching Homosexual Identity

The first Ph.D. dissertations on homosexuality were permitted in the history and political science departments of American universities in 1976 (Katz, 1976).¹⁸ The permissions granted these undertakings, however, were often accompanied by warnings of risk to the academic careers of doctoral candidates (D'Emilio, 1992). In 1982, scholars interested in the topic of homosexuality were forced to misrepresent the purpose of their visit to Canada in order to avoid being refused entry (Duberman, 1990). The academic climate in which historians work continues to be resistant. "Many scholars still consider the history of homosexuality a marginal field, if not an embarrassing or distasteful subject of study" (Duberman, 1990, p. 2). At Simon Fraser University, during a 1994 presentation of the proposal for the present research, the subject(s) was described, by a

fellow doctoral student, as a "disgusting" undertaking. Not surprisingly, graduate students are often cautioned by sympathetic faculty to carefully consider so "controversial" a topic (Duberman, 1990, p. 2).

Davis (1994) notes that some possible participants in a recent publication concerning gay and lesbian studies in art history, because they were employed in homophobic environments, could not "take the professional risk of publishing their work or being publicly identified or associated with lesbian and gay scholarship in art history" (p. 7). Such continuing cautions within the Academy reflect the disdain in the broader culture for matters of sexual diversity.¹⁹ While the overall resistance continues to be strong, the developing interest in related research and publication around the subject(s) of homosexualities, both in academia and the popular press, is best appreciated by noting its loquacity. The love that once dared not speak its name is now refusing to stop talking. The number of gay and lesbian issues related books in print, as an example, has increased from fewer than 500 titles in 1969 to more than 9,000 titles by 1989 (Gough and Greenblatt, 1990).

Personal Ground for Researching Homosexual Subject(s)

Any subject which can be called a study originates from the realm of everyday life experiences (Dewey, 1938/1963). Research problems do not exist outside of someone who perceives them as problems (Harding, 1987). This inquiry, like all research, emerges from the autobiography of the researcher who makes imperative and seeks to innervate its subject(s). Because the corporeal and theoretical research subject(s) are homosexual and homosexuality respectively, perhaps the most predictable question becomes: "Is the investigator also homosexual?" Because the homosexual subject is even more devalued than the subject of homosexuality, homosexuals have been particularly dissuaded from naming and studying themselves. Further, the degree to which homosexuals have chosen to consider themselves is, like much of the history of homosexualities, difficult to

accurately ascertain. When homosexuals have chosen to engage in the study of homosexual subject(s), their non-heterosexuality has rarely been acknowledged in the research. In a review of 351 research investigations which considered the nature of the research relationships between investigators and gay and lesbian research participants over the period 1974-1988, Walsh-Bowers and Parlour (1992) note that only two studies, both identifying lesbian researchers, reported the sexual orientation of the investigator.²⁰

While a white, middle-class, male researcher may acknowledge the potential privilege in positions of race, class, and gender, any potential self-nomination as homosexual becomes, not only an admitted exigency from which the project originates, but, as well, a culturally dissentious naming strategy which infuses and problematizes, because of the imbricative nature of identity, all other (gender, race, class) positions of subjectivity. While categories of gender, race and social class may offer visual determinative clues, any consideration of sexual identity is complicated by its potential invisibility which makes an active choice both possible and necessary. Disclosure of sexual variation has seemed a difficult and perhaps an even dangerous risk. For homosexuals to name and particularly to study and speak for themselves is to stretch the bounds of convention. It is also, necessarily, to anticipate the costs. "How does the subject speak truthfully about itself, inasmuch as it is the subject of sexual pleasure? And at what price?" (Foucault, 1983, see Kritzman, 1988, p. 30).

The findings of any research inquiry are meaningless without the dialogical intelligence of a reader. In the final analysis, what is said about the subject(s) of homosexualities and visual art practices will be considered through the filters of what and how the reader has previously constructed meaning and attributed value to the subject(s). While recognizing both the ineluctable risks and the imperative need not to confuse irrelevant confession with the significance of autobiographic information, the recognition

of the researcher's homosexuality, along with factors of social class, gender, and race, cannot be excluded from any consideration of this project.²¹

Peshkin (1991) argues that while social scientists admit the inevitable presence of subjectivity in their research, they are not as necessarily conscious of it. As such, personal stakes are insinuated rather than clarified. "If in the spirit of confession researchers acknowledge their subjectivity, they may benefit their souls, but they do not thereby attend to that subjectivity in any meaningful way" (p. 285). With Peshkin, it is my conclusion that "subjectivity can be seen as virtuous. For its existence underlies a researcher's making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of the writer's personal qualities joined to the data he or she has collected" (p. 287). Throughout this document as it represents the research, I have endeavored to seek out my subjectivities, to look for what Peshkin terms the "warm and the cool spots" (p. 287), and to identify and include them in all of its processes. Lather (1986) has noted that "our best shot at present is to construct research designs that push us toward becoming vigorously self-aware" (p. 66). In the collection, analysis, and final documentation, by recognizing when our subjectivities are engaged, they are managed rather than removed as burdensome (Peshkin, 1991).²²

Summary of the Research Problem

This descriptive, comparative case-study specifically seeks to make legible the voices of two contemporary gay male artists (and senior level post-secondary students of visual art) through a consideration of individual subjectivities and their relationship(s) to the conception, production, and reception of cultural products and practices. Secondly, this inquiry considers the relationship of these art outcomes to the cultures in which they are produced. Finally, this study will address the specific post-secondary visual art educational experiences of both artists. It is recognized that the present research questions

develop from social, educational, and political contexts which devalue sexual diversity. This study will provide information regarding: the specific and variant role(s) that (homo)sexualities play in the practices of visual art; the impact of the art of homosexual artists in the broader culture, and; the *climate* for homosexual post-secondary students of visual arts education. The results of the study will be of interest to artists and educators who wish to better understand: the relationship of sexual diversity to art practices; the cultural impact of the activities of gay artists; and finally, the implications for visual arts education in the recognition of sexual variance.

Notes:

¹To attribute such political consequence to visual images is not to suggest that there is always a direct relationship between a particular painting, as an example, and the formal structures of power within society. It is rather, to name the potentiality for visual images and practices to impact, in addition to individual identities, the organization, operations, and meanings of collective social practices which may then lead to shifts, however subtle, in the more formal arrangements of authority. Alternately, Hughes (1993) argues that while events, press photographs, and television provoke shifts in social and political climates, visual art does not.

²For an example of the inclusion of sexual variance in the literature of art education, see Honeychurch, K. (1995).

³As an example, Sparkes (1994), a "white, middle-aged, 'middle class', ostensibly able bodied, male, heterosexual, academic, working in a university" (p. 95), expends a considerable published space in attempting to account for the notion of voice and issues of appropriation. Despite how well he appears to understand the issues, Sparkes ultimately decides to ignore his own cautions. While Sparkes *lets* 'Jessica' introduce the project by opening with her words, and his paper, he claims, is "an attempt to help further interrupt the prevailing 'conspiracy of silence'" (p. 94), he nonetheless participates in furthering the silencing and derogation of a non-heterosexual voices by implicating himself in a practice which suggests that lesbians can only be spoken about (by others) using pseudonyms and certainly can not speak for themselves. Sparkes thereby reinforces the Academy's continuing refusal of, by speaking and taking up published space on behalf of, a lesbian voice. While Sparkes seeks to confront heterosexism and homophobia, he would more appropriately have served his purpose had he not, by writing on behalf of a lesbian, contributed further to that which he seeks to eradicate - that is, to her forced silence and an absence of a *named* self. As an alternative, Sparkes could have written of the ways in

which his own life, and the lives of others similarly situated, have been implicated in the constitution and perpetuation of heterosexism and homophobia in the Academy and in the broader culture. By doing the latter, Sparkes could more productively participate in the imagining of both a new, nonhomophobic body-coded heterosexual man, and, as well, an altered and more inclusive Academy.

⁴While I am uneasy about the use of the term *subject(s)*, a consequence, in part, of the impossibility of separating the word from its associations with the colonizing energies which placed one person under the authority of another, other terms such as respondent, informant, interlocutor, etc., make me equally anxious. While recognizing its limitations, the term *subject(s)* is employed to refer to both the embodied participants and the topic of the research inquiry. Further, in both using the names of the participants and also referring to them as research Subjects A and B, I am not seeking to reinscribe the inequities contained within the researcher-subject relationship, but rather to admit that they are, at this point, ineluctable. Stacy (1988), as an example, elaborates a similar position from a feminist perspective, in wondering if the terms "feminist" and "ethnography" may only be very uncomfortably allied.

⁵Heterosexual and homosexual male and female subjects were administered various tests to measure spatial abilities which included a test of mental rotation and a water level test. Reportedly, adult males have typically performed better than women on the tests used. Tests of fluency included the Animal Naming test which have tended to favor women. Results suggest that heterosexual men showed greater spatial ability relative to fluency. Spatial ability and fluency in homosexual men was similar. Heterosexual women demonstrated greater fluency relative to spatial ability. Further research suggests that non-right-handedness is associated with success in art (Peterson, 1979).

⁶ While recognizing that the all the terms which speak of same-sex eroticism - homosexual, gay, lesbian, queer, bisexual, etc. have differing histories in terms of the phenomenon which the terms sought to describe, I use all of the terms (eg. homosexual, gay, queer in reference to homosexual men) as a way of participating in both their destabilization and reclamation. As an example, historically, the word *homosexual* has primarily been a function of a medicalized discourse. Nonetheless, it remains open to resignification. Further, both the terms homosexual and homosexualities will be utilized because the range of dissident sexualities which constitute homosexual behavior and desire are non-monolithic. In addition, the recognition of the diversity of homosexualities disrupts the heterosexual/homosexual binary construction of sexual variance which otherwise suggests (and often insist upon) a more stable configuration of each. (see Dollimore, 1991)

⁷The term *gay*, once applied to both men and women, particularly through the 1980s, came to refer more exclusively to homosexual men, while the term *lesbian* was, and continues to be, used to identify the experience of same-sex erotically identified women. In contemporary practice, the term *gay* still reads more generically. A lesbian, as an example, might continue to think of and refer to herself as gay as well as lesbian, while a gay man would not refer to himself as a lesbian. Further, it must be noted that social and political concerns may vary substantially between lesbians and gay men.

⁸*Queer* stems from "the Indo-European root - *tewerkw*, which also yields the German *quer* (transverse), Latin *torquere* (to twist), English *athwart*" and means across (Kosofsky-Sedgwick, 1993, p. xii). In selecting and utilizing the word *queer*, users face the familiar and usually derogatory cultural meanings from which the word must be resignified. As examples, The *Concise English Dictionary* defines queer as: strange, odd, questionable, suspicious, unfavorable, bad, and worthless, and, in English vernacular, came to be applied to homosexuals (Hayward & Sparkes, 1982). The *Oxford Thesaurus* includes homosexual, as well as abnormal, deviant, grotesque, unnatural, and swish among its synonyms for queer (Urdang, 1991).

⁹"If you wear green on Thursday, you're a queer, a pansy, a sissy," Balzar (1993, p. A3) notes, is a taunt which has formed a long-standing part of homophobic school experience. Because queer gains its force from its legacy of prior-shaming and other harm-intending repetitions, it can never be fully separated from its history (Butler, 1993), and therefore, the recent appropriation of the term has fostered meditations on its (im)permanence. Kosofsky-Sedgwick (1993) suggests that the strength of queer is in its continuance, noting that the word, rather than a temporary flash, is "a continuing moment, movement, motive - recurrent, eddying, troublant" (p. xii).

¹⁰Queer takes its place within the complexities of a signifying system where claiming it transforms the user, and, in turn, that which it denotes. The ongoing resignification makes the shift from one that claims: if you are queer then I must not be, that is, the user has been both normalized and authorized to demarcate the borders of legitimized sexuality while the subject, to whom the derision is directed, is both shamed and constructed by that shame (Butler, 1993), to one in which both the user, and the subject to whom it is directed, share the power of its transgressive/transforming potentialities, suggesting rather that if you are queer, then so, providentially, must/might be I.

¹¹Kinsey's most popular statistic has long suggested that the gay population numbers approximately ten percent of the total. More recent literature, given the decimating effects of AIDS and particular problems of ensuring accuracy in a homophobic culture, suggest that the incidence of exclusive male homosexuality ranges between 1-5% of the total population (LeVay & Hamer, 1994; Byne, 1994). Those individuals who might be considered bisexual are excluded from these estimates.

¹²While research into biological elements in lesbian sexuality is increasing, to date, much of the biomaterial studies around sexuality have focused on males - some of it made possible by the devastating impact of AIDS. See: S. LeVay and D. Hamer, (1994); LeVay, 1993; Bailey and Pillard (1991). LeVay & Hamer (1994) acknowledge that their research into the biological origins of homosexuality has considerable public impact because "it touches a deep conflict in American society" (p. 49). The authors express concern that their research, because of homophobia, inevitably brings with it the risk that such knowledge could result in extinguishing the sexual diversities of the human population. For an examination of the links between biomaterial processes and social systems see: M. Schwalbe (1991). For a consideration of the extreme contemporary sensitivity to biological approaches to any study of human behavior see S. Hrdy (1990). In resisting *any*

essentialist explanations, my position is that gay male and lesbian scholars tend to consider themselves in inflated social terms. While I concentrate here on the cultural generation of heterosexualized knowledges, to deny any other accounting of sexuality is to forfeit too much. While I resist constraining lesbian or gay identities as foregone, and recognize that cultural discourses produce queer bodies, those inscriptions are not made on empty slates. While sexuality is never outside of, it is not born of, ideology. Sexual subjects, that is, are the constituted effect of discourse, but they are also its enabling conditions whose sexual forces are already immanent. Byne (1994) suggests: "Perhaps the answer to the most salient questions in this debate lie not within the biology of human brains but rather in the culture those brains have created" (p. 55).

¹³ I recognize that a willingness to accede the significance of the biological may make me prey to accusations of a retrograde yearning for an essentialized identity whose consequence could ultimately support homophobic opposition to sexual diversity. Rather, my position is that the state of our knowledge of sexualities is extremely limited and we have much to learn by remaining open. It is likely that a merger of biomaterial and social perspectives will prove advantageous where sexual identities are constructed in a precarious interstices which draws from both the possibilities of unwavering truisms (essentialism) and incessant performative reinvention (social constructionism).

¹⁴ In England, as an instance, sixty homosexual men were hanged in the first three decades of the nineteenth century (Crompton, 1985). Because *proof* of homosexual acts was difficult to exact, homosexual men were often convicted of lesser offenses and punished by police supervised public mob peltings during which they were sometimes killed, or otherwise, were ostracized or exiled. The harassment and brutal murders, because they were gay, of eight men in the state of Texas since April 1993 suggests a "new fraternity of hate, (where) the words "fag" and "queer" and "sissy" have been substituted for "nigger and guns for rope" (Bissinger, 1995, p. 86).

¹⁵ In responding to a 1986 publication which suggests that public funds in Britain were being used to promote homosexuality among children and young people, Stafford (1988) notes the author's complaint that homosexuality, as a disease, has been removed from the American Psychiatric Association's list of pathologies as a result of the intervention of gay activists, rather than as a consequence of scientific research. Stafford suggests that the more pertinent question is whether there was any scientific merit to its inclusion in the first place, and indicates rather, that it is more likely that the inclusion was made "in all too eager compliance with the prejudice in which Christian culture is steeped" (p. 13).

¹⁶ Mohr (1989) notes the Roman Catholic Church's recent decision to classify, as an "objective moral disorder" (p. 246), the "mere status of being a homosexual, even when congenitally fixed and unaccompanied by homosexual behavior" (p. 246).

¹⁷ In the tensions of the Cold War, D'Emilio (1992) suggests, that attentions turned to the *menace* of homosexuality and its danger to national security. Homosexuals, it was argued, were subject to blackmail as a consequence of their behavior, and secondly, lacked the stability of emotional character necessary for government service. Homosexuality was seen as an "epidemic infecting the nation, actively spread by Communists to sap the

strength of the next generation" (D'Emilio, 1992, p. 60). Duberman (1986/1991) notes a 1960 publication which continued to associate homosexuals and communism. "Still this dangerous mixture of anti-social hostility and social promiscuity inherent in the vice incline them toward communist causes" (p. 236).

¹⁸Other research suggests that homosexuality, as an acceptable area for study in the field of sociology as an example, occurred as early as 1950 (Phillips, 1991).

¹⁹A 1991 American Gallup Poll reported that citizens are growing less accepting of homosexuals with sixty-one percent reporting that they feel the "tolerance of gay life in the 1960s and 1970s was a 'bad thing for our society'" (Chesebro, 1994, p. 79).

²⁰There is a growing tendency to name a resonance with the subject(s) of investigation according to sexual orientation (Camille, 1994; Joselit, 1994; Reed, 1994). As an example, Camille (1994) names himself as homosexual and further acknowledges the autobiographical origins of his research in articulating that his early interest in the discipline of art history was aroused by images of nude males in large glossy art books.

²¹Arguments against the inclination to make public one's sexual orientation suggest that sexuality is a private matter concerned only with the personal sexual practices of the bedroom and is, therefore, of no consequence to the broader culture. Implicit in the charge is an universalization which presumes that individuals of all sexualities, outside of sexual behavior, otherwise consider the totalities of human experience in the same ways. In restricting the impact of sexual orientation to sexual behavior, any decision to name and account for sexual orientation is seen, not only as irrelevant, but as stepping outside the bounds of privacy and disrupting the claims of the culturally determined binaries which include: public/private; male/female; nature/nurture, hetero/homo as instances. To name oneself as homosexual and to draw the discourse which surrounds homosexualities into the Academy may be construed as *proof* of the complaint of the broader culture that gay men and lesbians simply want to flaunt their sexuality (Reed, 1994). Homosexuals wish, that argument goes, to make public that which should remain a private matter. However, it is argued in response, that while personal sexual practice (behavior) is an individually private matter, sexual orientation is not. Further, it is heterosexual not homosexual orientation which historically has not been private and which continues to be the most flagrant.

²²As an example, several years following the graduation of one of the research co-participants, I also completed an undergraduate degree at the same university, in the same department, with many of the same instructors. I was very aware of a pervasive *sense* of homophobia. In the data collection with this subject, as he described his own experiences of homophobia, it was necessary for me to stay conscious- to *flag* what Peshkin (1991) notes as the "emergence of positive and negative feelings...I had to monitor myself in order to sense how I was feeling" (p. 287), in order to *manage* the ways in which my own subjectivities - my prior personal experiences of homophobia could impact the efforts being made to hear and to understand the subject's experience from *his* perspective.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Subjectivity in the Practices of Visual Art

Any consideration of the conception, production, and reception of visual images, in any era, cannot be separated from the *interrogative cultural field* - that is, from the historical and cultural environment which is "already predisposed to consider data pertinent only to the extent that they can be shown to be relevant to a particular line of questions" (Preziosi, 1992, p. 375-376). For example, conceptions of *art* and its related practices, as well as of *subjectivity*, and *sociality*, are effects of the ways in which a culture organizes its beliefs and values around individual and collective social practices and cannot therefore, be separated from the cultural circumstances in which any are produced. Accordingly, any examination of art practices is situated in, and explained by, particular terms which determine the ways in which notions of *art*, the *subject*, and *sociality* are made intelligible. It is therefore, the differences in *interrogative cultural fields* which establish the terms by, and within which explorations around art are established and, as well, the boundaries which constrain *knowledge* and set the limits beyond which *knowing* is not considered. Further, the relationship between art and culture is, as has been noted, reciprocally implicated. Hence, recent contributions in cultural theory, Blau (1988) suggests: "establish the social conditions under which art of different qualities develops; at the same time the approach recognizes that art has ontological status as it shapes cultural meanings and in that way influences social behavior and large-scale institutional practices" (p. 272).

The Legacy of Modernism

According to critic Clement Greenberg (1965/1987; 1961/1968), modernism is the inclination of art toward a total self-referential autonomy which is achieved by emphasis on that which is specific and different to each art form. In Greenberg's terms, modernism

was an endeavor to free art from concerns which are not peculiarly its own: modernists were implored to seek purity, to use "art to call attention to art" (Greenberg, 1965/1984, p. 6). The *essence* of modernism, Greenberg confirmed, is found "in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself - not in order to subvert it, but to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence" (p. 5). As an example, under modernist terms, the basis for considering and defining quality in painting, as an instance, is considered to be the medium's *essential* elements: color, scale, flatness, and edge as examples. Taking their existence as self-evident (Burgin, 1986), Greenberg considered the values in art as purely formal.¹ Greenberg's project extends from a more general set of assumptions:

Art is an activity characteristic of humanity since the dawn of civilisation. In any epoch the *Artist*, by virtue of special gifts, expresses that which is finest in humanity... The visual artist achieves this through modes of understanding that are 'purely visual' - radically distinct from, for example, verbalisation. This special characteristic of art necessarily makes it an autonomous sphere of activity, completely separate from the everyday world of social and political life. The autonomous nature of visual art means that questions asked of it may only be properly put, and answered, in its own terms - all other forms of interrogation are irrelevant. (Burgin, 1986, p. 30)

As such, the essence of art is not to be found in representation and extrinsic qualities, including subject matter, are seen as detrimental. "Content is to be dissolved so completely into form that the work of art...cannot be reduced in whole or part to anything not itself...subject matter or content becomes something to be avoided like a plague" (Greenberg, 1961, p. 6). "The very idea of content was taken to be a hindrance and a nuisance, and looking for meaning was a form of philistinism" (Gablík, 1984, p. 23). Modernism was able to demonstrate, Greenberg (1965/1987) concludes, that so many factors thought essential, to the making and experiencing of art, are not so. Modernism "has been able to dispense with them and yet continue to provide the experience of art in all its essentials" (p. 9).

"In a sense, then, for the committed modernist, the audience doesn't really exist" (Gablik, 1984, p. 23). When artist Clyfford Still was asked whether he felt concern that his art reach his audience, he replied, "Not in the least. That is what the comic strip does" (Quoted in Gablik, 1984, p. 23). Painter Robert Motherwell (1951/1968) notes: "To leave out consideration of what is being put into the painting, I mean. One might truthfully say that abstract art is stripped bare of other things in order to intensify it, its rhythms, spatial intervals, and color structure" (p. 563). Marsden Hartley (1928) claimed:

I am interested then only in the problem of painting, of how to make a better painting according to certain laws that are inherent in the making of a good picture - and not at all in private extraversions or introversions of specific individuals. That is for me the inherent error in a work of art. (p. 526-527)

The perspective of modernism closely resembles the formalism of Roger Fry and Clive Bell. To appreciate a work of art, Bell (1913/1958) contends, one need "bring with us nothing but a sense of form and colour and a knowledge of three dimensional space" (p. 28). In such formalist terms, visual art was seen as necessarily confining itself to that which is given in the visual encounter and which does not make reference to "anything given in other orders of experience" (Greenberg, 1965/1984, p. 8). Any representation other than three dimensional space is irrelevant and is seen as a "sign of weakness in an artist" (Bell, 1913/1958, p. 29).

Further, within such a formalist aesthetic, works of art are seen as precipitating a particular *aesthetic* response in the viewer which is considered to be an emotion peculiar to that experience (Bell, 1914/1987). From this perspective, the realm of aesthetics provokes a world with emotions of its own. Although Bell recognized that systems of aesthetics "must be subjective" (p. 68), that is, all systems of aesthetics are based on individual experiences, Bell argued that art creates an experience with its own emotions and that the viewer of a work of art occupies a seemingly disembodied space "unrelated to the significance of life...in which the emotions of life find no place" (p. 73).

Similarly Fry (1909/1987) proffered that art "presents a life freed from the binding necessities of our actual existence" (p. 81). Fry noted that art "is an expression and a stimulus of this imaginative life, which is separated from actual life by the absence of responsive action" (p. 80-81). The responsive action of which Fry speaks is moral responsibility, and art, Fry suggests, has no such responsibility. Consequently, modernism, as defined, accepted the premise that art withdraw from the actual world of social and political circumstances² in order to historically maintain the essence of civilization into an uncertain future when individuals will have become cultivated enough to value it (Burgin, 1986).

The concepts of formalism, inherent in the art of *high* modernism, continue to exert significant influence on the teaching of art in schools as well as in college and university visual art departments. Noted art educator Edmund Feldman (1992) speaks to the assimilation of formalist doctrines into our "critical, aesthetic, and pedagogical cultures" (p. 122) and identifies formalism's specific dividends: (1.) students can learn through exercises and practice to construct and identify elements and principles of visual organization which reflect the constituents of visual art which are optically irreducible; (2.) students may recognize art as an independent language that does not rely on the prior existence of words; the elements and principles provide a simple-to-complex sequence preferred by teachers; (3.) academic respectability is warranted as a consequence of learning in art which proceeds in ways similar to other academic subjects; (4.) formalist principles offer a flexibility in the making of one's own art and in the consideration of the art of others; (5.) formalism provides all viewers, regardless of the level of sophistication, access to art of all times and places on the assumption that the formal elements of art serve as a 'lowest common denominator'.

As a consequence, aesthetics becomes:

the science of discerning how forms and formal relationships acquire expressive power, how they generate emotion and signify meaning, and why they are symbolically potent. Thus the history of art is a history of the evolution of formal relationships and of art-related decisions that have caused them to change over time. Thus, art instruction consists of teaching students to create forms, understand decisions that produce formal relationships, discern formal choices in the art of others, and apply lessons of form in their own artistic expression. (p. 122)

As will be discussed in a later section, consistent with formalist precepts, Feldman (1993) negates the relevance of personal factors (such as gender and sexual orientation) to the practices of visual art.

The Aesthetic Pluralism of Postmodernism

Alternatively, a variety of interdisciplinary approaches to art making and criticism which are, at least in part, a reaction against the restrictive authority of *high* modernism and which centralize the interimplicated relationships of artwork (as representation) to sociality and the self (differences) are loosely gathered together under the rubric of what, during the last twenty years, has come to be understood as *postmodernism*.³ In recognizing the multiplicities of lived-experience and in acknowledging the *realities* of diversity, postmodernism claims: the end of metanarratives (Lyotard, 1984); the demise of dualisms such as breakdowns between conceptions of high art and commercial culture (Jameson, 1984), and, an insistence on the relationships between power and discourse (Foucault, 1978).

In opposition to all forms of metanarratives, postmodernism brings closer attention to the possibilities of other voices that have long been silenced - that is to women, individuals of colors other than white, and to gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals as examples. From a postmodern perspective, there is a rejection of the notions of meta-theory or a meta-aesthetic (such as formalism) through which perspectivity and all art can be explained and represented. "Postmodern critics stress contextual meaning and prefer to

elucidate an artwork's personal or political import over evaluating the work formally and aesthetically" (Holt, 1995, p. 86). The simple postmodernist answer, Harvey (1990) avers, is that "coherent representation and action are either repressive or illusionary" (p. 52). While modernism recognized the "ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent" (Baudelaire, 1863/ 1987, p. 23) as half of art while viewing the other half as "the eternal and the immutable" (p. 23), postmodernism "swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and chaotic currents of change as if that is all there is" (Harvey, 1990. p. 44). As such, in its recognition and foregrounding of coexisting, colliding, and interpenetrating realities, postmodernism, as perspective, replaces a modernist held stance of an admittedly complex, but otherwise singular, conception of reality.⁴

As both are mediated social products, conceptions of *art* and the *self* are reciprocally implicated. As an example, an assumption of a dominant humanist view (modernist) of the self as a set of stable and coherent, however uneasy, biomaterial elements (such as biological sex), places the artist and the critic differently than a postmodern assertion that the subject is constructed by sets of signifying practices which include the visual arts. As illustration, Burgin (1986) contends:

If...we were to 'personify' a figure of 'pre-modernism' then it would be characterized by the self-knowing, punctual, subject of humanism, 'expressing' itself, and/or its world (a world simply there, as 'reality') via a transparent language. 'Modernism' came in with the social, political, and technological revolutions of the early twentieth century and is to be characterized by an existentially uneasy subject speaking of a world of 'relativity' and 'uncertainty' while uncomfortably aware of the conventional nature of language. The 'postmodernist' subject must live with the fact that not only are its languages 'arbitrary' but it is *itself* an 'effect of language', a precipitate of the very symbolic order of the humanist subject supposed itself to be the master. (Burgin, 1986, p. 49)

Contrary to a *high* modernist conception of art as a totally autonomous and material object with no reference to anything beyond its boundaries, inherent in a postmodernist orientation to art practices is an implosion of the aesthetic into all areas of

human experience. As such, visual art is neither without social interest or cultural responsibility. From a postmodern standpoint, the practices of art are no longer to be considered as an activity committed to the crafting of *objects* in any given medium, but rather, as a "set of *operations* (italics mine) performed in a *field* of signifying practices, perhaps centred on a medium but certainly not bounded by it" (Burgin, 1986, p. 39). As an example, as art is considered according to its historical circumstances through the *lenses* of contemporary theories, political circumstances cannot be avoided.⁵ In noting that all cultural practice is shaped by political considerations, Moxey (1994) notes:

As long as art history is thought to speak with one voice, it will be impossible to recognize the viability of contestatory discourses. An appreciation of theoretical differences will enable us to understand how the dominant voice is associated with a political position, one that can either be supported or called into question. (p. xii)

While meanings of the concept vary, the term *postmodernism* in art is used to refer to cultural practices "produced after Greenberg's late-modernism lost its ideological hegemony" (Burgin, 1986, p. 49). Postmodernism in art: (1.) acknowledges the role of appropriation; (2.) recognizes an eclectic mixture of styles including popular culture; (3.) challenges modernist notions of aesthetic autonomy and purity; and, (4.) emphasizes the local and temporal rather than the universal and eternal (Shusterman, 1992). As such, the isolationist ideologies of modernism are no longer viable, there is a need for a "criticism of art that is morally, socially, and politically motivated, just as there is a need for art itself to be so motivated" (Shusterman, 1992, p. 237).

Contrary to the earlier noted formalist stance in art education, Berleant (1991) argues that the disinterestedness of formalism has become an "academic anachronism" (p. 33). "Now at the end of the twentieth century, we have finally recognized the human factor in every kind of awareness and knowledge is structurally unavoidable. Art has become both a symptom of this change and a standard for grasping it" (p. 10). The

postmodern condition "is now our inescapable horizon" (Pollock, 1988, p. 158). As such, art is not only deeply contextual, but is a salient means by which the differences of subjectivity and sociality may be discovered, explored, and constituted.⁶ As an example, with respect to subjectivity, in postmodern terms, the individual becomes, at least in part, what s/he becomes as a consequence of interactions with the myriad of representations by which a culture determines the limits of that which the individual may be. Hence, impacted by a poststructuralist perspective, the consideration of visual art, rather than an interaction of a discrete modernist subject with a separate and distanced art object, becomes the engagement of an *unstable, multiply-inflected subject* with the *multiply-unstable text* of the art object/practice as it continually opens onto other *texts*.

Sexual Subjectivity in the Practices of Art

What defines an *academy* Burgin (1986) contends, is that "it knows a success when it sees one, the criteria are already in place - success is then defined in terms of *conformity* to established criteria and *proficiency* in the execution of the exercise" (p. 44-45). The dominant paradigm, Pollock (1988) suggests works "ideologically to constrain what can and cannot be discussed in relation to the creation and reception of art" (p.2). That which is admitted to the *canon* is subject to "perpetual exhumation" (Burgin, 1986, p. 159), that which is denied is condemned to "perpetual oblivion" (p. 159).

Consequently, artists and critics who have occupied a *central* position in the practices and discourses of art have constructed the perimeters of the discourse as indistinguishable from the *actual* boundaries of art itself. Those *outside* those borders are seen as eccentric to the authoritative and authorizing master narratives. It is feminist⁷ artists and scholars who provided the originating, and continue to provide the salient, challenge to the tenets of a masculinist (modernist) discourse in the Academy which preferred to exclude anything outside of itself.⁸ Feminist interventions in the art and its related practices ask questions which demand "recognitions of gender power relations,

making visible the mechanisms of male power, the social construction of sexual difference and the role of cultural representations in that construction" (Pollock, 1988, p. 9).⁹ The recognition that categories (and oppressions) of gender can have a structuring force for points of thought (Kosofsky-Sedgwick, 1990) has been one of the greatest heuristic leaps of feminism. In addition to gender however, any consideration of the conception, production, and reception of visual images is also linked to other notions of individual subjectivities which include race, social class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Moxey (1994) notes that factors of "race, class, gender, sexual preference, and cultural background play an important role in both the production and consumption of knowledge" (p. xiii).

Hence, just as the making of, and knowledge about, visual art is viewed through gender perspectives (or racial and class locations), art and its related practices are not beyond or irrelevant to sexuality. In those undertakings however, it is specifically (hetero)sexuality which is most often presumed and/or insisted upon, which is the "canonical culture of the closet" (Kosofsky-Sedgwick, 1990, p. 151), and which defies the *alternatives*. What tends to be in place in curriculums and scholarship is a "don't ask. Or less laconically: You shouldn't know" (p. 144) policies and practices. In this way, the homosexuality of the artist will not prove detrimental, nor significant, if it is not talked about. In adopting and adapting Kosofsky-Sedgwick's (1990) discussion of the exclusion of homosexuality (from relevance to literature) to the present consideration of the visual arts, questions about the homosexuality of artists have been dismissed on the following grounds: (1.) same-sex genital relations may have been common but since there was no language to talk about them, they must be meaningless; (2.) since attitudes towards homosexuality were so intolerant in earlier periods, there was unlikely to be homosexual behavior; (3.) the word *homosexual* wasn't coined until 1869 so artists before that time would be considered to have been *heterosexual*; (4.) since the artist was rumored to have

had an attachment to a member of the opposite sex, any same-sex attachment(s) must be meaningless; (5.) as there is no actual *proof* (photographs of sexual acts with others of the same sex) of the artist's homosexuality, any such speculation can be discounted; and, (6.) while the artist might have been homosexual, his/her (homo)sexuality is such an insignificant variable to be given any serious consideration of the artist's life or artwork.

Alternatively, in his consideration of Western art, Lucie-Smith (1991) concludes that today, sexuality is its "main subject" (p. 8) and further, within that claim, recognizes the emergence of a specifically homosexual art. Despite the increasingly recognized prevalence of lesbian and gay artists throughout the history of art (Cooper, 1986), the homosexuality of artists has historically been viewed as outside the boundaries of legitimate ideological admission. Consequently, any inquiries into the nature of the relationship between homosexual subjectivity and the practices of visual art have been deemed either distracting and/or irrelevant, and, consequently, have been considered as unnecessary and/or detrimental to its productive consideration.

It has been suggested that conventional "wisdom tells us that gay men are unusually gifted in the visual arts" (Demb, 1992, p. 83).¹⁰ While a full exploration of the artwork of homosexual (gay male) artists is beyond the scope of this inquiry, the *perceived* relationship between the practices of art and (homo)sexual subjectivity are directly relevant. A number of examples will explicate the ways in which, historically, (homo)sexual subjectivity has often been refused or disguised and, as well, will reflect the ongoing shifts which are evident among contemporary art makers.

As an early instance, in the erotic images of Charles Demuth, what is most interesting, Weinberg (1988) suggests, is the "complex representation of sexuality outside heterosexual norms" (p. 221). The representation of (homo)sexual difference is a recurring theme and, while limited in numbers when compared to his overall artistic production, Demuth's specific homoerotic paintings are numerous and include: *Turkish Bath Scene*

with *Self-Portrait* (1918); *Eight O'Clock (Morning #2)* (1917); *Turkish Bath* (1915); *Turkish Bath* (1916); *Dancing Sailors* (1918); *Two Sailors Urinating* (1930); *Three Sailors Urinating* (1930). In one canvas, Demuth's sexually blatant *Three Sailors on the Beach* (1930), the artist depicts three muscular males in various stages of undress. The two men facing the viewer share visible and exaggerated erections as the neck of the seated figure, in a sexually-charged gesture, is grabbed as if to be pulled toward the engorged penis of the sailor standing over him. While the men are clearly engaged in sexual play and one, the aggressive standing figure, displays a tattoo of a heart-shape and the initials CD (Demuth's initials) on his right arm,¹¹ any references to Demuth's imaging of homosexuality and its relationship to his art, his life, and society were long ignored or minimized. As an example, Marcel Duchamp, when commenting on the paintings and alluding to Demuth's homosexuality states:

The little perverse tendency that he had was not important in Demuth's life. After all, everybody has a little perverse tendency in him. That quality in him had nothing to do with the quality of his work. It had nothing to do with his art. (Farnham, 1959, p. 973 cited in Weinberg, 1993, p. xiii)

In such endeavors to separate artwork or processes from the *polluting forces* of (homo)sexuality (Weinberg, 1993), there is reflected the significant concern that "focusing on (the) peculiarities of an artist's personal life necessarily impugns the quality of the art produced. There is serious worry that emphasizing the marginality of an artist's range of interests also will marginalize his or her art" (p. xviii). There has, as well, been the determined association of the male homosexual with the *feminine*, and a vigorous defensive assertion of the male artist as *masculine*. As an example, in reviewing the work of a number of male artists who, in the 1960s and 1970s, used their own bodies in, or as, their art practices, Jones (1994) considers the male artist's subjectivity and identity as *performative* rather than as ontologically fixed, but, also notes that the masochistic body performance work of artist Chris Burden, as an instance, is seen as a reassertion of the

"male *heterosexual* body" (Jones, 1994, p. 572). Otherwise, Jones asserts, "shorn of his illusory claim of bearing the phallus, the male artist is feminized or homosexualized. In short, he is no longer an artist as this figure is conventionally understood in western culture" (p. 572). With regard to sexual orientation:

built into the masculinity of the artist function is an implicit heterosexuality; this is the case even for homosexual artists such as Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, whose 'deviant' sexual orientation is suppressed in art-historical constructions of them in relation to their work. Their authority is purely (i.e. heterosexually) masculine if their actual sexuality is not. (Jones, 1994, p. 581)

Perhaps the clearest indication of the connectedness of art to (homo)sexuality is found in the vehement reaction of viewers whose encounters with the work of particular artists/critics triggers vigorous objection around sexual content.¹² In other words, when a work of art is considered to violate some culturally sanctioned boundary of 'legitimate' sexuality - the powerful relationship of art to sexuality, and of sexuality to cultural power, becomes very quickly evident.¹³ In order for there to be such an eruptive cultural controversy around art which is perceived to be sexually transgressive, both a sense that there has been a threat to dominant cultural values and a mobilization of power in response to the challenge are necessary (Dubin, 1992). As an example, in 1989 a fractious struggle over freedom of expression and the American National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was initiated by United States Senator Alfonse D'Amato (Republican, N.Y.) who, in castigatory objection to Andres Serrano's photographic production entitled *Piss Christ*, tore to shreds its reproduction, tossing the pieces to the floor of the United States Senate. "This so-called piece of art is a deplorable, despicable display of vulgarity" (D'Amato, quoted in Bolton, 1992, p.3).¹⁴

An even more vigorous controversy erupted when the Corcoran Gallery of Art cancelled the scheduled 1989 photographic exhibition of homosexual artist Robert Mapplethorpe. While Corcoran had previously exhibited Mapplethorpe's work, and the

exhibition in question had been mounted in other large American cities without incident, the capitulation to the pressures of censorship, Smith (1989/1992) suggests, is a function of an historical period in which the times are more politically reactionary and intolerant. Corcoran's decision was based on the conclusion that the controversial nature of the work, that is "photographs that some may deem shocking and past the bounds of artistic license" (Jewett Jr., & Kreeger, 1989/1992, p. 46), would negate its educational and aesthetic potentialities.

As earlier noted, the subject(s) of homosexualities, a primary focus of the work of Robert Mapplethorpe, have long been silenced, often considered unspeakable and unsymbolizable. "I touch with reluctance, and dispatch with impatience, a more odious vice, of which modesty rejects the name, and nature abominates the idea" (Edward Gibbon (1776), quoted in Crompton, 1985, p. 23). More than two hundred years later, the subject(s) of the contemporary Mapplethorpe images were considered, in some quarters, to be so objectionable that it is clear that the traditions of taboo, of refusal, of compulsory illegibility and unspeakability around homosexualities, remain strong. Art critic Hilton Kramer, as an example, found himself unable to describe the images "in all their gruesome particularities" (Kramer, 1989/1992, p.53), while *The New York Times* art critic Robert Hughes advised Mapplethorpe that he too found the images "too disgusting to write about with enthusiasm" (Hughes, 1993, p. 162).

Images such as Demuth's or Mapplethorpe's challenge two significant boundaries which the dominant culture holds to be already firmly established: the borders and legitimacies of visual art and those of eroticism. Dubin (1992) suggests that such deviance in art practices which may be intended to shift the practices and value systems of the culture, to the contrary, as noted by public response, may actually fuel a mobilization of the society to fight challenges to the status quo and thereby create a further rigidity in social belief systems. As evidence, representations which so emphatically challenge

dominant ideologies, are frequently counter-attacked by particular educational, cultural, religious, or political leaders whose querulous insinuations on the extirpation of difference call for a return to more established and more broadly acceptable artistic methods and subject matter.

In such a reactive state, art that reflects the emerging power of women, gay men, and racial or ethnic minorities has often been scapegoated.¹⁵ The relatively recent works of art by Serano and Mapplethorpe, as examples, using Dubin's (1992) criteria, violated the boundaries of culturally declared legitimacy and their maker's ethnicity and sexuality made them weak to resist the onslaught of the dominant majority enacted against them.¹⁶ The scrutiny and subsequent controversies generated around Mapplethorpe, as an example, were not so much a function of the works of art themselves, but rather, that Mapplethorpe's homosexuality made him an *easier target* (Smith, 1989/1992). What "may be the real issue is the veiled hostility toward homosexuals" (p. 39).

Regardless of the vehement resistance to their endeavors, artists, historians and critics are increasingly recognizing that any consideration of the practices of art cannot be separated from sexual subjectivities. In *In Tongues of Flame*, (Blinderman, 1990), gay artist David Wojnarowicz suggests:

I think people are preoccupied by things if they are denied information - it's the same things with issues of sexuality. Things tend to gain power by their denial; if my sexuality is denied, no wonder for a period I explored promiscuity; if I'm going to be invisible in the reflections of society then I'll seek my visibility. So when I concentrate on issues of sexuality in my work, a lot of people say that's better left to the bedroom. I say bullshit, because I'm completely surrounded by one form of sexuality; its represented in every ad - whether its cigarettes or beer or whatever, there's always one prescribed sexuality which makes me feel invisible. So of course, if my work is going to reflect my life, then I'm going to put sexuality into my work. (p. 50)

Kroker (1990) suggests that the particular brilliance of gay artist Attila Richard Lukacs is that he paints what he actually is: the painter's vision is:

a world of cold seduction: disciplined, highly aestheticized bodies with no excess fleshiness, tribal poses of the male subject engaged in all kinds of kitsch activities from sports, religion and broadcasting to frenzied orgiastic feasts of male sexual bonding, an almost autistic world where sexuality, authority and power form a single field of male desire...This is the painting, finally of sex without secretions, of male sexuality as a purely imaginary theatre of desire - a voyeuristic theatre of seduction. (no page number)

Cotter (1994), in profiling twelve contemporary gay and lesbian artists, notes:

As the gay and lesbian movement identifies itself with and becomes part of the global political picture and as openly gay and lesbian artists, with their rich personal histories and their diverse and challenging work, become part of the fabric of international art, there is every reason for optimism as we approach a new century. (p. 56)

Other gay and lesbian artists profiled by Cotter (1994) include: Frank Moore, Deborah Kass, Cary S. Leibowitz/Candyass, Hugh Steers, Louise Fishman, Ross Bleckner, Zoe Leonard, Donald Moffett, John Lindell, Lyle Ashton Harris, Ellen B. Neipris, and Nicole Eisenman.

As gay male artists speak firsthand of their experience, considerably different attitudes, towards the relationship of art practice and sexual subjectivity, are evident (Cotter, 1994). As an example, Frank Moore (bn. 1953) comments:

Autobiography is a grounding device...It's your life...it has interested me to push that level of personal revelation and investment...I hope that all those things add up to something with a general applicability that ultimately transcends the personal level and the specificity of issues such as gay and lesbian rights, or AIDS. (Cotter, 1994, p. 115)

Cary S. Leibowitz/Candyass (bn. 1963) suggests that he has:

no problems at all with being called a 'gay artist'. My work is about me and I'm gay...I do think my art embodies a certain kind of gay sensibility...maybe its camp...I wasn't really around the artworld before politically gay art was there. I think I've had it easy. I've been shown because the art world is receptive to what I do...It's too good to hope for that art with a gay content will change homophobic attitudes. (Cotter, 1994, p. 58)

Hugh Steers (bn. 1962) notes:

there was 'gay' content all along in my work but this whole notion is problematic and needs discussion...what I paint comes from my experience and my reaction to things going on around me...these days, finally, the voices of people who are attracted to the same sex are being heard and allowed to develop and play off each other...it is not possible to say that there is any one 'gay content'. (Cotter, 1994, p. 59)

John Lindell (bn. 1956) comments that what is crucial about his work is:

that it isn't about gay identity but about homosexual identity and the difference between the two. The terms are often used synonymously but they aren't the same. Homosexual is a clinical term; gay implies some political or social consciousness... ideally I would want my work to be readable by homosexuals, gay men, bisexuals and straights. But I don't see art as being made up of universals. It's about culturally specific things and you have to make an effort to decide who you can or want to be talking to...being a homosexual artist ghettoizes me in a negative way in the mainstream art world. (Cotter, 1994, p.63)

Lyle Ashton Harris (bn. 1965) seeks:

to document the different identities pulling on me from within and from without...I'm not interested in the work revealing that I'm gay, as much as I am interested in gay desire as a point of departure...It is about accepting myself and what my role is in the creation of culture. (Cotter, 1994, p. 64)

Ross Bleckner (bn. 1949) concludes:

gay people...feel more or less like outsiders at critical points in their lives. I think that one feeling, more than anything, comes to define your view of the world. It's a view from the outside. It's a view from feeling different...It took me a long time to be gay-identified on a personal level, and oddly enough the situation repeated itself when I was first becoming a professional artist because most of my friends were heterosexual. The art world's a lot more conservative than people might imagine. If you look at the work and the way that work gets thought about it's a very bourgeois world and it's predominately heterosexual in its values...being gay has always been a critical part of what it means to me to be an artist...inventing a language is the way I've tried to use being gay as an advantage. I always knew there was something that made me see things a little differently, that opened up some other kind of meaning for me... I think that the fact that I'm gay helps make my paintings interesting, adds a dimension, you might say, especially at this point in time. It all works together: my work is really about painting and painting is

really about identity and identity, for me, is really about being gay. (Cotter, 1994, p. 60-61)

In considering the relationship between homosexual subjectivities and visual arts practices there are four positions which emerge as a consequence of the literature review. Each may reflect differing relationships between homosexuality and art practice. First homosexual men and women artists may remain fully closeted throughout their lives, and consequently, while there may be suspicions of sexual variance, the artist's homosexuality will not, in any substantive way, be addressed in the literature. Second, homosexual artists may remain outside of any institutional (gallery, university, etc.) system, a perspective represented as an example, by the works of gay activist groups such as *Act-Up*. Third, homosexual artists (eg. David Wojnarowicz) may work from within the institutional system, but reject the *mainstream* and operate and produce visual art from a *radical* and *confrontative* place of resistance toward, that system. Finally, homosexual artists (eg. Attila Richard Lukacs) may occupy simultaneous (non-marginalized) positions within the gallery and university systems as well as within the gay and/or lesbian community. In this final category, artists maintain a commitment to the group with which they are aligned and therefore to the potency of resistance and critique on behalf of gay and lesbian artists, but are, as well, interested in maintaining connections to the dominant organized systems of visual culture.

Homosexuality and Post-Secondary Education

General Education.

There is a developing body of literature which specifically addresses the issues of gays and lesbian students in post-secondary education. In 1967 and 1973, the first gay students group and the first gay faculty groups, respectively, were formed on American college campuses (D'Emilio, 1992). By 1976, one quarter of college campuses in the United States had formed gay organizations (Shilts, 1993). From these early beginnings

has emerged an increasingly evident campus presence and an evolving scholarship related to issues of concern to gay male and lesbian students. As an example, a study at New Jersey's Rutgers University focused its attention on specific concerns for gay men and lesbians in the academic community. As part of the university's commitment to combating prejudice and encouraging respect for diversity, the study recognized that homophobia and heterosexism, like racism and sexism, are issues which must be addressed in the academic community, and a recognition of sexual diversity has profound implications for all aspects of higher education. The Rutgers document *In Every Classroom*, produced by the President's Select Committee for Lesbian and Gay Concerns, provides a comprehensive resource for students, faculty, and administration in support of the university's four primary goals with respect to these issues: (1) to ensure an atmosphere in which all members of the academic community are able to freely participate and "develop intellectually and emotionally, free from fear, violence, or harassment" (Nieberding, 1989, p. 8); (2.) the promotion of respect for diversity; (3.) the equitable treatment of all members of the community; and, (4.) the encouragement of research and scholarly debate in the areas of gay and lesbian studies. The Assistant Vice-President for Student Life Policy and Services at Rutgers notes: "the focus of attention on the issues of homophobia as one aspect of human dignity within a context of attempting to reduce bigotry and prejudice seems to have had a very beneficial effect on campus" (William David Burns, personal communication, February 3, 1993).

Since the appointment of the Select Committee, a number of specific proposals have been implemented. The Alumni Association endeavors to provide a lesbian and gay focus at traditional alumni functions (eg. Homecoming Weekend). The first reception attracted 150 individuals and commemorated the founding of the Rutgers Student Homophile League. Secondly, the library's special collections are now a state depository for historical information regarding lesbian and gay experience in New Jersey. Third, the

President of Rutgers requested that liaison individuals from each dean's staff be appointed to assume responsibility for lesbian and gay concerns and to act as a point of connection between the college and the Select Committee. Fourth, each college within Rutgers was asked to include issues of special interest to gay and lesbian students in their fall orientation sessions. As an example, many students participated in the program "Major Campus Issues: Prejudice, AIDS, Diversity." All new students at one college were required to attend orientation sessions presented by the counselling staff which addressed issues of racism, sexism, and homophobia. Fifth, The Health Education Department and the Residence Life Office presented workshops specifically on reducing homophobia. Finally, for the year 1989-1990, developing programs and services for lesbian and gay students became the focus of the responsibility of the Assistant Dean of Students.

Recognizing that institutions both produce and regulate discourse, D'Augelli (1989), Associate Professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Pennsylvania State University, traces the increasing participation of gay men and lesbians in their efforts to participate in, and modify, constructions of knowledge. D'Augelli (1989) charts the development of his institution's interactions with homosexual students. In 1971, early attempts to charter a student organization of gay men and lesbians at Penn State resulted in a legal investigation and a denial of the use of university facilities for the group's functions. At that time, the Vice-President for Student Affairs, Raymond O. Murphy, claimed:

We are advised that based upon sound psychological and psychiatric opinion, the chartering of your organization would create a substantial conflict with counselling and psychiatric services the University provides to its students, and that such conflict would be harmful to the best interests of the students of the University.
(cited in D'Augelli, 1989)

In recognizing that power in educational institutions is often hidden or disguised, D'Augelli (1989) notes the difficulties inherent in empowerment and suggests that change

can be resisted by educational institutions by deeming something (such as the presence and needs of gay men and lesbians on campuses) taboo, rejecting its essence, and denying its truthfulness. From its early refusal to grant basic rights to its gay and lesbian students, Penn State currently incorporates sexual orientation into its *diversity* course required of all new students.

Other research studies have investigated the attitudes of college and university students to issues of sexual difference. Calling for curriculum reform and significant adjustment to the more intangible institutional climate, McNaron (1991) compares the changes occurring on campuses for gay men and women to those programs initiated twenty years ago for recognizing ethnic and racial diversity. While proceeding with institutional accommodations or incorporating a lesbian or gay perspective into the curriculum may appear to be either trivial, or contrived, such beliefs are a consequence of the degree of oppression of relevant issues (Andrews, 1990). A primary means of eliminating homophobia and heterosexism on campuses, Baker (1991) suggests, is for faculty and administration to: become more adequately informed, challenge homophobic remarks, develop associations with lesbians and gay men, encourage dialogue about gay and lesbian issues in the classroom, and encourage positive gay role models in course content. In also calling for curriculum reform, Lenskyj (1990) further suggests the development of specific strategies for dealing with sexist and homophobic attitudes and behavior. In an analysis of introductory texts in sociology and acknowledging that schools are transmitters of culture and are therefore key agents of the hegemonic process, Phillips (1991) notes that although progress has been made in addressing issues of concern to gay men and lesbians, the textbook coverage of information relevant to lesbian and gay experience remains biased, inadequate, and a reflection of the heterosexism of the culture in which they are produced.

Clift (1988) sought: to begin to rectify the lack of attention to lesbian and gay issues in British educational research; to collect information regarding the attitudes of first year students in higher education; and, to assess the impact on student attitudes of the inclusion of a section on homosexuality and education as part of an introductory offering in Educational Studies. With regard to attitudes towards lesbian and gay issues, a questionnaire completed by eighty undergraduate students suggests significant sex differences. While expressing more positive attitudes towards lesbians, men were less tolerant than women towards homosexuals in general and towards gay men, and openness in education in particular. Other research shows similar findings. Again using a first year higher education class, D'Augelli & Rose (1990) suggest the emergence of a "chilling portrait" (p. 490) of homophobia in the academic community reviewed.

Many freshmen in this study showed strongly biased views about lesbians and gay men. Nearly 30% would prefer a college environment with only heterosexuals. Nearly half considered gay men disgusting and believed that homosexual activity is wrong. All freshman were more hostile to gay men, than to lesbians. Consistent with other data on this campus,...men were significantly more homophobic than were women. Men demonstrated greater animosity toward gay men than toward lesbians. (p. 488-489)

Many arguments against the positive treatment of lesbians and gay men depend, Stafford (1988) suggests, on false premises that homosexuals are necessarily promiscuous, that homosexuality is an illness or is socially subversive. In an effort to encourage post-secondary students to confront homophobia, both their own and others, one research project asked all members of an undergraduate sociology class to wear pink triangles around campus, and to later report their personal experiences of discrimination (Chesler & Zuniga, 1991). The pink triangle, as the authors report, was forced on lesbians and gay men in the concentration camps of Europe during the Holocaust, and has now been claimed by the gay and lesbian political movement as a symbol of assertion for equal

rights. At the conclusion of the exercise, students reported significant learning which reinforced the "breadth of societal prejudice against gay men and lesbians" (p. 179).

D'Emilio (1992) articulates the general lack of acceptable progress for gay and lesbian rights which has been made at many institutions of higher learning. In noting that, on many campuses, students still must fight for the right to meet on campus, less attention is paid to the critical issues of: appropriate antihomophobic counselling services, scientific rather than moralistic education on sexually transmitted diseases, dealing with homophobia among students, faculty, and administrators and insisting on disciplinary action for violations, and finally on curriculum development which is appropriate to the developmental needs of gay and lesbian students (D'Emilio, 1992).

In considering the experiences of homosexual students, and using a detailed 22 page questionnaire, D'Augelli (1991) examined the identity processes of 77 self-identified gay male college students registered at a large mid-Atlantic state university. D'Augelli's research suggests that there is considerable variability in the manner in which gay men address issues of sexual orientation with respect to their college experiences. Conclusions suggest that nearly all participants were well aware of gay feelings before entrance into university, gay men, during the college years, experience a high degree of psychological tension in the management of gay status in both intimate and public contexts. "On the average, these men noted their openness about being gay in the center of a continuum of hidden-disclosed" (D'Augelli, 1991, p. 145).

Homosexual men and women on campus share the experience of oppression with other oppressed groups but in ways that may be quite different. As opposed to race and gender, a gay man or lesbian may *pass* as heterosexual. While historically less equitably open to women and persons who are other than white, gay men have always been present in institutions of higher learning. The questions for both men and women are: what is their experience of sexual difference? and can they stay productively within their institutions

once their homosexuality becomes publicly known? Faculty who are homosexual may be denied tenure or promotion, while homosexual students may be denied funding, or become alienated within homophobic departments. A psychology professor at the University of Toronto indicates that although he is the only "publicly gay professor on the faculty,...there are 11 other male professors and one female professor that I know (who are homosexual" (Appleby, 1993).¹⁷

Art Education.

While it was earlier noted that sexual orientation has been named as a relevant constituent of subjectivity by a number of art educators, others continue to claim the (in)significance of the artist's gendered and sexed subjectivities:

About sex and gender. The history of art is replete with gay and lesbian as well as heterosexual artists. However, these are essentially biological categories, so they provide little guidance when it comes to studying the actual work any particular artist has created ... From the standpoint of art teaching, the analysis of artists' personalities, behavior, and sexual orientation tends to be a cop-out: it avoids the central task of figuring out what works of art mean, making determinations of excellence, and deciding how they bear on the lives of our students. (Feldman 1993, p. 59)

As has been earlier noted, it is the widespread cultural derogation of homosexuality which has delimited the extent to which the art practices of homosexual men and women have both reflected sexual diversity and/or have been considered by critics and educators. A research project which considers the post-secondary visual art experiences of homosexuals is then an unlikely research project. The distaste for the subject is perhaps revealingly implied as Feldman (1993) negates the significance of homosexuality to the practices of art, but does so by scattering homosexuality and murder in the same hand.¹⁸

Does it matter that Leonardo and Michelangelo were reputedly homosexual; that *The Horse Fair* was painted by Rosa Bonheur, a lesbian; that David Hockney is gay? No more than the fact that...a great sculptor shot and killed a man in 1527. (p. 59)

Given the earlier identified cultural perception of the relationship between artistic skills and male homosexuality, any consideration of sexual orientation with respect to programs of studio art education may be particularly significant. In a survey of the doctoral literature concerning American studio education between 1964-1984, LaChapelle (1988) notes the extent and variety of both the subject matter and methodologies. In considering 332 dissertations, LaChapelle identifies a category for a primary research focus on "studies of the psychological and social set that artists bring to a professional education setting" (p. 74), and a category for *women and minorities* but, studies concerning sexual orientation, if present, were neither addressed nor specifically identified.

The efforts to control representation by the dominant cultural institutions also have been noted. As with the production and criticism of visual art, programs and institutions developed for the study and teaching of art have historically been controlled by members of the dominant culture. As such, visual arts programs have most often reflected the norms of the culture as determined by that group. The subjects of study, research and art practice at post-secondary institutions, as well as the subjects not chosen or encouraged speak vigorously to the institutions and the culture's values.

In programs of visual art's education, admission and progression standards, acceptability of artistic content and method, determination of historical and critical relevance with respect to both the making and study of art, design of facilities, design and implementation of curriculum, are among the factors which have been controlled by those with cultural and institutional authority. Programs of visual art most often are, by nature, studio based. As such, all aspects of studio art education are focused around the art practices of individual students by which they are considered for admission, and which are subsequently evaluated by the commonly utilized *critique system* which determines class ranking, progression, and access to scholarship and other funding sources. Most aspects of the programs in visual art therefore, including admission criteria and strategies, media,

method and content, and grading and progression standards, are controlled by individual faculty members or small groups of faculty who represent the department's and or institution's dominant ideologies and interests.

Criteria for admission and grading in programs of visual art education, as an example, are highly subjective and often poorly defined. Individual faculty members claim total authority over all aspects of the student's artistic production if that student is to succeed according to the institution's grading and progression standards. Well qualified students who do not conform to the institution's bias may not be admitted to undergraduate or graduate programs. If admitted, such students may do poorly once engaged in the studio course offerings, or may be forced to dramatically alter artistic content, media, and method in order to conform to the ideological and artistic inclinations of the faculty member or institution.

The body of research which specifically considers education in the visual arts is, for a number of reasons, limited. Traditionally the field of education has been identified as feminine. Perhaps predictably, Chapman (1982) notes that more women than men are enrolled in both post-secondary art and art education programs. Similarly, although the twentieth century art world has been dominated by men, within the broader culture, when it is compared to science or engineering as alternatives, art has also been broadly female identified. Chapman (1982) notes the cultural stereotype which suggests that art is seen as the subject "of natural interest to women - an extension of some biological urge to decorate the nest or adorn the body" (p.92). Similarly, the concept of "female sensibility" in artistic practice has been closely linked to the devaluing of women's experience and cultural associations of the feminine with "passivity, dependency, delicacy, ineffectualness, and a lack of seriousness or commitment" (Collins, 1981, p.84). Although male artists may be praised for a sensitivity associated with the *feminine*, Wayne (1974) has acknowledged that the non-conforming male artist may have the label *feminine* attached punitively in any

critical examination of his work, and, as Chapman (1982) suggests, "men who show an interest in art have sometimes been prejudged as effeminate" (p.92). The field of art education then, has suffered particularly low status because of its double feminine identification (Sandal, 1991).

Over a ten year period, psychologist Frank Baron (1972) undertook a major investigation of art school students at the San Francisco Art Institute. Baron utilized observation, interviews, and adopted empirical techniques to his task of understanding artistic development with particular reference to topics such as talent, creativity, aesthetic judgment, and career and educational choices. While sexual orientation was not specifically addressed, homosexuality has been associated with challenges to the cultural constraints of gender. Barron (1972) noted that sex (gender) differences in creative individuals were often less pronounced. "Sex-specific interests and traits that are descriptive of men and women in general seem to break down when we examine creative people" (p. 33). Barron reports that the male students were considerably more "passionate" (p.34) than the female students about their art work, revealing "a dedication that is just not expressed by women art students" (p.35). More men than women also felt that their art productions were superior to the work of other students at their institution.

In an analysis of the results of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), Barron (1972) concludes:

the male artists as a group present on the MMPI a portrait that might be called the "gentleman pirate" motif. They show an independence of thought and unconventionality that leads to unusual conclusions and experiences. They are flexible, creative, spontaneous, and there is a certain flair to their personal style. They move toward life with vigor, seeking experience with a restlessness, expansiveness, and enthusiasm that may shade into irritability or quick flashes of anger...This slight swagger to their walk however, is tempered by a civilized sensitivity to nuance. They see themselves as polite, sensitive, rational, empathic, and fair, with some detachment and capacity for reserve....There is an awareness of the basic requirements of social living, with a sense of individuality and freedom

within these broad outlines.... This apparent balance between spontaneity and restraint, structure and chaos, is achieved at some cost. Both verve and sensitivity seem to depend on an openness to experience, including heightened sensitivity to one's own physical and mental operations, which bring in its wake intrapsychic struggle and complexity.... Feelings of anxiety, perplexity, and isolation are experienced, not repressed... The group profile of these students seems to indicate an evolving structure; nothing is settled, conflict must be solved, not denied. In the process, the usual aggressive go-getter male role is left behind, its place taken by an emphasis on internal complexity, sensitivity, and a differentiated response to life. (p.45)

Whitesel (1984) designed a research study to consider the differences between the self-perceived personality characteristics of graduate male and female art students to students in English and psychology. The inquiry sought to determine if female and male art students expressed different personality characteristics, and secondly whether male and female art students expressed personality characteristics different from those expressed by members of the same sex but in a different discipline. The results revealed significant differences only between the male and female art students. The female students expressed characteristics which included: seeking change, complexity, and variety in addition to characteristics of competition and aggression. While the project did not account for the sexual orientation of its participants, Whitesel notes that the "overstepping of sex-role boundaries has not been unusual for art students of either sex" (p.54).

A recent doctoral dissertation at Columbia University Teacher's College considered the education of *didactic contemporary artists*. In recognizing the ways that a formalist aesthetic devalues or avoids the psychological, cultural, socioeconomic, utilitarian, and political aspects, of art, Reisman (1991) undertook a descriptive study of the artistic development and artwork of six *cultural activist* artists, that is artists who use their artwork to effect social change.¹⁹ Reisman sought a clearer understanding of the relationship between an artist's intentions and the cultural use to which their artwork was put. Reisman concludes art education, from this perspective, includes processes that can

be viewed as a "social form of problem finding" (p. 24). The artists (Tim Rollins, Martha Rosler, Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Karen Ramspacher, and Krzysztof Wodiczko) reflect a concern for "political activism, education, collaborative processes, and a public approach to art" (p. 44). Content areas include: social issues and matters of public policy such as housing, AIDS, free speech, and consumerism. Sexual orientation was not addressed as a factor for consideration.

Summary of the Review of the Literature

As noted, there is evidence to suggest the varieties of ways in which gay male and lesbian artists constitute their sexual subjectivities in relation to their art practices and to the broader culture. The literature review also suggests that there is an increasing, but still extremely limited, body of research which considers the experiences of lesbians and gay men within the general education system. However, there is an absence of research which specifically addresses sexual orientation and post-secondary education in visual art and the three central questions relevant to this inquiry: (1.) what are the relationships between individual subjectivities and the contemporary art practices of gay male artists? (2.) what relationships do contemporary art practices of gay male artists have to the social practices of the broader culture? and, (3.) how do cultural institutions of post-secondary education in visual arts both locate and address the experience of gay artists?

Notes:

¹ Three approaches to aesthetics have been identified: formalism, anti-formalism, and pluralism (Hart, 1991). The formalist aesthetic stance utilizes traditional Western standards as a means by which all art forms can be considered and compared and, during much of the twentieth century, the concept of formalism has been a *master* approach to aesthetics and the constitution of definitions of art. Within the theoretical framework of formalism, four major features have been determined: the privileging of the art object; an

autonomy of art objects as sequestered in galleries and museums; the notion of *disinterestedness* where art is unique in its capacity to precipitate a response in particularly informed viewers trained to contemplate art with an attitude specific to that activity; and finally, the recognition of art as an expression of the consciousness of a single artist (Berleant, 1986; Lauter, 1990).

²While high modernism claimed and sought to be *apolitical* in its endeavors, it was not so. Modernism "stood for *order* - the obedience to function...the respect for 'specificity' and 'tradition' in Greenberg's aesthetics - everything in its proper place, doing its duty, fulfilling its preordained role in patriarchal culture" (Burgin, 1986, p. 47).

³Any thorough literature review would reveal a wide range of sometimes contradictory definitions of the term *postmodern*, and, as well, diverse conceptualizations of its interface with the term and notions of *poststructuralism*. The former, as an example, has been considered an umbrella term for the latter (Pinar & Reynolds, 1992), or the terms are considered to mesh and overlap and are often been used interchangeably (Lather, 1991). They are not however, identical constructs. If postmodernism "represents the contemporary 'avantgarde' in the arts, poststructuralism must be its equivalent in critical theory" (Huyssen, 1984/1990, p. 258). Postmodernism represents cultural shifts while poststructuralism represents a "working out of those shifts within the arenas of academic theory" (Lather, 1991, p. 4). While the use of the term may vary because the definitions, among the various sources quoted, differ, postmodernism is here most often used to refer to the directions of visual art since the 1960s which followed and are a reaction to, *high* modernism.

⁴Those who have been excluded from representation by a *universal subject* as a consequence of class, race, gender, or sexual orientation are likely to experience the ideological demise of the coherent and relatively stable subject of modernism differently than those who have lived at the center of its construction.

⁵While a full discussion of the relationship between theory and the practices of visual art is beyond the present purpose, a brief examination of the interimplications is warranted. Carroll (1995) suggests that the notion of artwork as a species of theorizing is currently a commanding critical perspective. The connection between theory and artwork can be considered by speculating on the impact (on theory) of sexually dissident artwork. Carroll challenges the assertion that avant-garde art of the present, by definition, in its subversion of expectations, is able to elicit theoretical insights. Carroll counters that while art may subvert viewer's expectations and cause bewilderment, there is little evidence to suggest that the viewer is able to move on to the level of theoretical insight. While not denying that artworks are connected to theory, Carroll concludes that avant-garde artwork becomes a "symbol around which a new viewpoint coalesces and consolidates" (p. 11).

⁶The perspectives of postmodernism are often criticized. As an example, Holt (1995) notes: "Art in today's society is rarely censored for its content; controversial art is frequently shown regardless of its offensiveness...in fact, it often seems that the more offensive art becomes...the more lucrative the rewards are for the artist and the gallery. The value of such art is contained in its social, or antisocial, message, not in the aesthetic

properties of the image" (p. 88). In addition, postmodernism is also criticized for its lack of affirmation for transcendent or universal values. As such, the concern is that the potential for shared experience and mutually beneficial beliefs is negated (Holt, 1995).

⁷It is not possible to speak of the terms *postmodernism* or *feminism* in monolithic terms, and the relationship of both to the term *poststructuralist* is also variable. While feminism may have affinity with poststructuralist thinking, it owes it "no debt of gratitude" (Luke & Gore, 1992, p. 4). Feminist theory may be seen as an integrated part of more general poststructuralist theorizing in the Academy (Smith, 1987), an example of postmodern philosophy (Flax, 1990), or a way for postmodernism to ameliorate its shortcomings (Hawkesworth, 1989) through a pooling of resources by which feminism and postmodernism make a "proposal of conjunction" (Singer, 1992, p. 464).

⁸Some feminist scholars have suggested that the artist in modern western culture is a quintessentially phallic figure: the (presumed heterosexual) male artist is the ideologically centered subject of modernism. The ritual display of phallic attributes, in relation to the masculinized function of the artist, exaggerates a masculinity which, in patriarchal culture, affords power to the male subject. The construction of the masculine self of the modern artist is at the expense of female subjectivity (Jones, 1994).

⁹As illustration, feminists have challenged the authorizing of certain art practices and art makers over others where the bounds of legitimacy or the "criteria of greatness" (Pollock, 1988, p. 1) have been established by a select group of art makers and critics. As an instance, in its centralizing of gender, as well as other factors of *difference*, feminist artists and critics have been instrumental in the challenge to the perspectives of formalism and its preoccupation with the disembodiment of art and the severing of art from everyday experience and, as well, the noted recognition of the relationships between power and knowledge which have often excluded women. Putting aside the idealism of formalism, feminism has asserted the premise that art is indeed gendered. In that recognition, feminist artists and critics have transformed the very nature of the ways in which art has historically been produced and examined and, in so doing, have opened the way for the consideration of other factors of diversity in the practices of art.

¹⁰In considering the culturally perceived *overrepresentation* of male homosexuals in artistic fields, Demb (1992), in reviewing the literature, suggests that the question as to the nature of the connection remains unanswered.

¹¹Weinberg (1993) concludes that the tattoo "conveys a desire to be more than a voyeur, more than just an observer of the sailor's erotic play. The tattoo provides a way for the artist to be in the picture without actually being depicted. More important, Demuth is not merely recording an imagined homosexual encounter; through the signature he is defining himself as homosexual" (p. 1-3).

¹²Danto (1989/1992) suggests that "art has the privileges of freedom only because it is a form of expression. And to be seriously interested in making an expression is to be seriously prepared to endure the consequences of making it. It is also not an offence to counter outrage with outrage. On the contrary, it is taking art seriously to do so" (p. 97).

¹³While there are disagreements about the potential impact of art, that is, on its potency to effect change, there is nonetheless, a widespread cultural *belief* that "*art is dangerous*" (Danto, 1986, p. 4). When considering both rhetoric and art, in noting that it is the "office of rhetoric to modify minds and then the actions of men and women by co-opting their feelings" (p. 21), Danto (1986) concludes that: "there is reason after all to be afraid of art" (p. 21).

¹⁴In 1994, although Serrano's grant application to the NEA was originally approved by an advisory panel of photography experts, the decision was overturned by the National Council on the Arts, a presidentially appointed body which has, in the past, rarely gone against the recommendations of the initial selection committees.

¹⁵Weeks (1985), expanding on the work of Cohen (1972), writing before the AIDS epidemic, presents the idea of *moral panics* suggesting that in times of extreme stress, societies may, as an example, scapegoat those considered sexually deviant blaming those groups as the cause of the nation's ills. Attempts to control the cultural productions of marginal groups are efforts to reinforce the socially acceptable through an insistence on a return to established epistemological, textual, and visual art practices acceptable to more powerful members of the dominant culture. Sex is a "major flashpoint in art controversies" (Dubin, 1992, p. 38) and with the advent of the AIDS epidemic, the association of homosexuality with serious violations of cultural sexual norms and particularly with disease, has magnified even further the general cultural disdain for homosexuals. As a consequence there has been a mobilization of severe restrictions on the cultural productions of artists of diverse sexualities.

¹⁶It has further been suggested that when threats by external enemies subside, societies search for the enemies within (Dubin, 1992). Art critic Robert Hughes (1993), while unwilling, as noted, to personally review the Mapplethorpe exhibition, suggests that Americans, no longer under the threat of the Red Menace since the collapse of Communism, and having therefore "lost the barbarian at the gates...(have gone for) the *fairy* (italics mine) at the bottom of the garden" (p. 172).

¹⁷While not a part of the system of higher education, for other considerations of the experience of homosexual (lesbian) teachers which reflect on current status, see Sullivan, a pseudonym, (1993).

¹⁸Feldman's article drew a vigorous response from some readers. In letters to the editor of *Art Education*, Lampella (1994) counters: "the analysis of an artist's...sexual orientation can be important to understanding the meaning of some art objects" (p. 6), and also, to saving lives. Check (1993) similarly disputes Feldman's claims by acknowledging that his own education did not recognize gay and lesbian artists, and had it been otherwise, the difference would have been significant. "To represent oneself as a lesbian or gay man is a political act, and evidently, an unpopular one" (Check, 1993, p. 6). Feldman (1994) responds that his detractors "just don't get it" (p. 8) and reiterates his stance: "The trick in art teaching is to attend seriously to the *work* of the artist regardless of his/her race, religion, sexuality, blood type or hair color" (p.8).

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

Research Design and Orientation

It is the absence of a comprehensive knowledge of any matter of interest which initiates the research process in art education. Researchers choose relevant issues which are available for observation and description, and which may be, at least in some sense, idiosyncratic. The generation of knowledge through social research in art education may serve to: increase understanding, improve pedagogical alternatives, and ultimately, impact social practices within the broader culture. Research problems which engage investigators may originate from one or a combination of: (1.) theoretical speculations, (2.) reviews of related literature, (3.) personal experiences of the researcher, or (4) broader social issues in the culture.

Quantitative Methodologies and Positivist Inquiry in Social Research.

All research methods privilege a particular conceptual structure; conceptual structures privilege particular methodologies. Bruner (1990) suggests that "research on *anything* will yield findings that mirror its procedures for observing or measuring" (p. 104). As an instance, rationality remains a prevailing model in contemporary research.¹ There continues to be a conviction that *rational* knowledge, or that which can be tested by *reason*, will solve all problems, facilitate mastery over nature, and, in research practice, there follows a persistent belief that knowledge other than *scientific* knowledge does not qualify as *knowledge* at all. Emerging from the empirical traditions of positivist inquiry, investigations in education have traditionally been grounded in quantitative paradigms where, in efforts to reach conclusions which may count as *scientific*, theories have been used to generate hypotheses which can be tested under conditions where there is an imperative to be *objectively* representative and to yield evidence for generalizations.

There is currently a strong interest in examining the suppositions of social research and the disagreements regarding its purposes and justifications are perhaps greater now than ever before (Hammersley, 1995). As an example, Hammersley (1995) articulates his concern for what he determines as the inappropriate collapse between the activities of social research and social/political undertakings where, he argues, research has become undermined as a distinctive activity. From such an ideological perspective, Hammersley critiques: 'critical' research which he defines as an "umbrella term under which advocates of politically committed research often gather" (p. x); feminist researchers who argue for different "methodological canons to those of non-feminists" (p. xi); research on race which describes as 'empiricist' any research which is not overtly anti-racist in approach; and finally, the recent challenges to writing ethnographic texts which, emerging from the work of poststructuralist theorists, challenge any ethnographic writing which maintains a 'realist' form.²

While noting that its meaning has become somewhat obscured, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) acknowledge, that the term positivism has now become "little more than a term of abuse among social scientists" (p.3).³ To the contrary, Hammersley (1995) contends that the model of natural science should not be eliminated from the social sciences but rather, should remain the primary model. "In effect, the decline and death of positivism charts a process in which many of the problems which the positivists thought they had abolished came back to haunt them. We should not simply dismiss positivism, lest we suffer the same fate" (p. 20). While admitting that "positivists were dramatically wrong about many things" (p. 18), Hammersley notes that: positivists have recognized and attempted to address shortcomings; it should not be concluded that natural sciences have no relevance to the activities of social researchers; researchers should use caution in abandoning the principle of value-neutrality; the significance of the clarity of expression

must be maintained; and, finally, "philosophy must not be seen as superordinate to empirical research" (p. 19).

Qualitative Methods: Introduction

Eisner (1991) has suggested that the historical emphasis on quantitative methods, and the concomitant devaluing of alternative methods which draw from the long traditions of the arts and humanities, reflects both a limited and limiting conception of knowledge. The difference between "conventional research and what has been called qualitative research is a difference between doing art and doing science" (p. 14). A qualitative study is an approach to social inquiry whose primary objective is to contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon or perspectives of individuals under consideration through both description and interpretation rather than through predictive hypothesis testing. Qualitative inquiry does not assume universal realities, but rather, assumes that experience is multiple and infused by social meaning. Lived experience therefore becomes the object of study, and its description and understanding, presented using language and images, is considered of more interest than either the sole abstractions of theory or the numbers of quantitative research (Game, 1991).

Qualitative research utilizes information gathered primarily from: interviews, artifacts, and observation/participation. Burgess (1985) notes that qualitative research shares the following characteristics: (1.) the researcher works in natural settings; (2.) the design of the research project is modified, as necessary, as the study progresses; (3.) there is concern for social processes and meaning; and, (4.) the data collection and analysis occur simultaneously. Eisner (1991) concludes that six features contribute to the character of qualitative inquiry: (1.) the study is field focused; (2.) the *self* is the instrument of research; (3.) the study is interpretive in character; (4.) there is both a use of expressive language and an acknowledgment of *voice* in the text of the inquiry; (5.) the study attends

to particulars; and, (6.) factors of coherence, insight and applicability are used to determine the success of the research project.

Types of Qualitative Research in Art Education

The terms *descriptive research*, *fieldwork*, *case study*, and *ethnography* are relevant to defining the research design of the present inquiry. In *descriptive* investigation, a detailed accounting of the subject(s) under consideration is presented. The term *fieldwork* denotes the processes whereby the researcher physically goes to a site(s) for the purposes of data-collection. A *case study* is an approach which encourages an in-depth understanding of the life experience of the subjects under consideration.⁴ Merriam (1988) notes that case study research is an appropriate design when a *bounded system* can be identified:

That is, a case study is an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group. The bounded system, or case, might be selected because it is an instance of some concern, issue, or hypotheses. (p. 9-10)

In the present inquiry, the *bounded-system* could be delineated in a number of ways: a specific phenomenon (education of artists); a person(s) (two specifically identified research participants); and, a social group (gay males). Under Merriam's (1988) case study terms, the bounded system considered herein concerns *gay male post-secondary students of visual art*.

Merriam (1988) identifies four terms which define case study research: particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive. Research which is particularistic focuses on, and contributes to, an understanding of the specific phenomenon. Case studies address, in a holistic approach, the manner in which specific groups of people identify and confront particular problem situations (Shaw, 1978). Secondly, case study research provides a significant description of the subject under review, not in terms of numbers or quantifiable data, but in terms of language and artifacts. Third, case studies are heuristic in

that they contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon, either through the contribution of new insight, or, to a confirmation of what is already known. Finally, case study research is inductive in that hypotheses develop from a consideration of the data itself. Original hypotheses are subject to continuing revision as the process-oriented qualitative study progresses.

Social knowledge is produced through the reciprocal interactions of the researcher and the subject(s) of their inquiry (Ferrarotti, 1981; Catani, 1981). Inevitably, the researcher leaves, what Harding (1987) has described as their "social fingerprint" (p. 184) on the research problems, the processes, and the analysis. It is suggested that during case study research, the "demands...on a person's intellect, ego, and emotions are far greater than those of any other research strategy" (Yin, 1984, p. 56). As such, Merriam (1988) details personal characteristics of the researcher which facilitate the collection of meaningful data in case study research. Since such inquiries often involve complex inter-relationships and multiple variables, the researcher must possess a tolerance for ambiguity. Case study research is most suitable to a researcher comfortable with a comparative lack of structure and able to adapt to the changing research process as it unfolds. Secondly, the investigator requires a sensitivity to context and to the variables of the experience which include the people, the physical setting, as well as overt and covert agendas. Finally, because the interview process in social research requires the development of a relationship of trust and confidence in order that the co-participants, in a short period of time, are willing to discuss issues significant to their lives, the case study researcher must be a good communicator, capable of being both a careful listener and of responding with empathy.

The end result of case study research can be classified as descriptive, interpretive, or evaluative (Merriam, 1988). A descriptive end product concentrates on providing a thorough and detailed account of the social processes under investigation and is particularly useful in an area where there is little research information available. An

interpretive result in case study research provides the reader with conceptual categories, derived from descriptive material, from which prior theoretical assumptions can be examined. An evaluative end product adds assessment or judgment to a consideration of the research conclusions.

While the term is most typically associated with anthropology, *ethnography* is a basic form of social inquiry through which a researcher, via overt or covert participant observations learns about, records, and communicates regarding the group studied. Ethnographic research requires a strong commitment and an intensity of personal involvement with the likelihoods of "risk, uncertainty, and discomfort" (Ball, 1990, p. 157). In ethnography, the researcher does not rely solely on the subject's accounting of their own experiences but s/he also participates in the field setting and in a sociocultural interpretation of the unit of study. Ethnography employs the research strategies of other examples of qualitative inquiry: (1.) participant-observation, (2.) in-depth structured interviews, and (3.) documentary evidence.

A naturalistic approach to ethnography, as much as possible, examines the social world of its subjects "in its 'natural' state, undisturbed by the researcher" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 6). Naturalism required a "fidelity to the phenomena under study, not to any set of methodological principles" (p. 7). In order to understand human behavior, Hammersley & Atkinson (1995) argue, researchers must utilize an approach which "gives access to the meanings that guide behavior" (p. 8). Naturalistic ethnography and positivism however, are not mutually exclusive terms. In claiming the models of natural science, both endeavor to reach understandings through a consideration of the object of study as independent of the researcher and his/her practical and political commitments (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

Notably, because this inquiry extends beyond an analysis of the *bounded-system* to also consider a sociocultural analysis of the unit(s) of study, and because it considers more

than one subject, under the umbrella terms qualitative inquiry, using descriptions obtained through field work strategies, this research is best described as a *comparative ethnographic case study*. Because the researcher is a gay male conducting inquiry with other gay males, this study may be further denominatively honed and described as a *comparative autoethnographic case study*. The term *autoethnography* emerged from an interest in the ways in which anthropologists conduct and write ethnographies of their *own people* and the problems and advantages of theory and methodology which might be associated with such an undertaking (Hayano, 1979). Similarly, Clifford (1986) uses the terms *indigenous ethnographer* to describe an insider who studies their own culture and is able to provide a perspective and depth of understanding which yields accounts which are both especially restricted and empowered.

The problems of autoethnography "are the problems of ethnography compounded by the researcher's involvement and *intimacy* (italics mine) with his subjects" (Hayano, 1979, p. 99). The most common type of autoethnography is written, Hayano suggests, by researchers whose *master-status* is both obvious and important to their self identity. In autoethnographic research, the investigator "possesses the qualities of often permanent self-identification with a group and full internal membership, as recognized both by themselves and the people of whom they are a part" (p. 100). While sexual orientation is omitted as an identifier, Hayano suggests that the list otherwise includes "ethnographers who have studied their own cultural, social, ethnic, racial, religious, residential, or sex membership group, or a combination of one or more of these categories" (p. 100).

Objectivism/Subjectivism in Social Research in Art Education

Historically, the notion of *scientific* knowledge, assumed to emerge from positivist perspectives, has been viewed as objective - as value neutral and disinterested. This conventional notion of *objectivity* is sometimes referred to as *objectivism* (Harding, 1991). In objectivist paradigms, the object is considered to exist outside the conditions of

its perceivability where an event is "presented to an observer who takes up a 'point of view' on the action, who stands back so as to observe it and, transferring into the object the principles of his relation to the object, conceives of it as a totality intended for cognition alone" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 96). Accordingly, the *real* world is considered to exist independent of human understanding and can be understood by the *correct* applications of reason in successive efforts to reach the *truth*. In research endeavors, the object or the world, the social *facts* as they actually *are*, can first be determined and then described in a literal and univocal language where the connection between the word and that which it describes is direct. As such, reasoning is rule governed and disembodied. There is a split between the researcher and the external world, and the investigator (with the God's eye view) subjects the external world to the reasoning process by which it may then be reported (Hermans & Kempen, 1993).

Such a view presupposes a suspension of a particularized being whose existence brought the world into being and sustained it and, as *the* authorized standpoint, strives to make the researcher's subjectivities invisible. In the West, the white, male heterosexual view became the universalized *objective* perspective - the view from everywhere and, as such, was considered as transcendent, unmarked, disembodied and unmediated (Haraway, 1988). It is this objectivist view which is the "one afforded by high positions in the social structure" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 96). As an example, by presupposing the configurations and meanings of the body and desire, heterosexual men not only have legitimized certain options while refusing others, but have presumptively claimed an objectivity beyond the specificities of their own subjectivities, a particular dispassion not afforded to women of all sexual orientations or to homosexual men, or, in the West, perhaps also to men who are poor, uneducated, or non-white.

However, "not all reason is white, masculinist, modern, heterosexual, Western" (Harding, 1991, p. 159), and the purportedly objective claims of positivism, it is argued,

are inevitably rife with undetected assumptions and implicit agendas. The empirical methods of positivism have been premised on the supposed insulation of the results from the values of the researchers. Harding (1991) notes that the "conception of value-free, impartial, dispassionate research is supposed to direct the identification of all social values and their elimination from the results of research" (p. 143), but rather "it has been operationalized to identify and eliminate *only* those social values and interests that differ among the researchers and critics who are regarded by the scientific community as competent to make such judgment" (p. 143). Elaborating on Harding's position with respect to sexual orientation, if the community of *qualified* researchers excludes lesbians and gay men, and if the academic and broader cultures continue not to have their homophobic postures challenged in any powerful ways, it is unlikely that antihomophobic beliefs and interests would be articulated within a community of researchers which is primarily composed of individuals who benefit from the institutionalization of homophobia.

In endeavoring to address the limitation of naturalistic ethnography, Roman and Apple (1990) first note that subjectivity has been viewed as a "form of pollution in social and scientific inquiry" (p. 38), and then assert that research cannot proceed without an accounting of researcher subjectivities and without recognizing that researchers act "simultaneously within and against our contradictory interests by gender, class, race, age, and sexual orientation" (p. 39). Roman and Apple (1990) argue for a feminist materialist ethnography which shifts from affirming a "social world that is meant to be gazed upon but not challenged or transformed" (p. 53) to one which views "knowledge as arising through practical social struggle to change the social world, a struggle that in turn changes human subjects themselves" (p. 54). Roman and Apple (1990) argue that a major purpose of social research is to connect the inquiry to the task of: democratizing the institutions of our unequal society with respect to issues of gender, class, race, sexual orientation, and

age which "are structured into the very warp and woof of our society" (p. 41). Research into education, therefore, is not simply an inquiry "into an assemblage of neutral institutions whose role is to pass on 'the common culture'" (p.41).

As the (im)possibilities of transcending a particular viewpoint have been recognized and vigorously challenged, issues of objectivity have been at the forefront of many of the projects of social research. Roman (1993) concludes that most feminists reject *objectivism* where researchers attempt to "minimize or make invisible their own subjectivities, cultural beliefs, and practices while simultaneously directing attention to those of their research subjects" (p. 279). At the same time, researchers, Roman suggests, should be cautious of an unfettered enthusiasm for *subjectivism* which values subjectivities, experiences, and knowledges of research participants without talking into account the underlying "structures, material conditions, and conflicting historically-specific power relations and inequities" (p. 280). In response to the subject/object dualism, Roman (1993) suggests that the researcher cannot be separated from the dialectical relationship between the speculations of theory and the consequences of practice which she names as *double-exposure*. As a result, it is not only the subjectivities of the researcher which must be considered, but as well, attention must be afforded an analysis of the relevant structural inequities which may concomitantly impact the inquiry. Double-exposure may be utilized by researchers to "self-consciously and reflexively expose how their prior beliefs and structural (class, gender and racial) interests partially constitute their empirical evidence for or against their descriptions and analysis of research subjects" (Roman, 1993, p. 281).

While Harding (1991) argues that "one cannot afford to 'just say no' to objectivity (p. 160), Haraway (1988) notes that objectivity is not about the false promises of transcendence but rather, about particular embodiment where knowledges are 'situated'. It is only partial and named perspective, Haraway suggests, which promises objective vision. Considerations of objectivity then, present, not disinterested vantage, but rather, function

as articulations of particular discourses and relationships of power which share a concern for challenging views of situations or knowledge which do not account for their partial, contingent, and historically situated natures (Fraser & Nicholson, 1990). Once having broken from the "positivist insistence upon researcher neutrality and objectivity" (Lather, 1986, p. 64), Lather reiterates that since interest-free knowledge is not possible, researchers should feel free to substitute explicit interests and biases for implicit ones and engage in, and acknowledge, openly ideological research.

Reliability and Validity

Inherited from a quantitative research perspective, the notions of reliability and validity remain difficult to dismiss in qualitative inquiry. *Reliability* concerns the extent to which results can be replicated (Merriam, 1988). Because reliability is based on the idea that there are particular *truths* which can be repeated, however, the concept, as such, is more problematic in qualitative research undertakings with human subjects due to the protean and variant nature of human behavior. To make such an assertion is not to unequivocally suggest that qualitative research is never interested in *repeatability*, but rather, it is to suggest that reliability, or the replication of results, might more appropriately be considered as making *sense* of a different, but similar person/situation through the application of the theories and procedures which are developed through the research endeavors which undertake to make *sense* of the person/situation studied in a prior inquiry.

Matters of validity (the relationship between an account and something outside of the account, ie. the research, or the degree to which findings match what is *really there* in the situation studied) have presented a long-standing challenge to the "legitimacy of qualitative research" (Maxwell, 1992, p. 279). Critiques which have contested the overall validity of qualitative inquiry, Maxwell asserts, have been based on positivist assumptions, but, in response, "explicit attention to *how* qualitative researchers conceptualize validity

issues in their research has been slow to develop" (p. 280). In a detailed consideration, Maxwell suggests that understanding is a more relevant and fundamental principle for qualitative research than is validity as it has been conventionally comprehended. The validity which Maxwell describes "refers primarily to accounts, not to data or methods" (p. 283). Further Maxwell (1992) asserts that validity:

is always relative to, and dependent on, some community of inquirers on whose perspective the account is based. Validity is relative in this sense because understanding is relative...it is not possible for an account to be independent of any particular perspective. It is always possible to challenge an account from outside that community and perspective, but such a challenge amounts to expanding the community that is concerned with the account and may change the nature of the validity issues. (p. 284)

Ethnography and the Study of the *Subject(s)* of Homosexualities

It has been noted that the role of the researcher's subjectivities and his/her social relations in the construction of the ethnographic fieldwork experiences must be considered. As the researcher is the primary research *tool*, "they must *charm* (italics mine) the respondents into cooperation" (Ball, 1990, p. 157). Ball discusses the influence of *categorical identities* on the possibilities of data collection (referring primarily to gender and ethnicity), and suggests that ethnography is "much more like going on a blind date than going to work" (p. 158). Hammersley & Atkinson (1995) suggest that characteristics as "gender, age, 'race', and ethnic identification" (p. 92) may affect research relationships in significant ways. In noting that the researcher may not escape the consequences of gender, Hammersley & Atkinson also note that those implications "vary according to setting and are intertwined with sexual orientation" (p. 92).

In quoting Wax (1971), Ball (1990) notes the advice to researchers to remember that a "coquette is in a much better position to learn about men than a nun" (p.161). Given that earlier *wisdom*, what might be the variables at issue when a man wishes to *learn about* other men, especially when all of those men are gay? Similarly, one could ask what might

be the issues when a lesbian scholar chooses to investigate a lesbian subject? Most often, as Britzman (1995) has noted, "questions of gay and lesbian thought are, well, not given any thought" (p. 151). If however, the contrary were to be considered, that is, if gay and lesbian thoughts *were* to be entertained, homosexuals themselves have joined the making of the ineluctable initial query: can gay men, as an example, conduct an *impartial* study with other gay men? Gay academic, James Sears asks: "Can a homosexual scholar study homosexuality?" (Sears, 1992, p. 149). Predictably, Hayano (1979) suggests that the most significant factor in autoethnographic research is a concern for bias and the "objective/subjective polarity in collecting, interpreting, and reporting information" (p. 102).

However, this same concern about partiality often goes unrecognized by those whose subjectivity or *master-status* is statistically prevalent and is culturally assigned *high* social power. Since, heterosexual scholars have been comfortably ensconced in a disinclination to interrogate their own suitabilities for researching *themselves*, the question itself might hastily be dismissed as homophobic. Bourdieu (1977) recognizes that theory as a human activity is necessarily embodied but then goes on to conclude that it would be naive "to reduce to their strictly sexual dimension the countless acts of diffuse inculcation through which the body and the world tend to be set in order" (p. 92). Bourdieu's claim is a function of unacknowledged presumption to a transcendent (monovocal) perspective which disavows the capacity for alternate sexual perspectives to differently infuse and radically alter each aspect of the socially-informed body which Bourdieu so aptly describes. In other words, the visibility (and consequence) of the sexual body in theory/research has been inversely related to its privilege: high privilege - low visibility. It is because heterosexual male desire is embedded in the structure of discourse itself that heterosexual men, or closeted homosexual men, are able to abstract themselves from their bodies and to make universal generalizations which not only point away from sexuality as

specific and informative to all epistemological/praxis undertakings, but, which simply neglect to similarly question the issues of researcher bias when, as an example, investigators whose *master-status* is heterosexual undertake social research projects with other heterosexuals. It is imperative therefore, that the identification of this particular subject position (homosexual and antihomophobic) and the recognition of its potential and particular effects, is not rated as any more or less critical to impacting the outcomes of social research than would any other identified subject position, unless it comes to be deemed so.

If it is otherwise assumed that gay men and lesbians are already engaged in the processes of studying themselves, it then seems more productive to ask what *differences* there might be in doing so, and in doing so, openly. Initially, a researcher's homosexuality may impact three aspects of the social research process. First, at the time of the conception of any research on the subject of homosexualities, given the hostility and risks engendered by such endeavors, it is more likely that lesbians and gay men (named or unnamed as such) will express originating and sustained interest in the tasks of completing such inquiry. Second, initial access to gay or lesbian subjects may also be influenced by the researcher's acknowledged homosexuality.⁵ Third, homosexual men and women are perhaps most likely to support the contention of Walsh-Bowers and Parlour (1992) who argue that research with lesbians and gay men should not detract from emancipatory purposes. In reviewing 351 reports of research with lesbians and gay men reported in three major and 75 miscellaneous journals from 1974-1988, the authors suggest that if researchers rely on the "traditional paradigm of detached, value-free inquiry when studying oppressed groups, they might indirectly reinforce social structures of domination by masking them" (p. 94).

There are however, likely to be other significant implications when homosexual researchers choose to engage with a subject(s) of homosexuality. However, because of the

voracity of the cultural insistence that lesbians and gay men, even if sexual variance is acknowledged, otherwise (outside of sexual practice) *act* like heterosexuals, the consequences of *known* homosexuals, openly gay or lesbian researchers, undertaking research with other *admitted* lesbians and gay men, outside of homophobia and the combination of the *space* limitations and the negligible *illumination* of the *closet*, are unknown. Having noted the three factors which may incline gay or lesbian researchers toward autoethnographic pursuits, there is otherwise, little known regarding the impressions on theory and research practices of that choice: while research activities between homosexuals are occurring, few homosexual investigators have named themselves as such and fewer have considered the consequences of doing so.⁶

Antihomophobic Inquiry in Social Research

Any theories and methods of research presuppose a world view, and determine the ways in which individuals experience, and subsequently privilege (legitimize) particular knowledges, methodologies, and texts over others. Once a researcher is named as homosexual, an entire range of epistemological and methodological presumptions are immediately unsettled and it cannot be assumed that the same (heterosexualized) theoretical orientations, methodologies, or styles of resultant research texts are appropriate, or even relevant to, ethnographic studies of homosexuals by homosexuals.⁷ As a first response, an *antihomophobic* (against the hatred and fear of homosexuals) stance in researching homosexualities is a meritorious posture; as an end, it is short-sighted. As not heterosexuality, homosexuality has been defined by its lack (Hocquenghem, 1978). Similarly, antihomophobic inquiry into matters concerning research in education is also restricted in that its onus is also on that which is absent - that is, in this case, the noted distaste for, and alarm regarding homosexuals (either as researchers or subjects). As a consequence, antihomophobic research in art education is a

claim to particularity through the practice of a set of repudiations which represent its homosexual subject(s) by shadows of that which has been proscribed.

While antihomophobic inquiry in art education remains a reasonable goal, as focused on what such research is not, or is against, the theories and methodologies utilized, perhaps inadvertently, inscribe the homosexual subject(s) as the site(s) of absence. Further, in Freudian terms, homosexuality has been defined as an arrest in development - a stopping short which prevents the full story from unfurling. Antihomophobic inquiry in social research, as an objective in itself again fails by default in that it does not go far enough and sufficiently demarcate what the practices and resultant narratives of inquiry by, with, and for gay and/or lesbian subject(s) might become - how they might be productively constituted and expressed by that which is present and different in their conception and execution.

In reflecting on perspectives which may be relevant to antihomophobic strategies, homosexual researchers are particularly indebted to the significant contributions of various feminisms. Feminist research, while not contained by the following, may be described as: utilizing experience as a source of knowledge (Weiler, 1991); using the concrete, material conditions of its participants to originate and address the adequacy of the research questions and procedures and protocols which matter to those researched (Harding, 1987; Shields and Dervin, 1993; Roman, 1993); recognizing and naming its perspectives (Luke & Gore, 1992); recognizing the place of *other* from which it speaks (Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, & Cohen, 1989), recognizing itself as an interest group which acknowledges that its intellectual work is grounded in a self-conscious politics which seeks to disrupt the power relations of patriarchy (Ebert, 1988); rejecting the detachments of objectivism and acknowledging its objectivity as a function of standpoint - of situated knowledges (Haraway, 1988); refusing to replicate, in the research, the inequities of the broader culture in which the inquiry is located (Bhavnani, 1993); acknowledging the

interimplications of methodological, political, and ethical choices (Roman, 1993), recognizing the micropolitics of the research experience itself (Bhavnani, 1993), attending to matters of *difference* at all levels of the process (Bhavnani, 1993); and, affirming the presence and significance of the evident female signature (Miller, 1988).

Feminist scholarship has been of considerable ameliorative consequence for a surfacing antihomophobic gay-male perspective, and provides longer standing, and more widely available and recognized paradigms and literature (Kosofsky-Sedgwick, 1990). However, while homosexual men, because they are characterized as *feminized* males, have fundamentally different stakes in feminism than their heterosexual counterparts (Owens, 1987), feminist and gay male antihomophobic projects are not coextensive (Kosofsky-Sedgwick, 1990). While there is continuing disagreement regarding whether or not males (regardless of sexual orientation) can satisfactorily undertake and produce feminist work, for a number of reasons, the present inquiry, while irrevocably indebted to feminist scholarship, cannot itself be considered feminist in orientation. Although this project emerges from, and utilizes or adapts, many feminist perspectives, it is my position that neither is it a *feminist* study, nor do I, as its gay male author, have any legitimate claim to invoking feminist authorization.

First, while feminism may benefit from male alliance and advocacy, feminism is in no urgent need of male intervention (Nelson, 1987). Second, much feminist theory, by self definition, is concerned with "women as the central category of analysis" (Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, & Cohen, 1989, p. 27). Feminist theory must be answerable to the requirements of women (Weedon, 1987), and is usually conducted by, and particularly for, women (Stacy, 1988; Bhavnani, 1993). While all feminisms do not only address gender, the "fundamental goal of feminist theory is (and ought to be) to analyze gender relations" (Flax, 1990, p. 40).⁸ Third, while some feminist theory recognizes that it "need not assert that theirs is the only or the final word on complex questions" (Hawkesworth, 1989, p.

557), other feminist inquiry has constructed a feminist metanarrative which essentializes a dualist response to constructions of women which also functions to "privilege women...and the moral authority (also a monovocal one) which these tendencies afford femaleness" (Yeatman, 1990, p. 224). Harding (1987), as an example, "prefers women's experiences to men's as reliable bases for knowledge claims" p.10), and suggests that "white men's experiences leads to partial and even perverse understandings of social life" (p. 7).⁹ Fourth, feminist literature, in spite of its inclusive intentions, may often reflect the deeply entrenched heterosexist assumptions of the broader culture. Feminism has rarely disputed its heterosexuality, and when it has, it emerges as something different - as an even more marginalized lesbian feminism. As gender and sexuality are not the same issues, for heterosexual women to occupy an anti-heterosexist discourse requires a political commitment beyond her every-day interests (Weedon, 1987). Fifth, in endeavors to distance women from the limitations of the heterosexual male gaze and its sexual objectifications and naturalizing of the female body, much feminist inquiry has sought to locate itself at some distance from the corporeal body and its capacities for physical pleasure and desire. Grosz (1994) notes that feminists like philosophers "have intended to ignore the body or to place it in the position of being somehow subordinate to and dependent for all that is interesting about it on animating intentions, some sort of psychical or social significance" (p. vii)

Researching Homosexualities: A Queered Alternative

Accordingly, as a gay male researcher *re-searching* gay male subject(s), I require a multiperspectival *productive* alternative which allows for a plurality of differences, and which, at this historical juncture, might be termed *queer* or *queered* standpoints.¹⁰ Such a possibility is clearly not an alternative restricted only to gay men and lesbians. Kosofsky-Sedgwick (1993) has noted that some of the most exciting work around *queer* "spins the term outward along dimensions that can't be subsumed under gender and sexuality at all:

the ways that race, ethnicity, postcolonial nationality criss-cross with these *and other* identity-constituting, identity-fracturing discourses. Teresa de Lauretis (1991) has suggested that the word *queer*, as it gets attached to theory, was arrived at in effort to "avoid all of these fine distinctions in our (other) discursive protocols" (p. v). As an example, in the coupling of the terms *lesbian and gay*, while differences are implied in the phrase, they may "simply (be) taken for granted or even covered over by the word "and"" (p. vi). As a way to counter that possibility, a queered perspective offers a recognition of both heterogeneity in, and the possibilities of mutual identifications across, difference. In other words, while the particularities of gay male sexuality in this inquiry might be articulated and investigated under its auspices, a queered position operates, not from the specifics of *a* difference such as sexuality, gender, or race, but offers an alliance of relevance to an array of eccentric social identities which may be considered by a range of social research endeavors all enunciated under a queer umbrella.

A queered position in social research in education requires an ontological shift which is comprehensively resistant in its exception to dominant normativity. It is not merely an interest in the addition of the previously excluded to dominant discourses and research practices which otherwise remain unaltered. When queer theory is brought into tension with education, what is required is "an ethical project that begins to engage difference as the *grounds* (italics mine) of politicality and community" (Britzman, 1995, p. 152). A queering of standpoint in social research, as a consequence, is a more vigorous challenge to that which has constrained what may be known, who may be the knower, and how knowledge has come to be generated and circulated.

A queered position is one which first dislocates the agent of its constitution. While homosexuals have largely been defined by the discourse of the dominant (heterosexual) majority, queers participate in positioning themselves through both authoring and authorizing practices. As lesbian and gay (queer) subject(s) are located in an evolving

discourse which pre-exists and constitutes them, they are, at the same time, its creative agents - naming themselves and impacting the conditions under which queer identities are constituted.

A queered position may never be fully fixed, nor is it a definitive defence.¹¹ To urge the potentialities of queerness in the conception, execution, and documentation of social research inquiry around homosexualities is therefore not to suggest equable, coherent, and closed practices which might be organized around its denomination. Queered standpoint however, can be declared in the affirmative by producing visibility through that which it is, or, that which it might become under its own auspices. A labile queered position insists, not only on the partiality of exclusionary heterosexual assertions, but on the necessity of recognizing the admittedly equally partial, but nonetheless, productive differences of queered presence. While providing no easy nor immediate answers, a queered position provides a unique way of commenting on the social world, not only as constructed against the norm of un-queered perspectives by which its processes and outcomes might (in)appropriately be measured, but rather, through the claims of an alternative which expands the sphere of legitimacy applicable to all research. As an example, Britzman (1995) notes that the demands of gays and lesbians for civil rights have called into question the categorization and stability of such cultural categories as masculinity, femininity, sexuality, etc. and that these categories are "central to the ways in which education organizes knowledge of bodies and bodies of knowledge" (p. 152). Accordingly, the insights of queered research practices are not only of relevance to queer subjects. While restrictive research practices, such as homophobic inquiry, are damaging to lesbians and gay men, in constraining ideas and critical perspectives, such restrictive investigations also have epistemological consequence in that they yield partial and distorted knowledges for inquirers of all sexualities.

In considering emergent theoretical, methodological, and textual possibilities, such speculations around queer are not intended to abandon alternate viewpoints and tactics as totally pernicious and irrelevant to queer experiences. A queered position is not a push for an apartheid based on sexual difference nor a suggestion of impermeability between differing sexualities and knowledges. Lesbian and gay male social researchers engaged in studying the subjects of homosexualities can escape neither the implications of our sexualities nor the heterosexual prerogatives of the schools, Academy, and cultures in which we are indoctrinated and taught to *concentrate* - that is, brought to a narrow focus.

In refusing an unquestioning allegiance to, and confidence in, heterosexualized models however, a queered option in social research is a means by which the former's theories and practices may be queried and obstructed long enough to engage the pluralities of desire and knowledge. It is to participate in a struggle to access the potentialities of diacritical theories, languages, practices, and values by which lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, the transgendered and others might positively constitute ourselves and productively contribute to more expansive collective cultural discourses. It is to denote an openness to epistemological, methodological, and textual shifts which might occur as a result of a refusal to disclaim that which has previously been inimical to such undertakings and which queer now confesses and makes grave. This task, I suspect, will not be easy. Eisner (1991) notes, methods of research are not only epistemological, but political: "methods or perspectives that deviate from accepted norms are often regarded as mistakes, they threaten competence and conventional lore" (p. 51). Any move into epistemologies and practices alternate to those of the dominant majority are likely to be taken as inferior and as a wandering away from the otherwise considered *truths* of heterosexualized experience generalized to represent monolithically for all, regardless of diverse sexualities. Certainly, any effort to affiliate authoritative, established theory and research methodologies of the Academy with a generant, connotatively perverse term, is perhaps, if nothing else,

certainly a risky semantic leap which concurrently may vituperate and refuse the legitimacy of any resultant shifts in epistemological, methodological, or textual vantage. It is perhaps even more unlikely that the still predominantly white, likely heterosexual, male dominated (however postmodern), turns in inquiry will uphold queer bodies, practices, theoretics, methodologies, or texts any more enthusiastically than they have, for the past twenty years, adhered to those texts, epistemologies, and practices deemed feminist.

As an exploratory queered inquiry, this research study can only proceed toward an end which it cannot know, only to be able to claim it, at least provisionally and partially, at its destination. To appropriate Lyotard's (1984) claim for the work of the postmodern artist or writer, a queered standpoint in social research is not "in principle governed by preestablished rules, and...cannot be judged according to a determining judgment by applying familiar categories" (p. 81). It is in the acts of queered social research itself that the rules and categories are sought. To again attach to the possibilities of research to Lyotard's claim, from a queered position, research operates "without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done. Hence the fact that work and text have the character of an event" (p. 81).

To choose queer it is proffered, is to acknowledge and assume *responsibility* for epistemological, methodological, and textual spaces and also a willingness to interrogate those respective parameters. It is an effort which, while describing *difference*, resists closure around those terms and, for many purposes, including methodological, claims and affirms queer as a signifier of both that space and the resistance by which it is conceived. It is, as researcher, to open to, and examine, experience, including the specificities of multiply-inflected (gender, class, race) queer bodies which may inform methodological strategies and outcomes, but, in alternate methodological considerations have remained hidden or have been considered irrelevant. With Butler (1992), it is argued that the willingness and necessity of interrogating the queer subject is not to deny its existence and

agency, but rather, is to ensure its potentialities for continual resignifications. In an inchoate manner, this inquiry simultaneously assumes and questions queer identities - articulates and dramatizes queer bodies, lives (including desires), social practices, knowledges, and texts and, at the same time, calls them into question.

The potentialities of queered position in social research, while nascent and tentative, include, but are not limited to, the effects of: thinking outside of heterosexual epistemologies;¹² issues around objectivity;¹³ the queering of language and texts;¹⁴ the implications of the body and the erotic in research practices;¹⁵ the likelihood of raising the hackles of contrary readers;¹⁶ and finally, the interimplications of the Academy and schooling with the potentialities of transformative social practices.¹⁷

Research Procedures

Selection of Subjects.

"One selects a case study approach because one wishes to understand the particular in depth, not because one wants to know what is generally true of the many" (Merriam, 1988, p. 173). "The power of qualitative data...lies not in the number of people interviewed but in the researcher's ability to know well a few people in their cultural contexts" (Sears, 1992, p. 148). For the purposes of this study, two subjects were selected: one individual was identified through a newspaper article while the second was referred by an art critic who was familiar with the research intentions. Access to subjects was direct with no gatekeepers involved in that process. Researchers who choose to undertake social research inevitably also choose to make public that which otherwise might previously have been "maintained as private in the cognitive, social, and educational lives of individuals studied" (Constas, 1992, p. 254). As the research orientation refuses to subscribe to reinforcing the homophobic stigmas attached to homosexuality (through the use of pseudonyms, as an example), it was necessary to locate research subjects who were

willing to speak *on record* regarding their experiences. Because of the theoretical and political positioning of this inquiry, and because art exhibitions are public in nature, it was considered both inappropriate and unnecessary to use pseudonyms or to uphold any other standards of *secrecy* or the concomitant *shame* on which sexual secrecy depends. In following university protocols regarding ethical standards for research involving human subjects, the *Certificate of Approval* indicated that subjects would be identified by name and by art work. *The Primary Subject/Consent* Form signed by the participants also contained a statement by which each artist agreed to being named within the context of the study.

Subject A (Christopher Lefler) was selected as a consequence of newspaper articles which had detailed his experiences with the University of Saskatchewan at Saskatoon. The second participant, Subject B (Gayle Ryon), was referred through the art critic who had reviewed a Vancouver exhibition of his paintings. As such, subjects were selected according to non-probability sampling. While probability sampling allows the researcher to "specify for each element of the population the probability that it will be included in the sample" (Merriam, 1988, p. 47), non-probability sampling provides "no assurance that every element has some chance of being included (p. 47). Because generalization, (to outside individuals or groups), is not a goal of this research, non-probability sampling is appropriate for its purposes. The most common form of non-probability sampling is purposive (Merriam, 1988) that is, since the researcher wishes to gain understanding and insight, subjects are identified who may best contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon. In this study, both criterion-based and purposive sampling procedures were adopted. Subjects were first identified as meeting particular criteria, that is: gay, male, artists in attendance in visual arts programs at a Canadian post-secondary institution. Once the criteria had been met, subjects were then considered according to their abilities to provide insight into the inquiry.¹⁸

Data Gathering.

Data collection and analysis begin at the time of gaining access: there is not an abrupt period when data is collected when the *moment* before it was not. Data was gathered using three primary methods: (1.) questioning and listening to subjects (recorded interviews), (2.) observing behavior (fieldnotes), and, (3.) examining artworks, documents, and other records, and obtaining photographs of four selected art works from each artist.

Interviews.

Any ethnographic case study is constrained by the skills, sensitivity, and integrity of the researcher. With Harding (1987), who suggests that the best feminist analysis maintains a similar relationship, queered inquiry strives to place the enquirer on the same critical plane as the overt subject matter. Some feminist research has suggested that research subjects "can and should become full collaborators" (Stacey, 1988, p. 22). Shields & Dervin (1993) suggest that it is increased interaction and collaboration with subjects that yields "better, more accurate, and less exploitive results" (p. 70). However, some cautions are in order. It has also been suggested that in any such intimate relationship there are inevitable dilemmas in ethnographic method which may contradict feminist principles. Roman (1993) questions whether a research practice which involves a great deal of intimacy between the researcher and research subjects is any less likely to exploit subordinate groups than positivist methods. As an example, exploitation of research subjects seems unavoidable because participants, Stacey (1988) suggests, are vulnerable to "manipulation and betrayal" (p. 23), and ultimately to desertion by the researcher. Stacey further notes that while there may be an intention to fully involve the subjects in a collaborative process, it is, in the end, the researcher who authors the resultant ethnography. "In the last instance an ethnography is a written document structured primarily by a researcher's purposes, offering a researcher's interpretations, registered in a

researcher's voice" (p.23). Stacey concludes that such ethnographic methods expose subjects of the research to more danger and exploitation than more positivist, masculinist research methods. The relationship between feminist principles and ethnography, Stacey (1988) concludes, are ambivalent, and researchers require rigorous self-awareness in conducting their research endeavors.

Interviews, for the purpose of data collection, may best be considered as conversations with a particular end in mind. The research questions which were established prior to the interviews were general and provided broad guidelines only. I was interested in hearing the experiences of the subjects and not in predetermining (and perhaps thereby limiting) the issues by a prior identification of a less than flexible line of questions. As such, the questioning process was not totally open-ended, but neither did it in any way conform to a highly structured questionnaire, or, even to a consistent list of questions asked of both subjects. In response to the three primary research questions, samples of the initial pre-prepared general interview questions are as follows:

Research Question A: What are the relationships between personal identities and the contemporary art practices of gay/queer artists?

Sample Interview Questions:

- 1.) How do you consider or name yourself as a maker of art?
- 2.) Do you see yourself as identified with any one group or groups? If so, which one or ones?
- 3.) Does your art practice, in terms of content, medium, method, purposes, etc., relate to your personal experiences and identities as defined? If so, in what ways?

Research Question B: What relationship does the contemporary art practice of gay/queer artists have to the broader culture in which it is produced?

Sample Interview Questions:

- 1.) What has been the public response to your art practice? Have you had particular feedback from education officials, gallery curators, community interest groups as examples? What has been the nature of that feedback? What effect has

- that feedback had on you personally, as well as how has it impacted your current art making practices?
- 2.) What purpose/function do you see your art practice has in contemporary culture?

Research Question C: How does contemporary post-secondary art education address the interests of art makers who identify themselves as *gay/queer*?

Sample Interview Questions:

- 1.) What have been your art education experiences within post-secondary institutions?
- 2.) How do you feel your interests and identities have or have not been addressed?
- 3.) How might programs of advanced art education incorporate the needs of *gay/queer* art makers?

Interview questioning necessarily proceeded from Category A through Category C. As an example, it was necessary for each subject to identify himself - that is, to *name* himself as *gay*, *queer*, *fag*, etc., before it was appropriate to ask questions regarding the nature and impact of those *identities* within the educational system and the broader culture.

Research Sites

The distinctiveness of the settings may be viewed as a resource (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Although *conversations* continued in other locations, the *formal* research interviews were entirely conducted in the private residences of the participants. The interviews with Christopher Lefler were conducted in the small sitting room of the home of one of his gay male friends with whom he shared living accommodation. Both participants sat on the floor, facing each other, with the tape recorder placed in an equidistant location. Both came prepared with notes, and made further notations during the interview process. Christopher's art practices were available for viewing on slide and video. The distance travelled necessitated interview sessions of lengthy duration. Twelve hours of recorded interviews were completed in a 48 hour period. The interviews with Gayle Ryon were conducted in four individual sessions, each of approximately three hours duration, in Gayle's very large combination studio and living area. Both the investigator

and research subject sat on chairs (at the end and side of a large table) with the tape-recorder equidistant. The studio was dominated by large-scale paintings. Also on display were the photographs on which the paintings were based.

Participant-Observations (Non-Interviews)

In the case of both subjects there were several opportunities for participant-observations outside of the interviews: a number of social functions provided the opportunity for the researcher to observe each subject in other settings. As an example, while inclined to preterition, a commitment not to exclude or refashion the uncomfortable necessitates that all informing episodes, however awkward, cannot be sidestepped. Any refusal to so censor and smooth the research experience, is to recognize that such incidents, rather than marginal, are crucial and constitutive to its accounts. The endeavor to speak frankly - to be as honest as I am able, is a refusal to censor and smooth the research experience in ways which might otherwise damage its sufficiency.

As an example, Halloween night fell during the month of data collection with Gayle Ryon and, by chance, he and I, both in costume, and without prior knowledge of the other's intention, attended the same extravaganza. While our costume choices may both be considered *drag*, they were otherwise disparate. For the first time, the researcher, and two close gay male friends, chose, not to dress as women, but to dress in women's clothes. Maintaining my short-cropped dark moustache and beard, with extravagant red fingernails and lips, shoulder length blond wig, a black dress slit up the leg, I was, to understate, in my 40s and six-foot-four in heels, unseemly and profligate. Conversely, Gayle and his two late 20s companions, highly sexualized vestiges of Anthony Burgess' penetrating work, wore bowler hats and were shirtless, suspenders draping seductively over legs and buttocks clad in white "very tight tights with the old jelly mould, as we called it, fitting on the crotch underneath the tights, this being to protect and also a sort of design you could viddy clear enough in a certain light" (Burgess, 1962, p. 5-6). Damp from dancing and

apparition in black lace, Gayle moved across the floor to exchange a few smiling words with the discomforted researcher who, knowing the future in the instant, would have preferred to have evaporated into his pumps. While such an occasion may appear on the surface to be only an incidental amusement, a more substantive reflection reveals significant data regarding, as an example, the diverse constructions of gay male subjectivities in particular relation to gender performance and power. In addition, the incident provides insights regarding the subsequent impact and shifts in relationships of power between similarly-sited researchers and subjects regardless of egalitarian intentions.

Documents of Art

While the text is privileged in poststructuralist thought and ethnography has been described as *always* about writing (Clifford, 1986), objections have been made to the gendered (male-dominated) privileging of writing at the exclusion of other forms of ethnographic inscription (Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, & Cohen, 1989). Tomas (1992) proffers: "this type of literary myopia can only be redressed in the course of a critical reassessment of the observation preconditions of modernist and postmodernist ethnographic activity" (p. 3). Tomas notes interest in the "choice of vision as a principal site" (p. 3) and a "resurgence of interest in alternative ethnographic practices" (p.3).

While Barthes (1971/1986) has concluded that writing could tell the truth about language but not about *reality*, he continues by suggesting that "we are at present trying to learn what a reality without language might be" (p. 320). While Clifford (1986) accedes that photographs are themselves a part of the ethnographic event, Tomas (1992), although commenting on photographs taken as an aspect of fieldwork experiences, counters Clifford's agenda which, he suggests: "occludes the photographs' productive role in generating metaethnographic knowledge on fieldnotes" (p. 9). The written document thereby maintains the dominant position over other technologies of observation/inscription used in the production of ethnographic knowledges.

Tomas notes that:

a strategy that privileges writing is fraught with danger. Ethnographic representations are not solely products of written words, they are produced by a variety of other contemporary technologies of observation/inscription such as photography, but also including film, television, and video. (p.13)

Further, in any consideration of the artist's self, Olney (1972) concludes one must look not straight at, but sideways, to an experience of the self in a way which also relates to the experiences of other individuals. As it is not possible to see or touch the *self*, the art practices of both subjects become mirrors for the artist's respective visibility, providing opportunities for those side-long glances by which one comes to know the *self* of the artist through its reflections or its metaphors- that is, the artist's art. In the present research, the artwork of each participant was carefully examined and considered as an aspect of data collection. All paintings, performances, exhibits were ultimately reproduced in photographic form from slides provided by the artists. Reproductions of all works are included as Figures 1- 8 and will serve as the focus of discussions in Chapters IV and V.

Analysis of Data

The researcher's task is to transform the interviews, observations, and documents into meaningful data. This study seeks to record the history of the present as it relates to the gay male artist/subjects of its investigation. At the same time, there are inherent difficulties in any claim to know that present where, as Connor (1989) suggests, there is a kind of conceptual violence in any effort which attempts to fix the fluid and formless energies of the urgent and tenuous present into any kind of knowable or speakable form. Consequently, understanding is impacted by a series of reciprocally implicated choices made around what is written as well as about the more obvious contributions of the

participant observations, interviews, or the considerations of images and other documents themselves.

Holstein (1992) has analyzed the processes through which research findings are assembled from conversations (interviews) between the researcher and subjects. Holstein suggests that although the researcher asks the questions and the subject provides a knowledgeable answer, both the formulation of the question and the construction of the response are "interactionally accomplished and locally emergent" (p. 13). Intersubjectivity is the "reciprocal sharing of knowledge and experience between the researcher and the researched" (Shields & Dervin, 1993, p. 67). As such, the research act itself is the basis of knowledge as researchers construct knowledge through the unspecified use of "interpretive practices as they bridge an 'interpretive gap' between subjects' activities and researchers' analytic categories and formal reports" (p. 12).

Neither is the analysis of the data separate from its purpose, that is, "theory building and data collection (and analysis) are dialectically linked" (Harding, 1987, p. 174). The analysis of data reflects the researcher's ideas, beliefs, and values, and continues throughout the research process. In examining and evaluating the data, it is therefore necessary to assess the "characteristics, interests, and origin of the person who did the fieldwork" (Hayano, 1979, p. 100). In the analysis of the data, categories do not simply emerge, but rather, categories are created by the researcher who consciously or not selects particular analytical preferences (Constas, 1992). Categorization may be achieved through three varying procedures: origination, verification, and nomination (Constas, 1992). Origination identifies the locus of the construction of categories by acknowledging the responsibility or the authority for the categories: that is, do they come from participants, literature, or the researcher as examples. Verification addresses the matter of justifying both the creation and application of the categories in the research and such supporting sources could include: external, rational, technical, and participative. Finally, nomination

focuses on the naming of categories: that is where does the name for the selected categories originate. Further, naming, Constat (1992) suggests is not neutral, but rather, invokes particular relationships of power and establishes a real or illusory impression of certainty and of knowledge.

Summary of Research Design and Procedures

This study of the experiences of two gay male post-secondary students of visual arts education, Christopher Lefler and Gayle Ryon, acknowledges the significance of issues of research orientation, methods, and analysis, as discussed in this chapter. In particular, notions of researcher subjectivities and cultural locations, conceptions of objectivism/subjectivism, reliability, validity are identified as significant to qualitative methodologies: interviews, participant/observations, and the review of documents which form the basis of this inquiry.

Notes:

¹By rationality, it is meant that much research aims for a consistency in which the same circumstances will produce the same course of action. Decisions are made on the basis of achieving certain aims. The concept of rationality may be particularly questionable in research around the arts. While notions of rationality in research may seek to minimize ambiguity, in the conception, production, and reception of visual art, ambiguity might rather be mobilized.

² As an instance, Hammersley is likely to take exception to the work of Strathern (1987) who suggests that *fiction* cannot be eschewed altogether. Rather, she suggests, ethnographic texts reflect particular writing practices and reveal only partial accounts. It is an academic writer's choice of literary or scientific style which is a signal to the reader of the kind of *fiction* which is being presented.

³Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) summarize the major tenets of positivism. First, the methods of the physical sciences are assumed to share a common logic - that is quantitatively measured variables are manipulated in order to determine the relationships among them. It is this relationship which is the defining feature of *science*. Second, events are explained by appealing to universal laws that state that relationships between variables

will remain constant across all of the relevant sets of circumstances. Therefore, in such a model, there is a premium placed on the generalizability of the findings. Third, positivists are interested in the observable - that is scientific theories must correspond to the state of the world which it examines. As such, standard procedures for data collection and measurement across observers are required.

⁴Case studies may be single or multiple in design. A single case study may be critical in that one case meets all the criteria for a particular inquiry, an extreme or unique case in which the situation is rare, or revelatory in that the case has previously been inaccessible to research investigation (Yin, 1984).

⁵Krieger (1982) notes, as an example, that a lesbian who studies other lesbians, as an *insider*, has "an important sensitivity to offer" (p. 108). At the same time: "she is also more vulnerable than the nonlesbian researcher, both to pressure from the heterosexual world - that her studies conform to previous works and describe the lesbian reality in terms of its relationship with the outside - and to pressure from the inside, from the lesbian community itself - that her studies mirror not the reality of that community but its self-protective ideology" (Krieger, 1982, p. 108). According to such identified constraints, at all phases of the research process, the homosexual researcher is first compelled to consider the often contradictory demands of both the homosexual *insiders*, who are the subjects of the research, and also those heterosexual *outsiders* who have determined and authorized the parameters for all aspects of the research undertaking and who may judge its success by measures which are alien and unreasonable to its purposes.

⁶I have written about the possible impact(s) of a culturally dissident researcher undertaking inquiry with, or about, culturally dissident subject(s). See Honeychurch, K. (1996).

⁷ As an example, the language of the research is of particular relevance in the study of homosexualities because, as early as the conceptualization of an inquiry with homosexual men or women, it must be acknowledged that it is impossible even to name (regardless of the specific term) the potential subjects of such investigation without engendering at least a measure of derogation and the opening of oneself to physical threat or harm. Having named the subject, in researching matters of (homo)sexualities, the sanctions of language continue to be ineluctable as the denunciative heterosexualizing discourses of powerful cultural institutions embed the subject in its vituperative terms. A homosexual researcher who undertakes to study a homosexual subject that is, must endeavor to do so under conditions and with a language which has been instrumental in its castigation. In other words, when the subject(s) is researched within the Academy, it is, to date, constrained by the very nature and limits of the discourse which have sought its exclusion in the first place.

⁸While the significance of gender is recognized in this study, its central purpose is not the analysis of gender relations. Hammersley (1995) notes that while gender is significant, and its previous neglect "scandalous" (p. 50), it should not be given priority over other possible variables.

⁹Hammersley (1995) again cautions that: "we must beware of claims that one group or category of people necessarily has more valid insights than another" (p. 53). Hammersley suggests that women's insights lead, not to access to "guaranteed truths" (p. 53), but rather is an acknowledgment of the relative accessibility and inaccessibility of particular sorts of insight to those in different social positions" (p. 54). Further, as a gay man, I would concur with Hammersley (1995) that women "are not the only category of persons who experience more than one culture" (p. 54). As a white male, it might be assumed that I have access to particular social, economic, and political opportunities as a function of my gender and race. Until the personal and then public recognition of my homosexuality, I would have agreed. However, as an openly gay man, given the power of the negative valence attached to male homosexuality in Western culture, there is an entire and significant shift in whatever privilege might otherwise be experienced.

¹⁰The word queer and that which it connotes, is located in a set of formidable and omnipresent discourses which privilege and reify that which it is not. The current selection of the word *queer* in this inquiry is located in an historically and geographically specific context where its meaning oscillates even in relation to other signs of non-heterosexualities. As examples, in considering the experiences of men, queer may signify more contemporaneously than homosexual, more radically and generically than gay, and less playfully than fag, nancy, or poufter. It is also evident that *queer* means differently when hurled on the street as an homophobic epithet then when it is used in a descriptive conjunctural relationship with an evolving epistemology, methodology, or text, which it seeks to both reflect and constitute.

¹¹ There is strong reactions from those who fear any *fixing* of queer identities: Butler (1993) suggests that it is *risky* not to challenge them. Butler argues that such instability does not mean that she is not a lesbian, but rather that the ways in which identity is performed are the ways in which that being gets established, confirmed, and circulated. Fuss (1991) contends that gay men and lesbians, or readers of culture which stand outside that culture have a "responsibility to exert sustained pressure from/on the margins to reshape and to reorient the field of sexual difference to include sexual differences" (p. 6).

¹²In the generation and acquisition of knowledge, heterosexuality is most often assumed. As a consequence, even a rudimentary consideration outside of the mental categories it constructs becomes arduous because the *straight* mind universalizes all of its ideas and is unable to conceive of a culture which does not order all human relationships, as well as its production and ordering of concepts, on the basis of heterosexuality (Wittig, 1989/1992).

¹³In accounting for the impact of sexuality, heterosexist presumptions provide a distorted perception of desire by assuming and reinforcing the universality of heterosexuality. Prejudice is therefore mistaken for sexual knowledge. Queer inquiry, like heterosexist inquiry, is not value-free. Under its queered terms however, objectivity is not about counterfeit claims to exceeding subjectivities but rather, is about specific embodied beliefs and values which situate knowledges in particular cultural contexts.

¹⁴First, queered texts require that sexual subjects speak out as such. Second, texts produced by homosexual subjects, in reflecting the urgencies of sexual variance and the

speculations of a generant discourse, are likely to be marked by the imprint of excess. As an instance, in "asserting an ability to see beyond what is clearly evident; to grasp a reality beneath or totally separate from what is taught" (Bronski, 1984, p. 43), the *strains* of queered difference may be witnessed through the introduction of the often immoderate invigoration of *camp*. Having gained a measure of academic cachet, camp: exists in a state of tension with other cultural practices; is often about exaggeration and artifice; and, is easily recognizable to those marginal to the cultural mainstream (Bergman, 1993). Third, in refusing the anonymity of authorship, queered texts draw the Academy into the more intimate spaces of the body. As an example, because man is defined in heterosexual terms which has excluded that outside of itself, without claiming queer difference, a gay male writer is compelled to lip-synch discourse as a man in drag as a man. By exposing himself, the gay man subverts the power of the hidden male body which has suited the aims of a patriarchy dependent upon a masculine power fueled by phallic mystery. Fourth, queered texts are resistant to cultural binary distinctions such as male/female, nature/culture, homosexual, heterosexual where the requirement to describe oneself with the constraints of the subordinated terms are refused.

¹⁵As the focus of the culture's sexual alarm, the homosexual body comes prominently into view because it is deemed resistant in its registration of sexual/gender variance which is repellent to dominant culture. It is in a contemplation of that diversity however, that lesbians and gay men come to knowledge obliged to consider our bodies with a deliberateness not otherwise required.

¹⁶In the final analysis, it is readers' subjectivities which will ultimately determine meaning and attribute value to this, or any, research project. Because the study of homosexualities may fall well outside of personal experience, readers unable to believe outcomes that they do not see the truths of for themselves, may remain unconvinced.

¹⁷The Academy has been reluctant, not only to challenge its own epistemological exclusions, but to assume responsibility for recognizing their ultimate political impact by placing those epistemologies at the service of cultural practices (Hall, 1990). However, social researchers within these institutions continue to express opposite positions. Lather (1986), as an example argues for openly ideological and therefore political research, while Hammersley (1995) conversely argues that in making research political, it is undermined as a distinctive activity.

¹⁸ An initial interview was held with a third subject who was eliminated from the study because he did not meet the necessary criteria (was not enrolled in a visual arts post-secondary educational program).

CHAPTER IV: CHRISTOPHER LEFLER

Introduction

Christopher Lefler was identified as a potential subject for this research as a consequence of a newspaper article (Brown, 1994) which highlighted his controversial experiences at the University of Saskatchewan. Following a telephone conversation which requested and obtained Christopher's agreement to participate in the inquiry, the researcher undertook a 20 hour drive from Vancouver to Saskatoon and completed 12 hours of tape-recorded interviews over a 48 hour period.¹ As was noted in Chapter III, the purpose of this study is an in-depth consideration of the experiences of two individuals who meet the criteria of the *bounded system* (Merriam, 1988) which had been established for the overall determination of research subjects: gay male post-secondary students of visual art. Further, since understanding of the specific is the goal of the research, there is no necessity of probability sampling (every element has some chance of inclusion). Rather, the purposive non-probability sampling technique sought subjects who could best contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. In terms of case study research, it was evident that an examination of Christopher Lefler's experiences would provide data which was: particularity, that is, it would provide specific evidence regarding how he identified and addressed those experiences; descriptive, in that language (interviews) and artifacts (art practices), rather than numbers or quantifiable information, would serve as the means of data collection; and, heuristic, in that the results could provide new insights or, refutation, or confirmation of what is already *known*.

From the point of our introduction, there was a particular *comfort level* which was evident between Christopher and myself as two gay men sharing resonant and overlapping cultural and political concerns. As will be noted, although there was support for Christopher's art practices in some segments of the art, academic, and gay and lesbian communities in Saskatoon, he otherwise, for several months, had been *under siege* from

the media, the university, as well as from portions of the gay and lesbian community. It was apparent that he was keen to articulate his *story* and was eager to be able to do so in a manner which would not result in some kind of imminent retaliatory action. As a researcher, in seeking responses to the identified research questions, I was recording our discussions and was therefore able to focus on careful and empathic listening, and looking at the images, in ways which provided Christopher the opportunity to present his works, his positions, and their consequences without fear of castigation. For the purposes of the research, it was determined that the questioning and discussions would proceed via the consideration of particular artworks as the focal points. Between an introduction and a conclusion, the body of the data which follows is organized around four selected principal *works* of art.

Early Influences on Art Practice

After completing three years at Carleton University in Ontario in the Bachelor of Architecture program, but feeling the program to be inadequate, Christopher sought out universities in the West. In 1984, he entered the second year in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Victoria.² During that period, Christopher notes that his interests, in terms of art practice, were in issues of the everyday and in the capacities of drawings "to be produced by any form of mark making" (p. 2). However, as a consequence of the *coming out process*, Christopher left British Columbia returning to Ontario where he ended a relationship with a woman with whom he had been involved.

In 1987, Christopher re-entered the University of Victoria's fine arts program - returning with a number of evolving personal assertions which included his *coming out* as a gay man. During the earlier period at the University of Victoria, Christopher had involved himself on the university's rowing team, experiencing a "tremendous surge of self-confidence" (p.2) and, along with the evolving self-assurance, came an identifiable "political edge that I was starting to construct" (p. 3). In the fall of 1987, Christopher was

elected as student president of VASA (Visual Arts Student Association), but sought to eliminate the administrative hierarchy of the student association as a way of modelling an alternative to the punitive (to students) hierarchical operating systems of the university.³

Christopher's interests in his art practice, at this time, were directed towards explorations of "what it is that 'fills that object' (p. 7) - that is 'what is the subject matter and how does that come to be?'" (p. 7). Two early pieces, which he describes as "sketches" (p. 10), are indicative of a particular interest in the subject(s) of visual inquiry. Using his background as an architecture student, and utilizing a number of sculptural elements, in explanation of one early project, *Plato's Cave*, Christopher comments:

These lamps were all pointed with 100 watt bulbs at each corresponding sheet so that, as people walked past the hallway, that light got you right in the eye and you turned to the black paper and there you were cast as a shadow on the wall. You passed through it. It was a minor way of articulating this concern...how do we produce the subject within our work? (p. 8)

In a second piece, *Are you Different?*, which also questioned the relationship of the viewer, the artist, and the art object, working with photographs and slides, Christopher constructed an installation in which the viewer was again necessarily "bound by the work" (p. 9). Through both projects there was the a questioning of "subjecthood" (p. 9), and secondly, an interest in how *difference* is constructed within the field of Western visual art history.

Domestic Squabble - Couched Remains (Figure 1)

As with many artists, Christopher's art practice continued to evolve and to be influenced by his everyday experiences. For an artist whose artwork was obvious in its requirement for space in its articulation, there was an inchoate *crisis* generating as a consequence of the department's inability to allocate studio space to all its senior students. Although Christopher set up his drafting table in the cramped quarters, in his own words,

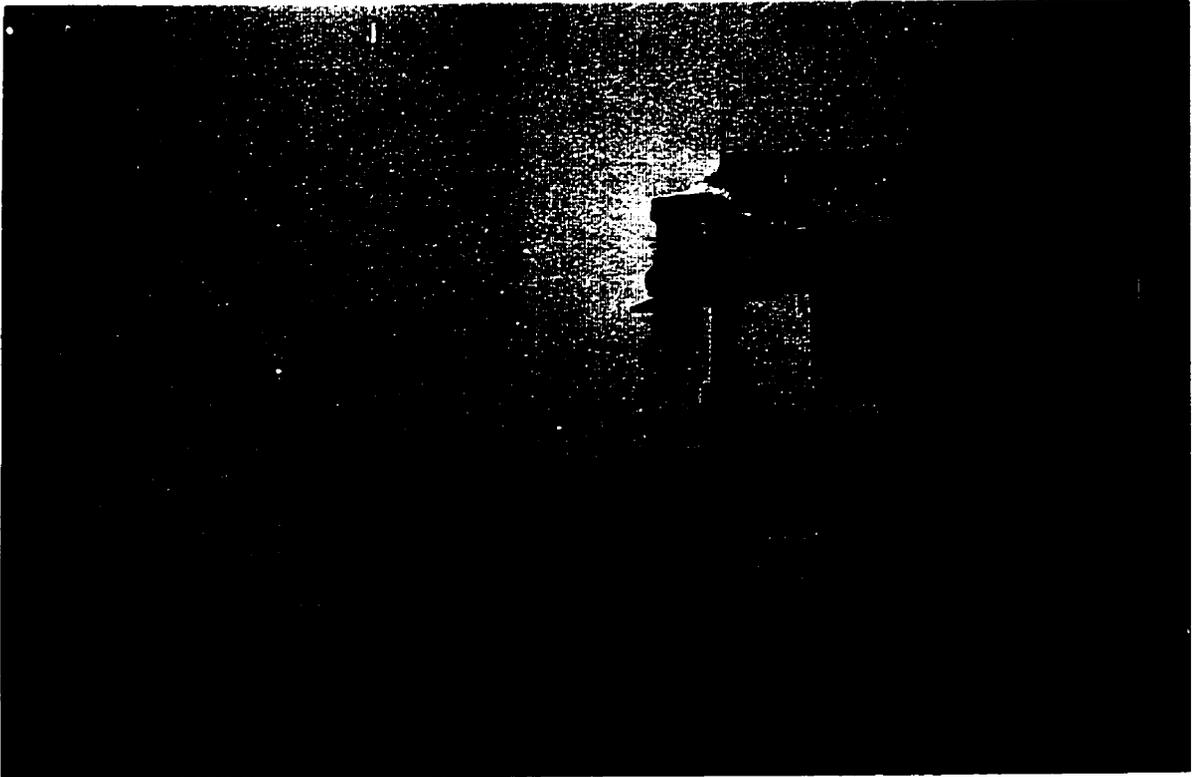


Figure 1: *Domestic Squabble- Couched Remains*

"I just wasn't producing. It was ridiculous. This isn't about my practice, my practice is about working spatially" (p. 5). In response to the limitations, Christopher introduced a couch into the studio space with the justification: "If I can't make art, I at least want to talk about (it)" (p. 5). The presence of the couch however, precipitated a prompt reaction from the department head who ordered its immediate removal on the grounds that it constituted a fire hazard.⁴ More likely, Christopher suggests, the distress grew, not from the actual safety threat of the couch, but rather, from a growing realization that the visual art's faculty have this "kind of art practitioner they can't figure out" (p. 5). "I was starting to question" (p. 4). "I think...(they) were perceiving me as difference - difference being unknowable and uncontrollable" (p. 14). The directive however, helped Christopher in realizing and formulating an emerging coherence around his work:

I constitute an enemy, whatever it is...to the institution. So I'm starting to pick up on how to articulate it. I'm starting to see that my practice has something to do with my political work, and my political work has something to do with my art practice, so I am going to start formulating my practice around it. (p.5- 6)⁵

The circulation of memos regarding the ordered removal of the couch and Christopher's concomitant refusal to comply, generated widespread *interest* and the involvement of the faculty, department head, dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts, and president of the University of Victoria. Christopher eventually acquiesced by removing the couch, but doing so in a way that ultimately would not resolve the university's complaints. Behind the visual arts building is a large open air space known as the sculpture compound. "I took the couch out of my studio space...hucked it over the fence...and just let it sit there" (p. 10).⁶ The act however, was not temerarious, and what the university might have taken as a reluctant act of propitiation was, in fact, from Christopher's perspective, a further stage in his art practice. As documentation, Christopher was producing video recordings and maintaining copies of all the memorandums generated by the dispute.

At a later point, the disallowed couch was placed on an altar constructed of huge aged industrial iron forms where it remained bound by Christopher's intentions to eventually set it on fire. Having consulted the near-by fire department and having understood their involvement, with his project, to be in agreement, ⁷ Christopher was aware that the firetrucks would necessarily have to drive by the department head's office (with sirens on) bringing to fruition, under a totally different set of engineered circumstances, the head's concern that the couch was indeed a fire hazard. However, the week before the scheduled event, Victoria was in the midst of heavy rains. Christopher explains: "The couch was so soggy that I couldn't ignite it if I had a bomb explosion. I went to the fire department and I said:... we are going to have to scout out for another day" (p. 12-13). The firechief wasn't available, but his representative, not only gave Christopher a less accommodating response, but tape recorded their conversation and forwarded a copy to the administration of the university.

Having lost the envisioned co-operation of the fire department Christopher set out to proceed independently of them. By then, his intentions were well known throughout the Department, as was his reputation for more general student activism.

All of the students know who I am. All of them know ...that there is this kind of controversy going on around the place and that someday this...(couch) is going to be lit on fire. What I did was I had a fellow that I had just started to date and his friend come out to help me, just to burn it, and video. (p. 13)

Dousing the couch with motor oil and igniting it with gas, Christopher, embodying "the refusing gesture" (p. 14) sat adamantly opposite his burning couch by now entitled *Domestic Squabble*.⁸ "So there I was uncategorical and defiant" (p.16). There were no firetrucks on the scene, but students emptied the building to observe the *inflaming* performance: faculty were otherwise ensconced in a departmental meeting. For Christopher, the piece had become a mechanism by which to *talk about* "these warring

factions" (p. 14) between contemporary and traditional art practices, and between students and faculty" (p. 14). From the university's perspective however, there was no apparent interest in such discussions. As a consequence of the incident, Christopher received a letter from the dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts which informed him that because his actions had constituted a (perceived) danger to lives and property, a memorandum had been forwarded to the president to recommend Christopher's expulsion.

Subsequently, a letter from the president indicated that the University of Victoria was considering legal actions and requested a meeting with Christopher.⁹ Accompanied by the president of the university's student society, Christopher met with the president of the university whose objurgation regarding safety also contained the conclusion that, according to the visual art's department head, Christopher's performance "clearly isn't art" (p. 18). In response Christopher notes:

At one point, I leaned back on my chair, put my feet up on his desk with the comfort that he had, and I said: "I'm not going to be told to shut-up here. Do what you have to do. I don't care. You are going to be graduating me in a year and if you don't think I know what art is by then, good luck for accrediting your program". (p. 19)

The student-run artist gallery invited Christopher to exhibit the remnants of his couch in the centrally-located gallery space in the visual arts building. In its new form, the burned couch was titled *Couched Remains* where, again mounted on iron supports, in the pristine white space of the gallery, it was granted a legitimacy which had otherwise eluded it. Anthropomorphizing, the couch had been immolated. Christopher admits: "It was so lonesome sitting there, that sense of: *"What the hell happened here?"* (italics mine) (p. 23). "It's so ridiculous to have a couch as a sacrificial lamb" (p. 22). Recognizing the absurdity, Christopher notes: "Because this was the carcass of a couch....(that reeked of naphtha and then flammable liquids that were still in it, embedded in it), it had the sanctity

of art practice to allow its existence" (p. 22). "Here it was given the credibility to remain." (p. 23). As a consequence of his actions, the administration suspended Christopher for the duration of the academic year. "For me it signified the end of the struggle" (p. 23).¹⁰

As he locates his "art practice at crises points that are site and event specific" (Young & Grubusic, 1994, p. 7), Christopher's work was growing into a "hybrid of performance art, installation, and story telling" (p. 7). An instructor pointed out to Christopher that he did *performance* work, that his work not only involved what he, as the artist did, but that his works did not remain *only* installations (as he had originally perceived) but rather, they included the inevitable involvement of many other individuals. "They are all doing this theatre with you" (p. 23). In noting the acuity of the observation, Christopher speculated that such an insight could not come from himself because of his experience of internalized invisibility as a gay man. "As a gay man I felt extremely isolated in this department.... There was only one other gay student...from what I knew he was pretty much quiet about his sexuality. I don't know if he's closeted but it certainly wasn't visible like mine...so I felt really isolated there (p. 13).

I can't identify or see myself in culture. So I just erased myself as present during all of this. Which I found just astonishing. I was really angry about that afterwards....(my work) is going to be about visibility and about articulating and knowing that I am present.... I just never saw myself as present. That, I know, is out of my gay experience. (p. 23-24)

University of Saskatchewan

After graduating from the University of Victoria, Christopher spent a year in Tokyo with his partner - an experience which was fundamental in galvanizing his anger and impressing on him the realization that he needed to be politicized around issues of HIV infection and queer rights. Returning from Tokyo, Christopher relocated to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.¹¹ Extending himself as a volunteer with an AIDS program,

Christopher developed a number of friendships and eventually applied for admission as a masters student in visual arts at the University of Saskatchewan. Given the events which were to unfold, the proposal which Christopher submitted in support of his 1992 application to the Department of Art and Art History has particular relevance. The experience in Tokyo combined with his experience at the University of Victoria dictated that he write a clear and *truthful* proposal in order to avoid finding himself again in a program hostile to the possibilities of queer activism. Opening with a statement which reads: "The art making process I engage in begins with the questioning of what we know as art," the document continues by acknowledging that his own work "investigates itself as art" (Lefler, 1992, Letter of intent, p. 1).

The proposed thesis of my degree therefore, is about Power. This thesis is about Control. Is about Oppression. Subversion. Affirmation. Validity. This thesis will speak through interfacing. Through relationships. Through the various permutations of a visual environment. Its origins are in the analysis of 'object-based art'. Its origins come through viewer/subject relationships. Its history is of exposition, of delineation, of reflection, of contamination, of opposition, of inversion, of confusion. (Lefler, 1992, letter of intent, p. 1)

In duplicating its format here, the proposal continues:

I need right now to make art about sexual politics.

The thesis I will work towards is about Power.

I need right now to affirm my existence as a sexual being--who does exist
AMONGST differing communities as well as within my own.

Is about Control.

I need right now to demand a STOP to the violence and oppression operating
against me and my community.

Oppression.

I need to speak to this.

Subversion.

I need to effect this on EQUAL ground.

Affirmation

I need to release myself from this restricted containment in order to see
myself become other than THEIR possession of my identity.

Validity. (Lefler, 1992, letter of intent, p. 2).

While gay subjectivity was not denominated explicitly in the document, it was, in any careful reading, certainly implied. Knowing the writer to be male, it would be difficult not to envision the letter of intent as a gay man's articulation of his sense of invisibility as a sexual being. In the October 4, 1993 proposal for his thesis outline, Christopher's intentions are made more distinct by his working title: "Imaging the Gay Body in Architecture" (Lefler, 1993, Thesis Outline, p. 1). The thesis states: "There is a presence in Architecture of the Gay Body, each acting upon the other to create a synthesis (A dialectic). I will centre this paper around Outing, (the third space, or the third term: the presence of the invisible visible" (p. 1). Christopher notes that he had labored in producing the proposal which acknowledged his intentions to work around gay identity and visibility and to connect it to architecture and activism. "I found myself in that odd situation again being in this notoriously homosexual ground called art-practice being the only one, and having faculty above me that are predominantly straight men" (p. 54). His conviction however, in applying to the university, was that he was not going to participate in any kind of a masquerade. It was to become clear that the university had either not read, or misunderstood, his proposal, or, alternately, had underestimated its implications.

Day Without Art for AIDS: *Masquerade and Draped, Black* (Figure 2)

During this early period at the University of Saskatchewan, two employees were among those involved in the early planning activities for the December Day Without Art for AIDS, and Christopher was interested in participating with them in the organization of events. Prior to his involvement, however, a committee member had written to Sylvia Fedoruk, the first female lieutenant governor of the province of Saskatchewan to invite her, as guest of honour, to officially open the university's Day Without Art ceremony. At the time, Christopher indicates that he was unfamiliar with Sylvia Fedoruk other than in her official capacity as the *Queen's* representative in government. The same, however, was

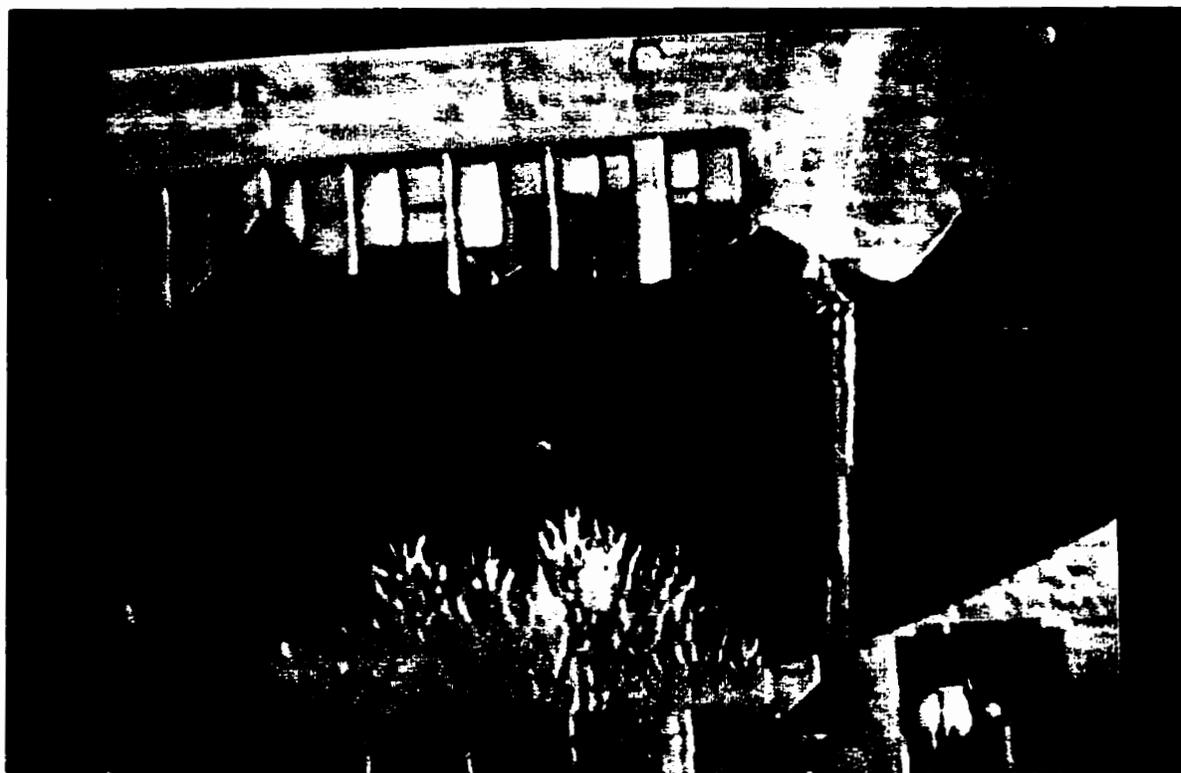


Figure 2: *Masquerade and Draped Black*

not true of other members of the organizing committee. In Christopher's words: "He (a committee member) said that the way that he got her (Sylvia Fedoruk) involved...is that he asked a friend of hers, a lesbian, to ask her, because...Sylvia's a *dyke*...I went; What? She's a what? (p. 59).¹² Having recently read a book which traces Premier Grant Devine's years in power, Christopher was angered by one particular essay which catalogued the "atrocities that the Devine government waged against homosexuals" (p. 59). Sylvia Fedoruk had been lieutenant governor during the period documented by the book and, Christopher notes: "She didn't say anything! She never said a damn thing!" (p. 59). The choice (of a closeted lesbian appointed to a senior government position by a rabidly homophobic government) seemed grossly inimical to the purpose and spirit of an event which was precipitated by a disease which has had a devastating impact on the gay and lesbian communities.

Realizing the conflict of interest, or rather, identifying Sylvia Fedoruk's *apparent* lack of conflict around what he believed *should* be her interests, Christopher reacted by informing other committee members that he was extremely displeased with Sylvia Fedoruk's significant official role in the Day Without Art ceremonies. Attending the first committee meeting, Christopher was outraged when it was confirmed that the lieutenant governor had accepted and was apparently excited at the prospects of participating and speaking to those who would be in attendance.

I just said right there: I just want you to know that this is humiliating for me as a gay male, artist, activist in the AIDS community. I cannot tolerate her being the key figure representing and speaking for all of those people that have died when she has had more than ample opportunity to speak to publics and privates where it would matter. You need to know that. I am going to use my voice, be sure. At the same time, I am committed to this project and will represent the (visual) art department on this committee. (p. 61)

Christopher indicates that his interest was in questioning the lack of action of the government which Sylvia Fedoruk represented. His interest was: "Why aren't you doing something? Why haven't you done anything? What are you doing here? It wasn't to say that Sylvia Fedoruk's a lesbian and I want everybody to know it" (p. 68).

In reflecting on how he might contemporaneously be involved as an individual gay, male artist/activist as well as a productive member of the committee, Christopher began considering the possibilities of his dual roles.¹³ Because Sylvia Fedoruk had actually been invited because she was a lesbian with power but everyone was going to simply pretend she was there as the lieutenant governor, Christopher seized on the idea of masquerade. There were others who shared his interest in a proposed performance to disrupt the ceremonies: an HIV negative man in a relationship with an HIV positive man, three women - a lesbian, and a heterosexual female graduate student, and a student in Christopher's drawing class, all of whom recognized the significant threat that HIV infection posed to women.

Exposing the homosexuality of well-known public figures is, among other things, Fuss (1991) suggests, "an attempt to demonstrate that there have been outsiders on the inside all along" (p. 4). Christopher's disgust with the charade intensified when he became aware that Fedoruk was previously a medical physicist at the University of Saskatchewan and was now, also chancellor at the same institution. As a result of her research on cobalt radiation for the treatment of cancer, Sylvia Fedoruk had been awarded the Order of Canada. Christopher comments:

This just gets worse the more I hear of it. There is just nothing forgivable about her fear of losing privilege. It is just inexcusable. I want to talk about this masquerade...Why is the gay community, the art community, the AIDS networking community, the university community, the arts department, and the faculty wanting to endorse this masquerade, to say this is the best we can do? I found very few voices who were willing to commit with me on articulating that (p. 66).¹⁴

The small group that were committed to the project designed black T shirts which read on the front: *We Are All HIV Positive*, and on the back: *She Kills Me*. After purchasing a number of inexpensive *barbie* dolls, each doll was treated to a recognizable Sylvia Fedoruk blunt haircut. After cutting the hair, each doll's entire body was wrapped in black fabric, exposing only the scalp and the identifiable haircut. "We had a bouquet of these death dolls each" (p. 67). Continuing in the theme of masquerade, the group, in imitation of the Victorian sequined eye masks on sticks, had intended to make "huge cheshire cat smiles with red glitter lips and big, bright, white teeth... (to hold) up to our faces and just politely (smile) giving permission, acknowledging that everything was fine" (p. 67).¹⁵

Through a series of events, it became more publicly known that there was a plan to stage a disruption which would possibly *out*¹⁶ the popular lieutenant governor as a lesbian. In that intention, Young & Grubusic (1994) note that Lefler came to be "characterized as a thoughtless terrorist, and an attention-seeking prankster out to destroy the lives of "decent ladies" like the Lieutenant-Governor. "Decency," of course, is an antonym for "lesbian"" (p. 7). Approximately one and one-half hours before the ceremony was scheduled to begin, and, in the midst of Christopher's involvement in the draping of the visual arts building, the head of the Department of Art and Art History asked to meet with him. Optimistically, Christopher considered that the head might be wishing to acknowledge the effort he had extended in the latter monumental project. Alternately, the purpose of the exchange was the department head's endeavor to extract a promise from Christopher that he would not, because of the severity of the impact to the reputation of Sylvia Fedoruk (and consequently to the university), continue with the planned disruption. The meeting was emotional for Christopher who, in response to the department head's pleas, asserted that, between him and his partner, "we've lost over 25 friends to AIDS. They are dead...how many more do I have to lose?" (p. 71-72). Refusing to capitulate but

proposing a palliative compromise, Christopher suggested the department head arrange a meeting with Fedoruk prior to the ceremonies and then left the meeting. "I walked out. Glen was there and I was in tears" (p. 72). "That's how alone and isolated I felt. This is the epitome of me being a gay person in the world. This is how it functions at the university" (p. 72).

A short time later, the department head requested that Christopher meet with the president of the university - an apparent move to intensify and strengthen the university's position. Without reaching agreement, Christopher left the meeting whereupon he was advised by security that if they (the demonstrators) *got out of hand*, they would be forced to leave the ceremonies. One hour before the event was scheduled to begin, Christopher became aware that the lieutenant governor would not be attending *because of the weather*. Realizing that Fedoruk would be absent, the five participants, nonetheless, strode to the front row of the auditorium each holding an arrangement of five death-dolls earlier described.¹⁷ The president of the university announced to those gathered that the lieutenant governor was unable to attend and that he would be speaking in her place. The earlier devised plans for the disruption simply stopped. "We just sat there silently" (p. 74). Although their intentions had been foiled by Fedoruk's withdrawal, Christopher felt that his earlier meeting with the president had an impact on the latter's address to those gathered. I realized, Christopher concluded that "I don't have to say anything. Our silence is enough" (p. 75).¹⁸

Staging Identities I (Figure 3)

The association between Christopher Lefler and Sylvia Fedoruk was only beginning. A series of ongoing events which further silenced and oppressed the voices of lesbians and gay men, in both Saskatchewan and Canada, reenergized the matter from Christopher's perspective. On Valentine's Day, February 14, 1993, Christopher Lefler, graduate student in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of

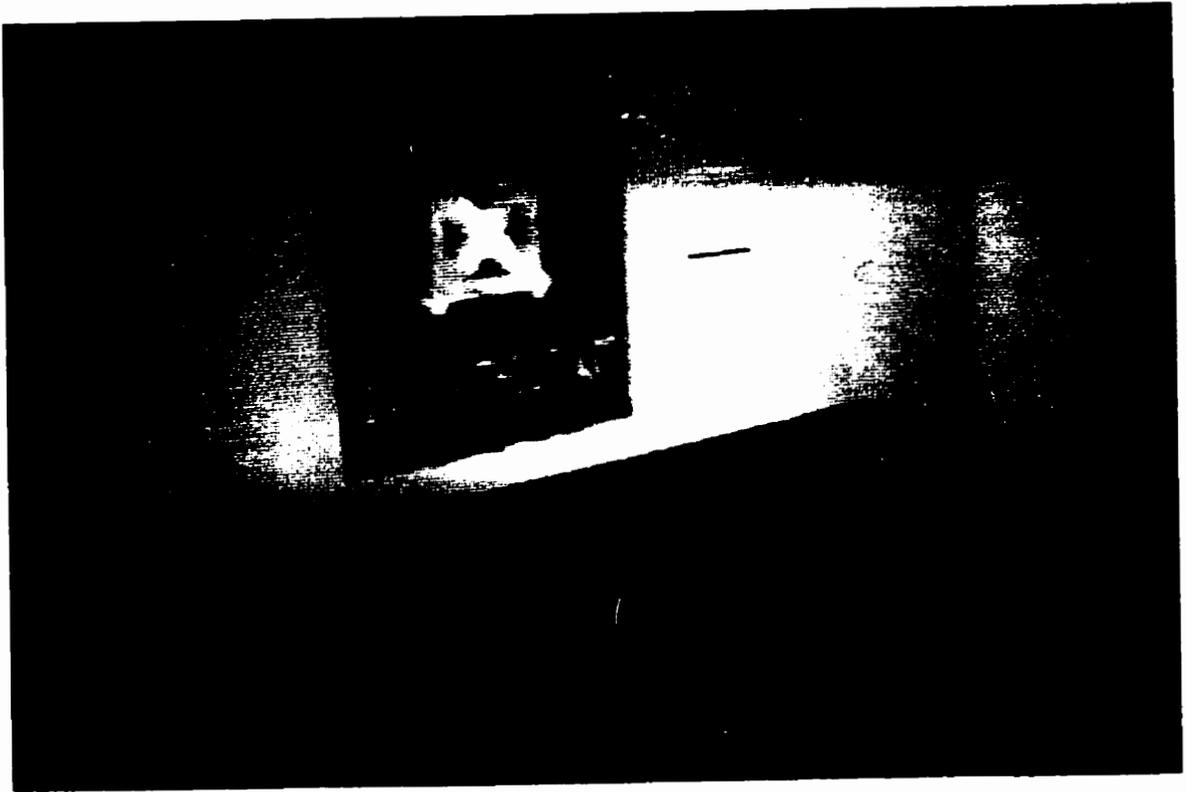


Figure 3: *Staging Identities 1*

Saskatchewan, wrote a letter to Sylvia Fedoruk, Lieutenant Governor at Government House, Regina, Saskatchewan. Part of the letter reads as follows.¹⁹

... AND YOU WERE SILENT.

A group of hate mongers in this province Sylvia, have been persistent at describing homosexuals as intrinsically evil, and continue to misconstrue our demand for EQUAL rights into SPECIAL rights. I have enclosed their brochure. I wonder how you feel.²⁰

I wonder, Sylvia, how isolated you must be. I wonder how it is that you are not hearing these things people are saying about YOU...

It's known of course, in the dark shadows and discreet whispers, that you are a Lesbian. It is known that you, as the Queen's Representative can and could have over the past many years, voiced your outrage over Grant Devine's hateful comments...But I suppose you made a choice not to. I and so many others however, have had to live with that decision. That denial. That contempt. That hate mongering. That violence.

IS YOUR FEAR SO DIFFERENT FROM OUR OWN?...

What could you have said Sylvia, as a scientist in medical physics, as the most legally and media powered person in this province, and as a Lesbian?

I KNOW, SYLVIA. BUT YOU DECIDED NOT TO COME.

I know how little I can expect from those ordained to govern, I know to disrespect authority when it shows no respect for me.

*I wish you knew my tears, Sylvia,
I wish you felt my rage.*

So can you answer, Sylvia?
Can you know my tears,
can you feel my rage

WILL YOU CLEARLY LET ALL PEOPLE KNOW THE 'WHO' YOU ARE WHO SPEAKS, AND PUBLICLY CALL AN END TO THIS WAR?

Most Sincerely,

Christopher Lefler
MFA Graduate Student
Department of Art and Art History
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. (Lefler, personal correspondence, February 14, 1993)

On April 8, 1993, on Government House stationery, the Lieutenant Governor responded to Christopher's letter assumedly under the conditions which are conventionally presumed by the words *PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL*. "Fedoruk's terse and predictably evasive response, (are) critical of Lefler's "misguided comments," while claiming that as Lieutenant Governor, she was "probably more constrained than any other citizen of Saskatchewan" (Young & Grubusic, 1994, p. 7). The official also says in her letter:

I think you have made cavalier and unwarranted assumptions about my own personal situations. Furthermore, you make these statements in quite cruel language, which is itself contrary to the respectful way in which you rightly argue that you should be treated as a gay man. (Hellquist, 1994, p. 6)

At a later date, straddling the next year's Day Without Art ceremony, a group of individuals interested in notions of identity in their art practices undertook to produce an exhibition called: *Staging Identities I*. This was to be, as Christopher notes, "an opportunity for students to engage with each other, and also with the world outside, around the same subject matter" (p. 84-85). While Christopher was enthused about the possibilities of the exhibition, he was not as early, or as easily, committed to his own personal involvement as an exhibitor. "I just thought again: the gallery isn't a place where I work. It flattens my work" (p. 86). After some reflection however, Christopher reconsidered and began to envision his own *submission*.

I thought (about) the notion of this argument around the invasion of privacy...What I'll do is flag their memories using the banner: Day Without Art. This is all rooted in my thesis topic...I'll use institutional architecture, furniture, fragments, to speak for the school. I borrowed a metal desk and chair from the

department. This was my artist's statement: they were mounted side by side above the desk. Underneath this was the black binder closed. You could sit and read. The binder had just my letter to Sylvia Fedoruk, and then, after that, her letter to me. (p. 86)²¹

The binder contained the original letter that the lieutenant governor had written, rather than a copy, as Christopher was anxious to ensure the maximum level of authenticity in providing the opportunity for Sylvia Fedoruk to speak in her own voice. "It's a dialogue between us" (p. 88). The black binder with the University of Saskatchewan's logo on it speaks of the architecture - it contains the controversy. "It houses the exchange. A binder, for us,...is seen as private property. If it is someone else's, it denotes a boundary" (p. 85-87). By placing the binder in a public space, Christopher acknowledges that he was allowing others to enter into the discussion. "You get to this and it is marked *PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL* across the top. It's not addressed to you, not written by you. Here is the big choice. Are you going to read it?" (p.88).²² From Christopher's perspective, he was making the material available in the gallery space and it was up to the viewer to decide the next step. "I was saying: here is an opportunity for you, the viewer...to know what is going on. If you want to situate yourself in it, here you are. If you don't want to, that's fine. Its a closed book" (p. 86).

The *Staging Identities I* exhibition opened but the response, on the part of university officials, was swift and peremptory, as, within hours of the gallery's opening, the binder was removed. Refusing to now become obsequious, Christopher immediately replaced it with a second copy which was also removed. By the third day:

all of my work was removed from the wall with a sign that said this work has been temporarily removed from the gallery. By the fourth day that was ordered removed. It moved from censorship to a really hostile notion of censorship where they closed the gallery....By the fourth day it was outright erasure. I was just wiped out. I didn't even exist. All of it was gone. (p. 92)

Prior to considering the written response from officials at the university, it is relevant to note the position of the curator of the gallery in which the work was to have been exhibited. In correspondence with the acting head of the Department of Art and Art History, the curator clearly states that she would not remove the work, and, if the work were removed by someone else, she would not re-open the gallery.

When a work of art is deemed problematic by a group or individual, the usual course of events involves a discussion between the artist, the curator and the person or persons who are questioning the work of art. This procedure was not followed in the case of Christopher's work. Until I am satisfied that appropriate measures have been taken in this regard, I must reiterate my position in relation to these proceedings: I request that Christopher's work be returned and that I be allowed to re-open the gallery. (E. MacKenzie, personal correspondence, November 23, 1993)

In writing to the acting department head, Christopher not only protested the removal of his work but advised the university that: "this and any following correspondence will be included in this exhibition as a growing examination of the powers and procedures of this institution" (C. Lefler, personal correspondence, November 22, 1993). In response, Patrick Browne, Vice-President (Academic), writes:

Dear Mr: Lefler:

The piece of "art" which you have submitted for inclusion in the exhibition of graduate undergraduate student work currently being shown in the Snelgrove Gallery has been brought to my attention.

I have discussed this work, which consists of a letter from you to the Lieutenant Governor and her personal and confidential response to you contained in a black binder bearing the University seal, with the Head of the Department of Art and Art History, the Dean of Arts and Science and the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research.

We are unanimously of the view that this material is neither appropriate nor acceptable for inclusion in any exhibition of student art at this University.

In addition to being *offensive and reprehensible* (italics mine), advice from our solicitor indicates that this "work" is potentially libelous and publication or exhibition of it in a public place might cause the University to be legally liable to a libel suit.

I have therefore directed the Department of Art and Art History to withdraw it from this exhibition.

I am also very concerned about the ethical questions your behavior in connection with this incident raises. It is behavior that is not consistent with that which is expected of students of this University. I am therefore considering what additional disciplinary action may be appropriate in your case.

Yours truly,

Patrick Browne

Vice-President (Academic) (P. Browne, personal correspondence, November 22, 1993)

The following day, a second letter from Browne reiterates:

Not only is material of this nature offensive, it does not constitute art in any sense of the word, and is not suitable for exhibition. You are hereby forbidden to submit any further material to this exhibition. Failure to comply with this directive will result in your immediate suspension from the University and could lead to your expulsion.

As I mentioned in my November 22 letter, I am considering what appropriate disciplinary action the University may take in relation to this incident. (P. Browne, personal correspondence, November 23, 1993)

The conviction of the administration regarding the certitude of their actions is evidenced by both the immediacy and vigor of their response. Vice-President Patrick Browne, in a further letter delivered by hand, notes that Christopher's actions:

place the University of Saskatchewan in a position of being liable to legal actions by third parties²³...Disciplinary charges for the above and any other conduct that may come to light following further investigation will be laid against you pursuant to the student discipline regulations of the University. In the interim, as a result of your failure to follow my previous directive, I am suspending you as a student at the University effective immediately. You are further prohibited from entering University premises during the period of this suspension. Security staff will be

advised of this prohibition. (P. Browne, personal communication, November 26, 1993)

Not long after Browne's last correspondence, while admitting that "I and a number of other people who know your work best have no doubts about your considerable intellectual abilities", Christopher's graduate supervisor, in suggesting that his (Christopher's) problem is the need "to find a process (and a place) which can provide an appropriate space in which you can address your very real concerns," advised him that he was "no longer prepared to continue as your graduate supervisor" (K. Bell, personal communication, December 8, 1993).

While Christopher's art practice is contestatory and often appears inscrutable and unjustifiably transgressive, particularly to those with a closed or incomplete understanding of the complexities which are involved, it is also tendentious. While the *official* actions of the university were determined and apparently consistent in their castigation, the purposes and underlying cause(s) inherent in Christopher's work are alternatively, recognized and defended by a number of others, primarily women, in the academic and arts community. Bell (1993), Associate Professor at the University of Saskatchewan, graduate supervisor and the instructor for one of his classes, notes that Christopher is:

a serious intellectual who has chosen to engage closely with the activities of reading, artmaking, writing, and conversing for the purposes of personal knowledge and pleasure as well as the political enhancement of gay men and other oppressed people. Christopher's intellectual performance...has been exemplary and it has become increasingly clear to me that he is a committed and independent thinker. ...Christopher's practice as an artist and thinker engages with the politics of everyday life and, at times, it raises issues which are difficult to resolve. However, I think it is the job of teachers and students to grapple with difficult questions and I think that the university should be a site where students can engage in critical thinking and intellectual work that questions the status quo without fear of being cut off from the necessary financial support and affirmation. (L. Bell, personal communication, April 6, 1993)

Writer, educator, and psychiatrist Jeanne Randolph whose innovative work related to art includes *Psychoanalysis & Synchronized Swimming* expresses concern that Christopher's efforts are:

being covertly obstructed due to faculty homophobia. That such discrimination should even appear to be possible, let alone be substantial cannot be ignored. In my capacity as an author, teacher and public speaker on Contemporary Canadian Visual Arts, my introduction to Christopher's work, and our conversations have impressed me with his intelligence, scholarly thoroughness and good judgment. (J. Randolph, personal communication, undated)

Similarly, Borsa (1993) acknowledges that she has "regularly interacted with Christopher over the past academic year and, as an Art History professor, curator, and critic of contemporary art," notes:

great admiration for Christopher's interdisciplinary practice and for the intellectual rigor he brings to bear on the many levels and stages of his production. But from my understanding of the recent controversy over his performance as a graduate student I am gravely concerned that his working methods and the nature of his critical inquiry necessary for his particular practice are either misunderstood, underestimated or "NOT ALLOWED" in this institutional environment...Is this controversy around C. Lefler or about other issues that continue to surface in and around art practices that name privilege, power relations, etc.?? (J. Borsa, personal communication, April 19, 1993)

The curator of the Mendel Art Gallery and Civic Conservatory, who was also Christopher's supervisor in a part-time employment position as library assistant and guide for the gallery, suggests that in his involvements with Christopher, he has:

proven to be an intelligent, articulate and thoughtful individual with a strong sense of responsibility...I find his practice to be very engaging and compelling. In his work he has consistently and articulately challenged normative social and formal narratives by adopting unorthodox media and unconventional subject matter. In doing so he invites us to reconsider the limitations of our social contract. (B. Grenville, personal communication, April 16, 1993)

Reactions of the media to both sides of the issue were varied and often ill-informed. Speaking as if it were a univocal phenomenon, Craig (1994) concludes that the gay and lesbian community are "appalled by Christopher Lefler and his attempt to identify a prominent Saskatchewan person as homosexual" (p. 3). Dik Campbell, who describes himself as a militant queer artist and activist "called outing counter-productive and decried those whose mission is to divulge homosexuals as "terrorists and stalkers" (Craig, 1994, p.3). According to Craig's impressions of other *gays* spoken to, "Lefler has no support within the gay and lesbian community" (p. 3).²⁴ Hellquist (1994) acknowledges that few issues are as contentious as that of outing, and personally finds the idea "*reprehensible*" (italics mine) (p.6),²⁵ and determines that "everyone must have the right to decide for themselves when and to whom they will disclose their sexual orientation (p. 6). Recognizing the homophobic and heterosexist climate, Hellquist suggests that the possibilities of risk are great for anyone who is public about their (homosexual) orientation.

Millard (1994) concludes that "outing is a form of violence" (p. 5), and suggests that perhaps, because of his youth, "Mr. Lefler does not fully appreciate what it is like to be in the closet for ten, twenty, or even thirty years" (p. 6). While Millard argues that there are "no moral grounds for outing regardless of the perceived circumstances, Mohr (1992) argues the opposite. Outing, according to Mohr, is a "morally expected activity" (p. 35). Christopher explains the difficulty that many have in distinguishing between sexual *orientation* and sexual *behavior*, and asserts that it is the inappropriate collapse of the two distinct notions onto the other which is used in support of notions of what is private and what is not. Christopher's endeavors are challenges which seek to dismantle the assumptions of heterosexism, and, in further explanation of his position, Christopher asks: "do you think that we should strike marriage laws off the legislative acts because those are invasions of privacy because they announce your sexual orientation?" (p. 98).

Booth (1993) describes the incident referring to a work which "claimed that a prominent Saskatchewan official is homosexual" (p. A11). Referring to his suspension from the university, Christopher is quoted: "I'm a gay man who's not afraid of my homosexuality...I just find it's absurd that the coercion in this society to make homosexuality a dirty little word has swept me out" (p. A11). ~~Another~~ *The StarPhoenix* writer, Robertson (1993), calls Lefler "intolerant of other people's right to privacy" (p. A2). While recognizing that artists often question social issues, Robertson describes Lefler's work as "neither outrageous nor novel" but continues to describe his act of *outing* as a "radical tactic...(which is) also a form of mistreatment and stigmatization" (p. A2). In an act of questionable logic however, Robertson then notes the media's disinclination to name the official "because it's been seen as inconsequential to the *real* (italics mine) story" (p. A2). Student newspapers also gave some attention to the controversy. Gabert (1994) of the University of Saskatchewan notes that Lefler is a "student without study, a scholar without a school and an artist without art" ... Leffler (*sic*) has recently lodged a complaint with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Board claiming he was discriminated against because of his sexual orientation and it impeded his education" (p. 1).

Others, to varying degrees, saw the actions, taken against Christopher, as iniquitous and narrow in single-mindedly holding him up for censure. Eyre (1994) notes the overall lack of *alarm* which students of post-secondary education ought reasonably to be feeling given the actions of the University against a student. "What we should be asking is why just Leffler (*sic*) is in trouble with the authorities...As a student, Leffler (*sic*) has been exposed to the tools of censorship -suspension and expulsion - not normally available to the censor." (p. D2). Eyre concludes: "Must we burn Christopher Leffler? (*sic*) (p. D2). Letters to the editor's columns made a number of further comments on the controversy. Anderson (1993) suggests that in addition to the student, perhaps others responsible for

the exhibition "(the curator, the student's professor, the department head and the dean of arts and science) (be) suspended and banned from the campus too? (p. A4).

Banning a student from the campus? Really? The university campus is public property. Has the student destroyed that property? Who there believes he has the authority to ban someone from a public place? And under what circumstances. Suspending this student? For what? Expressing an opinion?...Is this another example of a student having to bear the brunt of bungling administrators? (p. A4)

Similarly, Harrison (1993) comments on the "university's heavy-handed action against an art student" (p. A5) and suggests that the incident is a "timely reminder of the ongoing question whether those now serving as administrators have any meaningful training in administration or even any common-sense people skills, so essential today" (p. A5).

Russell (1994) notes:

the range and severity of the punishments meted out to Mr. Lefler by some of the province's most powerful institutions are frightening by any standards: he has had art work confiscated and removed from exhibition by authorities at the University of Saskatchewan; he has been expelled from the university and denied access to university property. (p. 7) ²⁶

The Wedding Closet (Figure 4)

"It was a simple spring wedding. The invitation was discreet: pink photocopy paper with traditional Gothic lettering...It read: 'The University of Saskatchewan in conjunction with Christopher Lefler presents *the Wedding:Closet*' (Young, B. & Grubusic, B., 1994, p. 7). The *ceremony, attended by security guards*, was the hearing at which Christopher Lefler's future as a student at the University of Saskatchewan was to be determined. Hair shorn and dyed blond, clad in white briefs, a black T shirt bearing the insignia SILENCE=DEATH, and pink platform Fluevogs, Christopher handcuffed himself to an open metal framed structure intended to signify the closet. Hanging on the rack behind him were a series of similar black T shirts which read *Militant Queer, Watch Your Ass*. A long lace bridal train was attached to the back of the structure and flowed

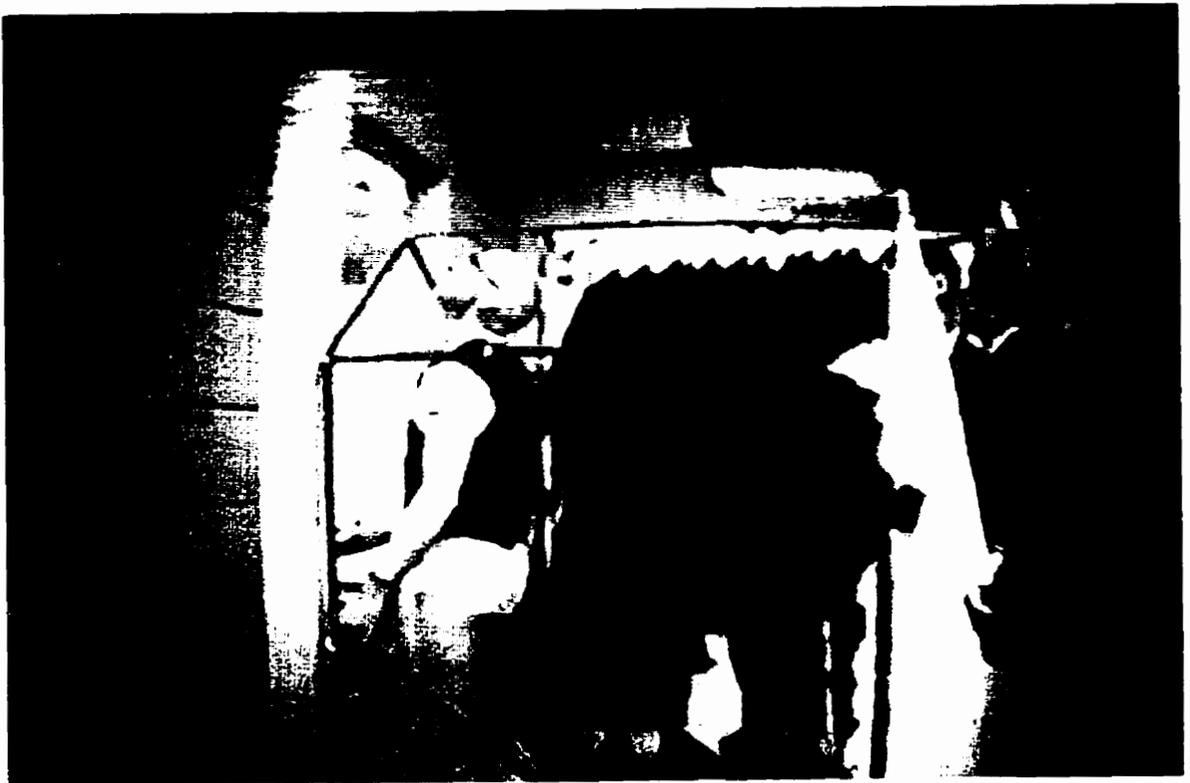


Figure 4: *The Wedding Closet*

gracefully as Christopher stepped to the strains of Mendelsohn's Wedding March. Unwittingly, bystanders became participants: a security man dressed in suit and tie, hands clasped in front of him, was unexpectedly a suitable groom. The security guards doubled as bridesmaids, assisting with the train, while CBC and CTV camera crews served as wedding photographers (Young & Grubusic, 1994).

After a long walk down the *aisle*, Christopher arrived at the door of the meeting room, in the Agriculture Building, in which the Board for Student Discipline was gathered to determine his fate as a student of visual arts. In his insistence on maintaining his art practice as a mechanism by which to elucidate and renegotiate the relationship of the *closet* with the University (and the broader culture), Christopher Lefler, as homosexual subject, shackled to his closet, could not get through the door, thus *marking the threshold* (in heterosexual terms) as a barrier. Freeing himself from his closet, Christopher proceeded into the hearing room and therefore, as an openly homosexual man, into the *authority* of the institution as constituted by the Board.

In referring the matter to the Board, Academic Vice-President Browne's recommendation for expulsion was based on three conclusions:

- 1.) The materials submitted by Mr. Lefler placed the University in a position where it could be the subject of legal proceedings from a third party.
- 2.) The materials submitted by Mr. Lefler constitute a serious invasion of privacy into the personal life of an individual.
- 3.) After being forbidden to submit further material to the exhibition, Mr. Lefler deliberately ignored my directive. (P. Browne, personal correspondence, December, 7, 1993)

In a letter to the president of the university, the chair, on behalf of the three member Board for Student Discipline, concluded that a number of Mr. Lefler's actions "constituted open acts of defiance of the direct order" and that the "majority of the members of the Board held that the proper sanction was expulsion of Mr. Lefler from the

University of Saskatchewan" (M. Scharf, Dean of the College of Education, personal correspondence, May 12, 1994).

Russell (1994) concludes:

Those Saskatchewan institutions that have dealt so severely with Mr Lefler do not seem to have exercised much consideration for prevailing social practices;...No matter how well-intentioned, their actions have left the impression that, for the University, the Arts Board, the media, and the Government of Saskatchewan, homosexual orientation remains a matter for personal shame. (p. 11)

Summary of Chapter

Lesbians and gay men, marginalized and demeaned by the discourses of the majority, have been forced to break conventions, to construct their identities and the totalities of their cultural practices as acts of resistance. Without such culturally determined silencing and repression, queer identities and the cultural fragments produced by queer artists such as Christopher Lefler would mutate in ways not yet imaginable. Any such endeavor to be more explicit about variant sexualities and their impact in the conception, production, and reception of art will alter, not only the lives of the artists, but as well, the kind of representations produced. As instance, Christopher has engaged in contesting the legitimacy and authority of the art object. In addition to challenging the conventions and boundaries of culturally-sanctioned art practice, in making queerness manifest, Christopher's work, because of the political impact of sexuality, also provides a political challenge which is determined to deracinate the systemic hierarchical structuring on which both the privileging and refusal, that is, the silences, distortions, or exclusions, are predicated.

Notes:

¹The single-spaced transcribed interviews fill 124 pages. Page number references which concern the researcher or Christopher Lefler refer to these transcripts.

²At Carleton, Christopher notes, although there were evident political issues (sexism, racism, homophobia), "at 18 I couldn't even name them" (p. 1).

³As an example the title was changed to *Liaison* to the AMS since all executive members held the same title and rotated the position of chair per meeting.

⁴There had been student protests against the department and the university's overall lack of concern for health and safety issues for students. At the time the University of Victoria Visual Arts Department was housed in "army huts", and the conditions for the health and safety of students was poor. As an example, there were no ventilation fans in the photography darkrooms and the windows had been sealed shut by repeated painting.

⁵In response to a question regarding the impetus for his readiness to vigorously challenge the *system*, Christopher outlines: "I was coming of age during the ...terror of Reagan and the whole nuclear (issue). I was in Ottawa where that kind of protesting was happening daily. Just the sense of being willing to challenge the political level, on a big scale, was part of the culture I identified with...By the time I got to U Vic I was just ready to act on that" (p. 7).

⁶In response to a sculpture project by a student who had graduated earlier, the university had required the building of a chain link fence around the space so that it would not become a safety hazard to the public.

⁷Christopher had previously gone to the local firechief and explained his intentions: "I'm doing this art project with a video where I want to video you guys putting out a fire. I've got this old couch that I've picked up and I've got it in this compound where its walled off and everything is safe. I'm going to douse it in all kinds of flammable *stuff* and then (I) want to ignite it. I'd like you to come on a firedrill. Can you do that? And, I'll video you. He said: Yeah, yeah, yeah, we can do that. I said: OK." (p. 12)

⁸As with all art practices, in thinking extensively about his own work and its background, Christopher, as artist, has significantly more understanding of the issues at hand. In contrast, a naive viewer simply sees a burning couch and a recalcitrant student.

⁹In anticipation of the meeting, Christopher asked to have a television monitor available in order to demonstrate via his video documentation that the perceived concerns for the safety of persons and property were totally unwarranted. The president's administrative secretary however, was told to refuse the request, saying, in effect, that they were only there to deal with the *facts*. What was apparent Christopher notes is that the "visual doesn't represent *fact*, only (the) textual is compelling" (p. 17).

¹⁰As a result of the fire incident, although Christopher was temporarily suspended and forbidden to enter university property, he returned during the summer session to continue with his program and eventually completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. From 1990-1992, after Christopher had graduated, the researcher attended the University of Victoria also as an undergraduate student in the same department. During this period couches or chairs in studio areas were common practice.

¹¹Given the size and location of the city, my first question during this portion of the interview was: "Why did you choose Saskatoon?" (p. 47). In response, Christopher indicated that he had always been *drawn* to the prairies in his trecks across Canada, and during the last drive: "I said I'm just going to go there and see what I can do" (p. 48).

¹²It should be noted that gay men and women may often refer to themselves in terms (eg. dyke, fag, etc.) which would otherwise be considered pejorative. It should also be noted that I, as researcher, do not personally *know* if Sylvia Fedoruk is, or is not, a lesbian.

¹³At the same time as Christopher was speculating about the possibilities of a performance disruption, Christopher initiated and saw actualized an activity involving the building which houses the fine arts department. With the co-operation of the department head and the involvement of a range of university personnel, Christopher's project involved using red rope to hold black fabric to drape the front of the art building. A *Day Without Art* banner was hung in the window. A long red rope from underneath the bottom of the curtain lifted it high enough to allow *participants* to pass through. It was a very public and positive acknowledgment: Christopher felt good about its success while continuing with his plans for the disruption of the official ceremony.

¹⁴I asked Christopher if he had considered a less potentially *catastrophic* way of addressing the matter, that is, had he considered alternate ways to make his point about the lack of government action on the AIDS issue. Christopher responded by indicating that in previous attempts to engage with government representatives through *official* channels, he consistently made no progress. "I said I know damn well by now that my participation in democracy is halted because I am a gay man. What I need to do is remember that in my art practice is where my strength is" (p. 68).

¹⁵As an alternate plan, Christopher had entertained the possibility of preparing a series of quilts, as part of an AIDS quilt series, that the lieutenant governor would read on stage. The quilts would start with legitimate quilts from which she would read the name of a person who had died from AIDS. Other quilts however would be inserted into the pile so that, if she chose to continue reading, Sylvia Fedoruk would be forced into making an active and public choice about her continued complicity. Christopher explains the proposed sequence: "Today (I'd create a fictitious death) I died making this quilt for myself knowing no others would because of homophobia in this province. The next one would be: I looked for my public officials to represent my voice in the legislature. It was never there. It would eventually be things like: as a lesbian, I have a responsibility to my brothers and others who are suffering under this oppression. She'd be saying this, invoking her subjecthood" (p. 67).

¹⁶*Outing* is the making public of an individual's sexual orientation. Consequently, in theory a heterosexual could also be *outed* as such. The debate on *outing* homosexuals is controversial, both *inside* and *outside* the gay community. While a full discussion is beyond the present scope, the following provides a brief synopsis. Those who are anti-outing suggest that sexual orientation is a private matter and not an issue for public knowledge or discussion. Those pro-outing counter that sexual orientation is only a private matter if you are homosexual as the many public displays of heterosexuality, at all levels of culture, attest. The argument also confuses privacy with secrecy. No privacy interests are violated by making public the "secret of someone's sexual orientation" (Mohr, 1992, p. 15). Rather, "outing will disrupt the codes of silence that block public acknowledgment of gay lives" (Mohr, 1992, p. 11). The more cogent argument on the anti-outing side is the suggestion that, given the hostility and possibilities of physical harm (including murder) of those *suspected* of homosexuality, outing may place others at risk. While those fears are recognized as justified by those pro-outing, the response remains that there is *strength in numbers*, and if all gay men and lesbians were to so declare themselves, the risks would be substantially reduced and cultural climate towards homosexuals would gradually shift in a more positive direction. The two sides are usually closest in agreement when the closeted figure is a public official who may be taking homophobic positions. Succinctly, Mohr concludes that it is not one's own happiness which is sought in the outing of another person, but rather, "it is the avoidance of being an instrument of insult to one's own dignity, the avoidance of complicity in one's own degradation" (p. 43).

¹⁷The performance had originally been designed with the participants planted in four corners, and was intended to proceed as follows: "At any given moment, we would all stand up and twirl, in a stupid, non-sensical gesture, just twirl to replicate the meaninglessness of this ceremony producing nothing... We had five dolls each, so we had enough to give away... with the last one, we would all file into the center of the auditorium and twirl, walk up to the front, file in front of the stage after Sylvia had spoken, twirl and toss the last doll out to Sylvia's feet. At the stage, we would twirl by pointing into the audience and making eye contact with anyone person. So that read and closed the circuit, and finish the twirl by pointing at her with the backs of our shirts (*She Kills Us*) and tossing the doll" (p. 74).

¹⁸In response to the media after the event, Christopher spoke only of Sylvia Fedoruk as a medical officer and the lieutenant governor, decrying her lack of action from those positions. "I didn't talk about her being a lesbian" (p. 75).

¹⁹While the original letter was prepared in a *regular* format and font, it is here produced in the form it took in the exhibition *Staging Identities I* which was to follow.

²⁰The one page leaflet depicts an image of a group holding a *Queer Nation* banner under which the caption reads: "Angry homosexual activists demanding special rights". The document goes on to suggest that the government plans to "Grant special rights to those who choose to practice homosexuality... Human rights laws are to protect people from "prejudice", not from reasonable decisions - on the basis of their IDENTITY (innate,

morally-neutral birth characteristics such as skin color, race, ethnic origin, etc.), and not on the basis of how they BEHAVE".

²¹The artist's statement refers to the text panel beside the banner which invited the viewer to situate themselves *within* the work - that is to *read, respond, or refuse*.

²²The matter of the *violation* of that which is implied in documents containing the words *Personal and Confidential* was of ongoing concern to those opposed to Christopher's strategies. However, Christopher's decision to make public such a document should be unsurprising to anyone who is *thoughtful* regarding the entire processes in which, as a performance artist, he has been engaged. At all levels, Christopher is challenging the status quo and the authority of some to make decisions which may be against the best interests of others. In my interview with Christopher I state: "If you thought those rules about private and public, and shameful and secret...were to be respected, then none of your work would make any sense" (p. 90). Christopher responds: "In terms of the *Personal and Confidential*,...it is coercion for me. You touched on it when you talked about the structures of homophobia... (being what) really supports that and gives it the strength for it to assert itself. But, to believe in that, means to shame yourself and to accept it as coercion. It really says: Christopher, I am going to write this letter... (on the) condition...that you help me with this closet - to keep the door shut...It is guised in this notion that there is some kind of really higher ethical (notion) that is descended from God, or the justice system, that *Personal and Confidential* can keep people in tow" (p. 95) .

²³Russell (1994) notes that the University of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan government raise two arguments against Lefler: 1.) drawing attention to the sexual orientation of a public official is illegal, (the university had proclaimed it potentially libelous) and 2.) even if it isn't illegal, it is offensive and reprehensible. Russell concludes the suggested legal justifications "appear to be entirely spurious" (p. 9). The outing "of a prominent public figure is not a breach of privacy under either Canadian or U.S. law" (p. 9). In Canadian law, in order to be libelous or defamatory, a statement must be false and bring someone into hatred, ridicule, or contempt. Noting the changing legislation regarding the rights of homosexuals, and also that there are no contemporary case laws to support such a contention, Russell concludes that the "suggestion of possible "libelous" implications is equally bogus" (p. 10).

²⁴In discussions of the difference between *equal* and *special* rights, Christopher recognized that, even within the gay community itself, the embeddedness of internalized homophobia is so strong that: "Those who are struggling for their very rights don't understand the difference, or the rights they are fighting for. The same thing applies with tolerance and promotion" (p. 87-88).

²⁵It is of note that Hellquist (1994), a gay man who "works for an organization that helps people through their personal coming out process" (p. 6), and Vice-President (Academic) Patrick Browne both use the term *reprehensible* to describe the act of outing.

²⁶In a later action, for the first time in its history, the Provincial Arts Board, in response to public and political pressure, at the urging of Minister of Culture Carol Carson,

withdrew the \$10,000.00 grant which had, on the basis of his proposal, been awarded to Christopher Lefler by a jury of artists (peers).

CHAPTER V: GAYLE RYON

Introduction

Gayle Ryon was identified as a potential research subject/participant as a result of an inquiry, by the researcher, to a Vancouver art critic and writer who was familiar with Gayle's art practice. As with Subject A, Gayle met the criteria of the *bounded system* (Merriam, 1988): gay male students of post-secondary education in the visual arts. He was contacted by telephone, and, after an explanation of the research project, agreed to participate. At the time of the first interview the Consent Form/Primary Subject was signed. As has been noted in Chapter III, because *understanding* is the goal of the inquiry, research subjects were sought who could most adequately contribute to that end. Therefore, in the selection process, purposive, non-probability sampling techniques were utilized.

In terms of autoethnographic research utilizing case studies, it was evident that an examination of Gayle Ryon's experiences would provide data which was: particularistic, that is, it would provide specific evidence regarding how he identified and addressed those experiences; descriptive, in that language (interviews) would, and paintings (representations), rather than numbers or quantifiable information could also, serve as sources of data; and, heuristic, in that the results could provide new insights or, refutation, or confirmation of what is already known. In addition to four three hour tape-recorded interviews,¹ and a number of opportunities for participant-observation, four particular paintings were considered as primary sources of data.

Art in Research

Eisner (1993) contends that researchers must "exploit different forms of representation to construct meanings that otherwise might elude us" (p. 6). The visual arts give us "insights that inform us in the special ways that only artistically rendered forms

make possible" (p. 7). Otherwise, our comprehension, Eisner suggests is constrained by the limits of our language. "Humans invented maps to do what narrative could not do as well" (p. 6). Concomitantly, the use of visual representation requires skills which would enable the researcher and others to treat material so that it functions as a medium - "something that mediates content" (p. 9). The use of visual materials in social research, Eisner (1993) recognizes, is not without consequence concerning the skills and understanding which determine who is capable of making the appraisals which arise from such inclusion.²

When research methods are stable and canonized, the rules of the game are relatively clear. With new games, new rules. With new rules, competencies that were appropriate for some forms of research may not necessarily be relevant for others. Furthermore, the ability to make sense of a form of research depends upon one's experience with that form and upon one's conception of what counts as research. (p. 8-9)

While the art practices of both research participants are utilized in this study, there are some significant differences between the ways in which the works were considered. As noted, the performances and exhibitions of Subject A were entirely viewed on video and photographed from a television monitor for inclusion here. Three of Gayle Ryon's paintings were viewed on exhibition in various locations (*Christina's World Revisited*, *Venus n anadyomene*, and *Pos.i.tive*) while *Untitled* was considered from an enlarged photograph of the painting.

Early Influences on Art Practice

During the first interview, after brief introductions, Gayle and I undertook an immediate examination of the paintings which were in progress and therefore on display in his spacious studio.³ While these paintings were ultimately not among those utilized as a focus, the inquiry was directed, not only by the research questions, but also, by the paintings in the studio and subsequently, by those four canvases which were selected as a

means of data collection.⁴ In other words, as with Subject A, research questions were organized within a pre-existing structure and introduced within a framework provided by the paintings - a mediation that continued throughout the inquiry. The first work on display in the studio (still in process) offered a nude portrayal of the artist who, on canvas, as well as in the regimes of his life, constructs and presents himself as an object of gay men's desire - unerringly reflecting a palpable interest both in how he looked (viewed others) and how he looked (appeared to others). A second large-scale nude study of the artist and a second nude male, one figure from the front, the other from the rear, leaned against an opposite wall.

During the first interview, there was some attention given to early life experiences which impacted Gayle's adult life as an art maker. As an example, in response to a question about one of the paintings in the studio, Gayle articulated what he saw as the relationship between his current approach to painting and some of his childhood art-related activities. One of the influences, he suggests, was the "phenomenon of collage, of placing images together in order to achieve a ...juxtaposition that you wouldn't find presented in any other way" (p. 2). Later, Gayle noted that, while in his early teens, he spent a significant amount of time drawing the male figure from anatomy books. Graduating from high school, Gayle enrolled in the fine arts program at the University of British Columbia where his early interests continued to reflect the influences of his mother who was also an artist - primarily a portrait and landscape painter. "What I painted, at that time, were outdoor scenes, landscapes, or images of people" (p. 9).

After two years at the University of British Columbia, Gayle withdrew from the program suggesting that he had too much information to explore within the formal educational system. Having previously spent one year in Japan as a high school exchange student, Gayle moved temporarily to Whitehorse and then back to Japan before continuing with his formal education in the visual arts. Returning from Japan, Gayle painted for a full

year and produced a body of work which was exhibited in a Vancouver gallery. Gayle recalls that during this period he was exploring various means of expressing archetypal human experiences. "At that point, I didn't really make a division in terms of how those human experiences might shift or be determined by the specificity of one's (social/sexual) orientation...I was engaged...in trying to find images, or to explore images or experiences that somehow related to that "essential man"" (p. 11).

A transfer from the University of British Columbia to the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in 1993 was largely based on Gayle's recognition that the latter provided a climate which more directly maintained the production of visual work as a focus. All of the paintings considered for this research were produced while Gayle was a student at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design which includes the period spent as a student at the San Francisco Art Institute.

Christina's World Revisited (1993) (Figure 5)

Painters make paintings with a visual literacy born of lived experiences which include all other art works, as well as, texts, encountered.⁵ Each artist's paintings then, exist at a nexus where all works are imbricative. In other words, while all paintings intersect and overlap, at this juncture, the new painting becomes its own multiply-inflected cultural site - inviting speculation and the production of modified cultural meaning(s) in ways both intentional and unforeseen. As an example, the first painting to be considered, Gayle Ryon's *Christina's World Revisited* (1993), makes an obvious art historical reference to Andrew Wyeth's perhaps most famous image - *Christina's World* (1948). When an artist chooses to make a blatant art historical reference, the latter work cannot reasonably be separated from a consideration of the former because of the artist's, considered, as well as not always conscious, insinuation of its history into his/her paint and therefore its indissociable penetration and saturation into the very warp and woof of the

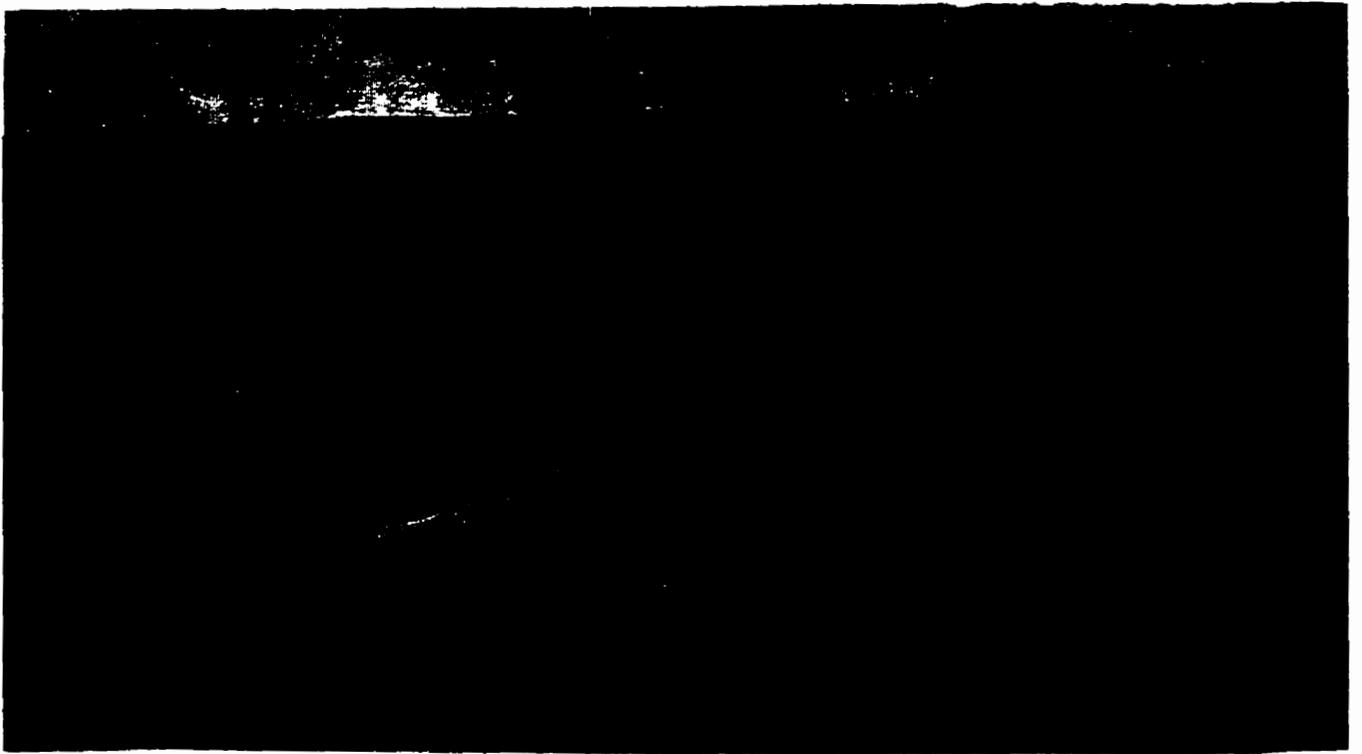


Figure 5: *Christina's World Revisited*

canvas. While meaning may be constructed outside of the earlier work, its consideration is ultimately explicatory for the latter.

Christina's World (1948) emerged from a combination of Andrew Wyeth's recent life circumstances which included the death of his father in 1945, a personal lung ailment serious enough to require surgical intervention and a prolonged period of recovery, as well as a long-standing fascination with the Olson family.⁶ The impact of Wyeth's father's death and his own illness Duff (1987) suggests, had:

profound importance for his art...the experience altered his outlook and may explain why he sought out other survivors, such as Christina Olson, and (has) chosen to paint almost exclusively those who have endured a harsh existence through difficult perseverance. These are strong (Wyeth would say "tough") people, alone, but obviously not lonely, who understand and take pride in their own worth, abilities, and limitations. (p. 46)

Wyeth was fascinated, not only with the individuals, but with the property itself: the farm buildings across the knoll of the land which had come to the Olson family because another family had "daughters out".⁷ In 1893, the subject of *Christina's World*, Anna Christina Olson was born, a child handicapped by a birth defect or injury which remained undetected until she was three years of age. Hoving (see Duff, 1987) notes that Wyeth paid scrupulous attention to the facts of the farm; he was "intrigued not only with the monumentality of the Olson's frail farmhouse, but with its disparate fragments - rather like Christina Olson herself" (p. 121). Christina's handicap necessitated that she drag herself by her arms around the house and property where, one afternoon, Wyeth observed the 55 year old full-bodied woman determinedly picking the low-crop blueberries in the family's fields.⁸

By situating himself, rather than someone else as figurative painted subject in a setting which almost exactly replicates the locale of the Wyeth painting, Ryon's *re-*

presentation speaks to the artist's location as a gay male within painting both in general, and in particular, terms.

Part of where I have been going in making art historical references, in a very broad sense, has been the relocating of (my own) specificity,...my maleness, my whiteness, or my lack of maleness perhaps, ...my queerness, within the work as a legitimate, or authentic kind of response-ability/responsibility. (p.57)

Like its counterpart, *Christina's World Revisited* emerges from, and specifically reflects, concerns around mortality. Gayle's earlier referenced non-figurative paintings, were, the artist suggests, an exploration of mortality which developed, in part, from his existentialist readings and the shock of a kayaking accident in which he almost died. After capsizing and spending half an hour in the frigid water before being rescued, his struggle to maintain the physical strength necessary for survival had a profound impact. Gayle explains:

Though mentally I felt completely there,...I almost didn't have the dexterity to manipulate the flares and get them off. I became very scared at first and moved beyond scared to the realization that, in all likelihood, I was probably going to lose the strength in my arms. I didn't have a life jacket on and I would just slip under the water - that would be it. In many ways, it was like I had (already) done that because, by the time I was rescued, I had spent enough time thinking about it, and being there with it, and had lost enough consciousness, that it was a struggle for me, afterwards, to reassert myself and gain the drive...to actively participate in what was going on around me. The realization in a lot of the work that I was doing at the time, in painting, was very heavily influenced by that experience. (p. 12)

More specifically, while Wyeth's and Ryon's medically-related issues were dissimilar, both emerged from the artist's experiences around health and corporeal well-being.⁹ While Christina's physical impediments were obvious, Gayle's *condition* was veiled by the exterior appearance of a corporeal body apparently in peak physical condition and untouched by somatic distress. Implicated in *Christina's World Revisited* however, as is true of all the paintings considered for this study, are matters related to sexually-transmitted disease.¹⁰

While both paintings use similar perspectives and odd angles, Ryon's *revisitation* brings about an almost total shift in emphasis by replacing the dark haired, clothed, young but somewhat frail, bony-armed, female body with a taut, muscular male body of the fairer-haired and bearded artist, naked but for his boots and his belted pants lowered to near his ankles. Christina Olson and Gayle Ryon, as subjects, have raised the upper parts of their bodies off the ground and are gazing towards the buildings - away from the viewer. In both paintings, while the viewer may be perplexed at the figure's placement in the landscape, the startling difference in the portrayal of the body transforms the perception of its relationship to the fields and the buildings outlined against the horizon. Perhaps most evidently diverse, a viewer might speculate, is first the respective figure's reason for being in the field, and secondly, their physical capacities to reach their destinations with ease.

Wyeth's Christina was painted in her favorite pink dress, in a place where she was reportedly happy. While Christina's blueberry-picking provided not only a source of the family's food but contributed to their income, that activity is not made obvious in the painting. Hence, there is a palpable tension in Wyeth's painting which is born of the uncertainty around the figure's placement in the landscape which makes variant, possibly grievous, explanation or speculation possible. Alternately, Ryon's brawny male figure appears powerful and in no jeopardy. Concomitant with the romanticism and nostalgia which country fields and abandoned farm buildings in both paintings may elicit, Ryon suggests that the setting has a prospective erotic component. As the figure in the painting, the artist acknowledges that the degree to which his clothes have been removed indicate an accordance with participation in any possible sexual exchange. "They are not just pulled down enough to expose my buttocks or my genitals, which may suggest it was forced on me (but rather) there is something willful and intentional in having them all the way down to my ankles and yet not taken off" (p. 60). For the viewer, at observing distance, the

ineluctable eroticism and capacious urgency of the partially nude male figure in a massive ground first leads a viewer so disposed to straddle inclinations to focus either on the *painting* of the figure or the *figure* of the painting. In Wyeth's canvas, a tall ladder leans against the eaves of the two story house, while in both paintings, the freshly swathed field and the tire tracks leading to the buildings suggest the recent presence of the (male) landkeeper. The house and barn then offer a number of potential sites for (homo)sexual exchange - the house, the artist contends, where sex may be more *justified* and alternately the barn and/or the fields which operate as those other, less reputable places for sexual interactions.¹¹

By replacing the female body of Wyeth's canvas with his own physical image, Ryon's painting engages the relationship of femininity to homosexuality - a stereotype of the dominant culture which many gay men have struggled to put behind them. In terms of association with the female, it is relevant to note that the artist's name was originally Lewis Ryon McMurray. Gayle explains:

Lewis and McMurray were both my father's names. He played a very insignificant role in my life and I decided a couple of years ago that I was not really interested in maintaining the patriarchal institution of carrying male last names. My middle name Ryon, is the name I grew up by and wanted to locate myself within. Also, to give my mother some tribute for the role she played in raising me, I took her middle name as my first name.(p. 51)

The name itself has led to interesting confusions. Gayle recalls receiving leaflets in his mailbox at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design for *women only* readings. One female reviewer intending to write about the work withdrew once realizing her *subject* was male. To contain perplexity, other writers have used the preamble "male painter" prior to denomination.

In more general terms, with respect to the relationship of homosexual men to the feminine, "male gay identity has more often been constructed as oddly placed in relation to

masculinity, seen as either departing from it towards effeminacy or else play-actingly exaggerating it in clonedom" (Dyer, 1991, p. 194). It has further been argued that the *logic* of masculine macho style assumed by many gay men may actually serve to idealize the cultural standards which oppress homosexual males and women. Gayle claims comfort with such discordancies and challenges to the stereotypes.

I enjoy that because it transgresses my location as a specifically male person. I think there is something that agrees with my own sensibility...I enjoy masculinity and I enjoy coming across as a masculine person, in sort of a stereotyped way, and yet, I don't box myself in with that. (p. 52)

Further enervating, the positioning of the male figure, in its *prurient* presentation of the buttocks, counters a focus on the penis and thereby risks a cultural reading which constructs the figure as *receptive*. An amplified tension is thereby created when, despite the musculature of the obviously male body, the *buttocks-up* placement extends the likelihood of a polemical *feminized* reading. According to Hocquenghem (1978), for men, it is only the phallus which dispenses identity. "Any social use of the anus, apart from its sublimated use, creates the risk of a loss of identity. Seen from behind we are all women; the anus does not practice sexual discrimination" (p. 87).

Further, in dominant representation, Silverman (1992) suggests that there are only two possible subject-positions - "that occupied on the one hand by heterosexual men and homosexual women, and that occupied on the other by heterosexual women and homosexual men" (p. 339). As Silverman suggests, such a formulation presents a "preposterously monolithic reading of male homosexuality" (p. 339). There is however, a clear difference between gender identity or gender role and sexual identity. One of the primary functions of sexuality, Halperin (1990) argues, is to "distinguish, once and for all, sexual identity from matters of gender - to decouple, as it were, *kinds* of sexual predilection from degrees of masculinity and femininity" (p. 25). Denying the often

troublesome fluidity of gender boundaries to which Ryon's paintings are drawn, notably and conversely, it is the non-confoundability of the genders which is necessary for the dominant culture's "traffic in "masculine" and "feminine" characters" (p. 146). Since the category of masculinity has been particularly restrictive, "those denying its conditions generally find themselves relegated to the more accommodating category of femininity" (Silverman, 1992, p. 342).

Structurally, Wyeth's and Ryon's paintings are also variant. Acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the former's single panel tempera on gesso panel measures approximately 32 1/4" x 47 3/4". Presently in a private collection, *Christina's World Revisited* is a large scale diptych measuring approximately 72" x 132". While originating as a way of handling a work of such monumental size, the scale and nature of Ryon's diptych reflects, not only the artist's immense physical and mental stamina, but came also, to have an impact on the composition. As the artist notes: "the shoulder comes right to the edge. The hand reaches over" (p. 57). The viewer's eye cannot avoid the *split*.

The two artists also share a technical mastery of their materials which has not always been seen as to their advantage. Laurence (1994) notes:

Ryon manifests a tremendous facility for both drawing and painting, but in many ways his facility works against him. Given the anguished nature of his subject, his style is surprisingly non-confrontational...the glowing eyes and upturned faces of these portraits, the sweet seductiveness of both expression and paint application, the coy academic poses, undermine this record of the artist's existential journey. (p. D15) ¹²

Similarly, Wyeth was accused of being "merely a devilishly clever technician" (Hoving, see Duff, 1987, p. 118) and his work was often dismissed by what were considered the more experimental of the American artists of the time. The paintings, critics suggest, are successful "only if the artist becomes excited - almost agitated" (p. 119). Wyeth himself

confesses that he has to watch himself with tempera "so as not to become too perfect" (Hoving, see Duff, 1987, p. 119).¹³

Venus n anadyomene (1993) (Figure 6)

Venus n anadyomene (72" x 48"), again a self-reflexive representation where the artist is projected into a speculative context, more directly addresses issues of mortality and disease - a painting, which Gayle affirms, was a "personal conversation dealing with those issues as a way of negotiating the difficulties I had in addressing (matters of) personal vanity or notions of the self" (p. 53). The artist explains:

In 1993 I went in for HIV testing...(The physician) asked me if I had been vaccinated for Hepatitis B...I hadn't, so we also did a test...in order to establish whether or not I had been in contact with the virus. The results all came back fine except for Hepatitis B which came back positive. At that time, I didn't know what Hepatitis B was. I'd never heard of it...there was very little certainty as to when I was infected, whether I was...going to become ill. There was no presence of antigens in my body so I wasn't developing any kind of immunity to it. At that time my doctors also told me that Hepatitis B can be fatal, (but)...there is treatment available - Interferon which is a six month self-injection program... It is very toxic, and it has a fifty percent success rate. So I very quickly became inundated with information, and a lot of it wasn't very good. Also...because Hepatitis is transmitted in the same way(s) that HIV is, although my HIV test came back negative, my doctor wanted to do another one...He wanted to make sure that I was not, in fact, infected with both...I guess the overriding sense that I took away from that initial experience was an awareness that what I was doing was very real and had very real consequences. How I engaged in sexual activity was not just something that occurred behind closed doors, and could be pleasurable...(which) you walked away from and had no lingering ties to. There was suddenly a very strong notion of responsibility to myself, and responsibility to other people because I was potentially infectious. (p. 5)

It was Friedrich Nietzsche who claimed that in order for there to be art, one physical condition was indispensable: frenzy. The combination of Gayle's health status and the recent break-up with a lover and the resulting sense of isolation left him feeling anguished. Reading the poem *Venus Anadyomene* by Arthur Rimbaud,¹⁴ whose personal contraction of syphilis had led to a period of depression and loneliness for the poet, Gayle



Figure 6: *Venus n anadyomene*

recalls a reference in which an elderly woman, emerging from the bathtub, is described as "hideously beautiful with an ulcer on her anus" (Rimbaud, quoted in Fowlie, 1966, p. 40). From a stanza in *Being Beauteous*, Rimbaud writes: "whistlings of death and the rounds of muffled music make this adored body rise, swell and tremble like a ghost; wounds, scarlet and black, erupt in this superb flesh" (Rimbaud, quoted in Peschel, 1973, p. 121).

The light that constitutes a work of art expresses not only the most subtle and the most cruel, but also the most hilarious of feelings associated with humankind (Lawler, 1992). Exhibited at Artropolis 1993, *Venus n anadyomene* evokes such a range of responses and, the artist determined, it was not to deny its potential for humor.

I became very caught in the realization that a lot of my predicament had to do, not with the actual awareness of the illness itself and its habitation within me, but just the stigma of carrying it, a sexually transmitted disease, and how that related to the social sphere - in how I brought myself to bear with other people. So the painting became sort of a humorous exploration of personal vanity...I put cold cream on my face and a towel on my head and took a glassy-eyed stare off into the abysmal self...I think it was very successful in that quality of humor and levity that it addresses within a very complicated and painful structure of experience. (p. 6)

In reviewing the *Venus* exhibition, Gustafson (1994) quotes the artist who "turned Marat's tragic bathtub into something so ridiculous that I laughed every time I looked at it" (p. 31).

Venus n anadyomene, at first glance, is more indirect in its nonetheless significant art historical reference: the painting intimates familiarity with the work of neoclassical French painter Jacques Louis David (1748- 1825) and particularly in the canvas *The Death of Marat* (1793). Ryon (as with *Christina's World Revisited*) saw the art historical referencing as a way of "jump-starting the dialogue that occurs between a viewer and a work" (p. 54). Once that connection is made, there is then an ineluctable perdurability in the concatenation of these two canvases painted two-hundred years apart.

Art works which hold our attention are rarely perspicuous, and, while the intention was not to make a precise reference to the work of David, because that painting is well known, an informed viewer is nonetheless impelled to consider the alliance and wonder. While the similarities between Ryon's work and its art historical referent are, in this case, less obvious, nonetheless, a brief revelational discussion of David's painting suggests pertinent information which can be brought to an examination of *Venus n anadyomene*.¹⁵ Jacques Louis David, in his own individualistic manner, reworked the classical and academic traditions of art in a politically didactic style which reflected his belief that the artist had a responsibility to make a forceful contribution to the education of the public. The French Revolution provided the circumstances for David's interest in public art and its use for the purposes of propaganda. In a discussion of the painting which depicts the death of David's friend Marat, stabbed to death in his bath by a political enemy, de la Croix and Tansey (1986) suggest that the "classical element of closed outline and compact composition, though present, are made to serve the ends of a dramatic realism of strong psychic impact" (p. 798). "Narrative details - the knife, the wound, the blood, the letter...are vividly placed to sharpen the sense of pain and outrage" (p. 798).

While aware of the inevitable *political* impact of his paintings in a contemporary and admittedly geographically-bound cultural space, Ryon is more cautious in his intentions to create work which deliberately shares David's interest in the didactic. "There is an element to how I think about my work, and to what I do in my work, that is definitely political, and to some degree activist" (p. 40). However, in allowing that within his paintings might lie an intention to effect change, that shift, he contends, takes longer to coalesce - a factor which differentiates his work from the immediacy, militancy, and often ephemerality of other *activist* art. While his paintings still engage around controversial *political* issues, Ryon's work, he suggests, "takes much longer to inform change or even to become regarded" (p. 40). That difference gives the work an ability to "transgress the

historical moment" (p. 41), to "move or shift somewhat backwards and forward in time" (p. 41). *Venus n anadyomene*, he contends, is a "play on an assumption of importance" (p. 55) in that it is concerned with what might, by comparison, be considered a "fairly banal event" (p. 55). However, the association of a well known and admittedly *political* painting with a canvas which makes public that which has most often been considered personal (infection through sexual transmission and the stigma implicit with such a revelation), makes any full reading of *either* painting necessarily allied with revolutionary events or attitudes.¹⁶

The selection of the bathroom as a locale for the two works is also telling. Growing up in a household of women, Gayle perceived the bathroom as a very specific place - as a "forum for events. I only began to realize as I grew older just how important that room was" (p. 61-62). The bathroom, as a setting for the painting, was addressed as a truly personal area - "a space where one cleans oneself, where one addressed or looked at oneself critically, scrutinized oneself" (p. 62). David's friend Marat, easing his discomforts in his own bathroom, turbaned his head with cloth soaked in vinegar and sheeted his body to prevent a recrudescence of sores which would result from his skin touching the lining of the copper tub. Murdered in his bath by Charlotte Corday, Marat's immolation for political purposes struck down an already very sick man who otherwise would have soon died had he not been killed by the violence of the knife wound to his right lung.

Some aesthetic similarities in the paintings are also of note. In both, there is a rather austere and neutral space above the dense organization of the figure. For David's lugubrious painting, that choice leads to a "chilling oppressiveness" (de la Croix & Tansy, 1986, p.798). In both cases the viewer is *confronted* with the scene portrayed. Further, while Brookner (1980) reports a "weird greenish lighting of the ground" (p. 115) in *The Death of Marat*, Ryon, having decided to work from composite photographs, in producing the photographic images on which the painting is based, comments on the

"monochrome yellowing effect" (p. 54). Similarly there is a dark quality to the figure of the turbaned artist in Ryon's painting while Brookner (1980) comments on the overall dark tonality of David's canvas which is used as a "vehicle for (communicating) intense emotion" (p. 58). The knife, present in David's painting is replaced by the ominous presence of an elongated sharply pointed (phallic) protrusion on which Ryon, depicted as bather, could impale himself should he thrust himself backwards on to it.

While David's painting portrays a more *realistic* physical space, the various planes and factitious cut-out nature of the figure in Ryon's painting, in part a function of the impossibility of photographing the location in one shot, presents a more fragmented surface consistent with the disjuncted sense of selves constituted and perpetuated in postmodernist discourse.¹⁷ Of all the bodies in this series, the representation of the bather most closely collapses the *body* onto the *face* of the canvas as well onto the *surface* of contemporary rhetoric. While the originating problem is obviously corporeal, within this postmodern schema, the body lacks depth, is not a *being*, and is rendered most succinctly, a *conceptual* rather than *physical* problem. Both the segmented finish of the canvas and the artifice of the cut-out figure give rise to the possibility of conceiving the somatic, not as *matter*, but rather, as a surface with variable and contestable boundaries regulated by the politics of social power.

In both paintings, there is an integration of the concerns of everyday life and the production of visual art. David makes "real life the pretext for a new type of high art. It is not, as is sometimes stated, that a sordid political assassination has been transformed into great art. It is that art and life have become indistinguishable" (Brookner, 1980, p. 115). Similarly, Ryon uses his own life experience and produces a painting wherein art and life are melded.

There was something very mundane about the whole thing, very common and every day. What I found was, as I started to put the image together...there were a

lot of little accidents that started to happen that I found aesthetically very attractive...I was interested in keeping it really loose. I worked very rapidly...The whole painting took me a week to do. Comparatively, that is a very short time. It normally takes me a month to do a painting. I worked everyday on it for eight hours. I'd get up in the middle of the night and work some more. A lot of it was done under low light conditions (p.53). From the original inception, I was in love with the piece. It made me feel really empowered. It was a really emotional state. I can remember at the time that I wasn't actually doing anything else except working out at the gym. I would go to the gym and all I would think about was the painting. I would run home to get back to work on it. (p. 54)

Ryon's *Venus n anadyomene*, like Rimbaud's *Being Beauteous* is not only a conversation about disease, and mortality, or even, as Lawler (1992) notes about the latter, is "not only (about) a Being that is Beauty,...nor even an evolving state of the beautiful" (p. 190), but rather, through art, the poet and painter are offered a cycle of renewal generated through the creative process.

Untitled (Figure 7)

Of the four paintings considered, only *Untitled* (1993) (72" x 48") is without a direct art historical reference. The artist, again using himself as subject, is portrayed in a physical space both receding, pulling the viewer's gaze into the left hand side of the canvas toward the body between chest and knee, while at the same time, blocking it through the utilization of painted passages, institutional in hue, around the head and back, which refuse entry and stop the viewer short. The viewer is exhorted to both approach and avoid. Gayle describes the compositional adjustments.

The background (originally) was recessive. There was a window at the end of the hall; there was an exit light. All of these things, I found, led the viewer outside of what I found to be a more rigorous exploration of a very specific...psychological moment within space.(p. 63)

Wearing an identification bracelet, the bare chested subject, clad in loose hospital pants open at the crotch, gazes invulnerably out at the viewer yet is, at the same time, already in another discernibly unreachable place about which each viewer can only



Figure 7: *Untitled*

speculate. Clutching his own hand, the immeasurable sadness appears consuming. It seems difficult to imagine a spectator who, while sensing the inevitable futility of his/her gesture, would not strain to somehow console a figure beyond consolation - a man whose capacities to hear, to respond to touch, are already consumed by the calamity of his circumstance.

Almost everybody who liked this piece talked about the face. The face...is really interesting because I actually used (as a reference for painting the face) one of the photographs which was taken the day that I was in the hospital having the liver biopsy...I can remember the specific moment when it was taken. The biopsy was over. I was brought back up and they were monitoring my blood pressure as an indication of whether or not there was any internal bleeding...My friend was still with me. He started taking some pictures. At one point he came right up to my face. I felt so completely empty. I felt completely beyond....it is difficult to really get a handle on it...I was in a state of having gone through the worst that I would go through in that event. What I realized through it was that there was a lot more tied into that specific event than I had ever previously given credence to. I became very emotionally bent out of shape through the process and afterwards felt like I had been whacked over the head with an axe... (After the surgery), when I came back into the ward and my friend was photographing me, when I looked at him, I didn't address him. I wasn't addressing anyone. It was a look of tolerance, of patience, but through that I couldn't be touched. I could leave myself completely open...There is a tremendous security in going to that outer limit and feeling empowered by your own untouchability. I think that regardless of whether people really catch that in the work, perhaps there is something in that that still reads that people are responding to. (p. 65-66)

While it is the same body portrayed in the other three paintings, this figure is a trace of itself - a physicality evident in a slighter and perceptibly more fragile form which appears, on first glance, certain not to be a facsimile of the hypermasculinity piercing every pore of the figures of *Christina's World Revisited* and *Pos.i.tive*. Notably, the rendering of an array of postured bodies used in the series of four paintings encourages a reading which disrupts inclinations to construct (homo)sexual identity as unified, natural, or unchanging. But by walking away from the painting, the viewer cannot escape the repetitive vertical draw from the V shape of the open crotch darkened by pubic hair, to the navel which

directs the eye through the cleavage in the chest, to the line of esophageal muscles, to the crown of the stubbled head and back again. Drawn in on the left, the flatness of the space which surrounds the figure makes the viewer's focus on the body fated. There is, the artist notes, a relationship between the "very straight edges and angular forms juxtaposed to the fluidity of the lines that compose the body or the fabric, create a tension, or evoke that association of the body to architecture" (p. 64). More speculatively however, consciously or not, each viewer must reckon with and consider, as an example, human needs for love, security, and belonging as well as contend with the loneliness of men, who as gendered beings, have ignored the "fundamental truth of interdependence" (Keen, 1991, p. 176).¹⁸ In a review of the 1994 exhibition of Ryon's works, Laurence (1994) suggests the "emotional tone ranges through loneliness, hopelessness, desperate vanity, catharsis, regeneration and oddly demure expiation" (p. D.15). If overt behavior is organized around inner conditions, and if, as Maslow contends, *expression* refers to "what a person is, rather than what he does" (Arnheim, 1966, p. 199), this portrayal is particularly revealing.

Pos.i.tive (1994) (Figure 8)

While all paintings given present consideration use the artist's nude, or semi-nude body as figurative subject, the painting *Pos.i.tive* (72" x 48") is particularly libidinal making the referential *odor* of the sexualized body inescapable. Jones (1994) has argued that masculinity is a "negotiated system of identities that are accomplished through the ritual display of phallic attributes, specifically in relation to the masculinized function of the artist - a function that could be said to exaggerate the attributes of masculinity affording power to the male subject in patriarchal culture" (p. 546). As portrayed in this painting however, the otherwise paradigmatic location of the male artist in modernism, which depends upon the veiling of the phallus, is subverted. Quoting Lacan, Jones notes that the phallus can only play its role if it is veiled; "the artist's authority is most effectively confirmed when the function of the phallus is masked, hidden under art-historically

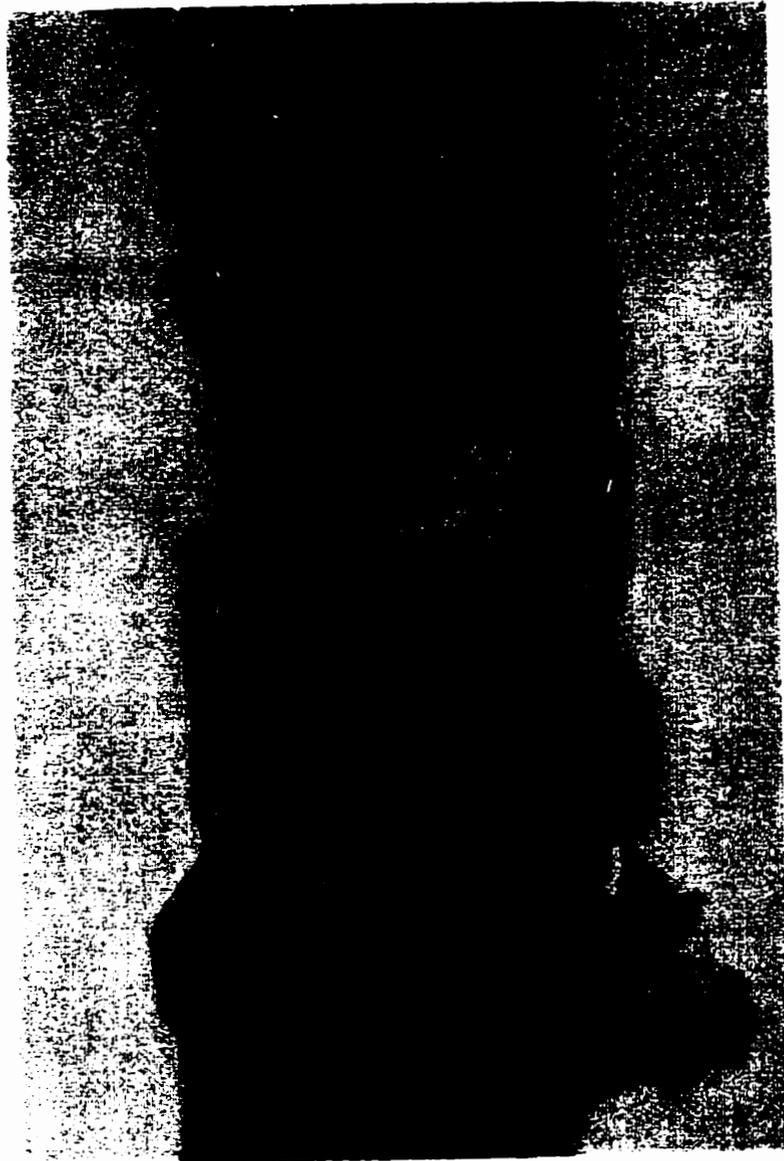


Figure 8: *Pos.i.tive*

sanctioned symbols of artistic genius" (p. 547). For male artists who choose a perturbative *display* of the penis (the anatomical corollary of the symbolic phallus), while there may still be a *playing* of the phallus to reinforce a masculine/artistic authority, it is also a seditious act which complicates the modernist strategy by disguising or occluding "the link between the symbolic function of the phallus and the penis: that link which simultaneously obscures and guarantees the privileging of the anatomically male subject within western culture" (p. 547).

Jones (1994) recognizes that her attentions have been "blatantly heterosexist" (p. 547) and have addressed the male bodies of artists who *perform* themselves as heterosexual. Eccentric to the constraints of heteronormativity, Ryon's use of himself as nude *gay* male figure is a dismantling of the assumptions around the naked male body constituted through heterosexism and, alternately is an exploration of the imbrication of sexuality and gender and therefore, the vicissitudes of postmodern male subjectivities. Photographically representational in its rendering, *Pos.i.tive* is the most *slickly* finished of the four paintings considered. The complexities of the painting are embedded in the synthesis of a range of the artist's diverse interests and experiences relevant to this work which include: 17th century Italian painter Guido Reni and the homoeroticism implicit in the paintings of St. Sebastian; Yukio Mishima's *Confessions of a Mask*, the margins; institutional spaces and colors of the 1950s; and again, concerns around sexually-transmitted disease. The word *Pos.i.tive* is imposed overhead, separating and centralizing the "i" and offering a double-edged intimation in its evocation, as the artist notes, of "both the fear and the expectation that is involved in the engagement of sexual practice and the risk of sexually transmitted disease, and also, in issues of identity and feeling empowered within one's identity" (p. 13-14).

Paintings of St. Sebastian by Guido Reni include the young male figure standing on a rock and bound to a tree. Reni's paintings were intended to reflect distinct moral and

intellectual ideas. Not noted for his modesty, Guido Reni was driven by his painting at which he worked perpetually and compulsively. The overriding interest in his life was his painting: his art was his social life. Pepper (1984) suggests that Reni's work reflects two aesthetic approaches: "one favoured polish and elaborateness, the other corporeal solidity and directness of expression" (p. 19). Reni was quick to take offence, remained close to his mother, was inclined towards melancholia, "driven by compulsions, beset by phobias, (and) isolated by pride" (Engass & Engass, 1980, p. 1). As a boy, Reni was reportedly "extraordinarily beautiful...blond, blue eyed and robust, but with very delicate, probably rather girlish facial features" (p. 2). In a chapter outlining the life of Guido Reni by Carlo Cesare Malvasia and translated by Engass and Engass (1980), it is suggested that Reni avoided women, and was a virgin: "He never caused the slightest scandal when observing the many lovely young girls who served as his models he was like marble" (p. 126).

Serving as his own model, Ryon's painting invites speculation, not only into its *subject*, but also, compels in its privileging of the sexualized young, muscular, adult male body and the simultaneous admission that below the seductiveness of the surface, the body, its desires yanked from unencumbered coition, holds the risk of contagion. Painted in San Francisco while a student at the San Francisco Art Institute, the artist is portrayed with his hands and wrists tied and pulled slightly to his right over his head, his pants and underwear at his ankles as he gazes down at his own body - across his belly towards his tumid penis sheathed in a condom. It is a narcissistic revelation where the *truth* is possessed in the singularity of the artist/subject's own body and his own mind. While there may be discomfort in doing so, the viewer must ineluctably reckon with corporeal excess - with the figure's relentless focus on his own sexuality - to share, or reject, to ponder, but never to elude, it.

Ryon suggests that because his head is pointed downwards, the viewer is "given room to move into my space. It is presenting an opportunity to look at me without

necessarily taking responsibility...They can have the pleasure of looking without being seen" (p. 71). For a viewer favorably inclined to the blatant homoeroticism of the image, the experience of viewership differs from those who might lean otherwise. The artist succinctly notes: "for someone who doesn't share an inclination to that point of view (homoerotic), it makes them very uncomfortable" (p. 72). In other words, while Davis (1994) contends that desire and representation are partly outside of one another (what is represented is not always what is desired; what is desired is not always what is represented), desire and interpretation of a particular representation are nonetheless reciprocally implicated.

The finished painting, Ryon concedes, is no longer incumbent on any particular historically referenced painting and went through a series of transformations before its completion in its present form.

There was a point at which I felt the painting was finished: it was entirely different than this. There was more of the architecture. I painted a tree trunk in the background. There was more of a landscape...For me the landscape didn't really have any necessary bearing on the the figure. (p. 68)

In eliminating the *natural* landscape, Ryon's decision was to eliminate the superfluous information and centralize the figure and the more ambiguous space which surrounds it. Reflecting his interest in architecture, the institutional spaces of the 1950s, referenced by the colour which *backs* the body, Ryon suggests, represent an "absolute position" (p. 68). "There is an authority in the 1950's architecture that I don't find today. There is an assurance and a self-awareness and a credence that is very attractive because it takes a position. It takes a standpoint" (p. 68).

What I find interesting to explore personally within that, is that, as soon as somebody makes an absolute kind of statement...it becomes something else....part of the way it becomes something else is that, in recognizing that it doesn't

address...me, then there is a will to dirty it. It somehow becomes erotic because it becomes a location of transgressive desire. Within it, there is a charge, possibly because I know that people move through that space and have no outlet for desire. The corners, the bathrooms, the forgotten spaces in that architecture are all charged with that sexual component. (p. 68-69) ¹⁹

Post-Secondary Education in the Visual Arts

As detailed in Chapter IV, all four works constituting the art practices of Subject A, which are under present consideration, centered around his relationships as gay male artist to the various institutions and organized systems of *authority* which sought to constrain the *public* examination of the issues which were relevant to his experience as gay student and citizen. While all four paintings considered in this chapter were produced while Gayle Ryon was a student at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design or at the San Francisco Art Institute, the overall post-secondary educational experiences were significantly different from those of Subject A.

During his early periods of experience within the post-secondary visual arts system, while not *out* as an openly gay man, Gayle recognizes that he was not unaware and recalls the significance of having an openly gay professor at the University of British Columbia.

I think one of the things that I found most striking and probably influenced me more than anything the first year was that my English teacher was gay. He was very upfront about it right from the first class: there was no masking or pretence. What it caused me to do was really think about my own dis-ease with being around him which was primarily dis-ease with myself. I was very inspired by his ability to be so forthright because it was completely alien to any of my previous experience. I'd grown up in a small town in which I had never seen outward gay sexuality. There was just no manifestation of it whatsoever. To believe that someone could be so completely whole within that identity was something new to me. So, within the first two years that I spent there, even though I wasn't out, I was certainly re-assessing my self-evaluation and thinking about issues around being gay. (p. 15)

The experiences at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design varied also because, by then, Gayle had become accustomed to living as an openly gay man. Gayle notes:

"Emily Carr has been a completely other experience... (however) I somehow anticipated that there would be more of (a gay presence) there. I was really surprised by the absence of a gay student body and faculty at Emily Carr" (p. 15). His experiences within the programs of the institute reportedly were generally quite positive.

When we did critiques and so forth, I located myself, both within being a gay artist, and also within the issues of illness that I was dealing with and exploring. The responses to that were, on the whole, very open. I think that the only problem that I've had with it, and the only area where I feel there may be some biases...(is that), because (the work) is receiving so much attention, there is a willingness to locate (them) entirely as just that...When I was engaged in a critique, it was very difficult to move it outside of that homoerotic gaze. In many ways, it has been a challenge for me to really understand in what ways the work might participate outside of that. (p. 16)

Gayle's experience as a student of visual art extended to the United States. The Student Mobility Program provides an opportunity for students to study for a period of time at one of the participating art colleges world wide. Gayle recalls the experience of his time at the San Francisco Art Institute:

I think San Francisco has been a really profound experience for me because it really opened up the sense of contextualizing work. Part of what we've been talking about in terms of the Emily Carr experience is a very limited viewership, or a limited way of looking at the work. Because people are not seeing a lot of work, or they are not engaged continually in a very cross-sectional kind of student body or work, there isn't the self-assertiveness that comes from locating oneself very clearly within specific cultural parameters...What I found immediately when I went to San Francisco was that I could find other people who had done similar reading to me, who shared similar interests and who were making work, which was completely different than my own, but was drawing from a lot of the same sources and a lot of the same experiences. (p. 17)

Returning to Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, while there was openness to the processes in which he was engaged, there was a limitedness to the kinds of teaching/learning experiences which were available.

The best response that I've had to the work has been from women instructors. I think the primary reason for that is...because most of them are involved very heavily with feminist discourse and are engaged in similar issues (in that) context. Most of the male instructors at the school have spent very little time thinking or viewing around similar issues because they are coming from a position of privilege. (p. 23)

Summary of Chapter

Gayle Ryon, as participant in this project, has agreed to speak transparently of his personal and cultural locations as a gay male artist. In so doing, there is an insistent renegotiation of the nature and reciprocal implications of the closet and visual art practices, between homosexuality and heterosexuality, between masculinity and femininity, between private and public, between the historical and the contemporary as examples. Accordingly Subject B, as with Subject A, engages in the constitution of *dissident* subjectivities and art practices and, also, through involvement in this inquiry, in the recording of the art and educational *history* of the present.

Notes:

¹The single spaced transcript for these interviews is 72 pages long. Page references for Gayle Ryon refer to this document.

²Eisner's enthusiasm for alternate forms of representation in the construction of meaning in research are not always shared. Phillips (1995), as an example, contends that Eisner frequently speaks as an artist rather than as a researcher and, in that critique, reinforces the belief that it is not possible to be both at the same time. Further, Phillips claims that Eisner neglects to distinguish between those forms of art which might extend our understanding (that is, count as research) and those that do not. In cautioning against Eisner's claims, Phillips concludes: "Art may well express meanings, but they are meanings in a quite different sense from those expressed in language, and it helps neither field to blur the major differences in this dimension" (p. 76).

³There were some immediate differences evident in the *climate* and in the two sets of circumstances which unfolded during and after interviews: the comfort level throughout the research process varied with the two subjects. As noted in Chapter IV, I had undertaken a twenty hour drive for the first set of interviews and, when accompanied by the general level of harassment and interrogation to which the first participant had been

exposed, there was created a palpable sense of relief on both our parts that helped to establish a level of comfort, a degree of reciprocal interest, and a depth of *understanding* more expected between individuals who had known each other for a longer period of time. The connection between us was first personal, felt intimate almost immediately, and the interview process was more reciprocal. Alternately, the interviews and subsequent contacts with Gayle Ryon remained more formal and distant. While the data collected was clearly a result of communication between the two of us, the *atmosphere* in which the information was gathered was ultimately more remote and the directionality of the exchanges more one way.

⁴The term "means" is used to suggest a broader range of implications than would result from considering the paintings simply as a "source" of information. By using the former, it is intended that the research convey an interest in: significance (How much does it *mean* to you?); content or subject matter (What does it *mean* to you?); and, method (By what *means* will the intention be accomplished?).

⁵Further to his interest in art history, an engagement with other means of representational discourse (writing) is evident in his work. Gustafson (1994) suggests that Ryon is an exception to the conception that artist's aren't thinkers: "he says he loves language, and is much more inspired by good writing than by looking at contemporary art" (p. 31).

⁶Wyeth maintained a thirty year relationship with the Olsons - an engagement which produced, in addition to *Christina's World*, untold numbers of preparatory drawings as well as other finished works.

⁷The Olson house previously belonged to Samuel Hawthorne and family whose only surviving child - a daughter, married John Olson. Using a common Maine expression, the Hawthorne's had "daughtered out" (Wyeth, 1982, p. 1).

⁸The paintings raise issues, not only of gender and sexuality, but also of age. Wyeth had made the Christina of his painting considerably more youthful than the woman who had actually served as his model. In doing so, according to cultural norms which value and sexualize youth, the viewer is presented with a wider range of interpretive possibilities. Ryon's canvas intensifies the collective and prevalent cultural sexualization of the young adult.

⁹I have used the names Gayle and Ryon to signify the artist. The nature of the relationship between researcher and subject(s) warrants a first name address. However, when art historians or reviewers write about artists, last names are generally used and I have endeavored to balance the kinds of denominations utilized. As an example, when I speak of the work of Andrew Wyeth and Gayle Ryon in proximity, I use last names for both.

¹⁰It should be noted that Gayle's 1996 exhibition, *Work Ethic*, while utilizing the gay male body in various settings addresses other issues outside of disease. It happens that the research was completed not long after the time when these concerns were primary in the artist's life.

¹¹It is interesting to note that in speaking of the other farm which particularly interested Wyeth (the Kuerner place), the artist suggests that his interest was not "because it was in

any way bucolic, but rather, the abstract almost military quality of that farm appealed to me" (Hoving, see Duff 1987, p.120)

¹²While *Venus n anadyomene* was a part of the exhibition which Laurence reviewed, not all of the paintings considered for this study were included.

¹³Wyeth's meticulous realism was a significant departure from the contemporaneous action paintings of the New York School where, "at first glance, Wyeth's spirit seems utterly untouched by the storms of twentieth century artistic revolution (de la Croix & Tansey, 1986, p. 942). However, "the odd angles of his compositions and his carefully selected perspectives show that he is no stranger to experimentation" (p. 942).

¹⁴In writing about Rimbaud, Bloom (1988) suggests that what mattered to the poet was his relation to the world and the way in which this relation revealed "him to be himself in his own eyes" (p. 94). "The body...reveals itself to be an inexhaustible source of exclusively intimate information concerning the living being one is" (p. 95). "To feel is to feel oneself, that is, to perceive the change brought about in us by the sensory event as a phenomenon which captures our attention" (p. 97).

¹⁵ In a similar painting, *intra-Venus*, Gayle, again as turbaned subject is physically positioned in a way which more closely approximates David's *Death of Marat*.

¹⁶Laurence (1994) notes Gayle's references to art history and to personal experience and comments that during an artist's talk at the opening of the Venus exhibition, Gayle spoke of the "emotional crisis precipitated by his diagnosis as a "chronic carrier" of the potentially fatal hepatitis B virus" (p. D15).

¹⁷Gayle also notes that the cut out nature of the figure is reminiscent of the way in which his sister placed photographs around the mirror in her bedroom. "Some of those naive, early practices that I found around me all brought to mind in some way - a notion of self and identity...(as they relate to) beauty and appearance or presentability" (p. 62).

¹⁸Of relevance, Keen (1991) notes research which suggests that men in the 1990's may become even more isolated as a consequence of present attitudes which include: 1.) an ethic of achievement and independence; 2.) an increasing self rather than other orientation; 3.) increased attention to exercise and health which intensifies a focus on self; and 4.) a more go-it-alone attitude.

¹⁹ For individuals not marginalized and silenced on the basis of sexual orientation, there is often an adverse reaction to the sexualization of space outside the confines of the house (bedroom). In response, it is argued that since gay men or lesbians are not permitted to demonstrate even casual physical affection publicly, there is an inclination to *take over*, in ways which the dominant culture finds offensive, other locales as sites for sexual exchange.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Research Question A: Personal Identities and Art Practices: Conclusions and Implications

This research was undertaken in order to consider three broad and initiating questions relevant to the experiences of gay men who were students of visual art within post-secondary educational systems. First, the inquiry sought to determine and articulate the relationship between personal identities and art practices. In order to ascertain the perspectives of each subject, the art productions and the following interview questions, both specific and general, served as mechanisms for data collection and for understanding:

- 1.) How do you consider or name yourself as a maker of art?
- 2.) Do you see yourself as identified with any one group or groups? If so, which one or ones?
- 3.) Does your art practice, in terms of content, medium, method, purposes, etc., relate to your personal experiences and identities as defined? If so, in what ways?

Art Practices and the Naming of Sexual Subjectivities

In Chapter I, a series of definitions around homosexualities were considered in order to approximate a common ground by which a discussion of sexual variance could proceed. While the inquiry delimited the research by addressing a specific population already named, that is *gay* male students of post-secondary visual arts, one of the questions which the research investigated is how the subject(s) of the inquiry named *themselves*. Christopher Lefler (Subject A) suggests:

My initial response is that I don't know how to occupy any of those names. I don't know how to because I just feel so extremely exterior to even *those* names in the way that I see them constituted. The way that I see them constituted is: if Gens Helquist and Dik Campbell are gay, then I am not gay. If Sylvia Fedoruk is gay, I am not gay. So I don't know how I feel about that term...So queer becomes the word to consider. I feel the most comfortable with queer, although I don't know how to embody that because I live in Saskatoon. It makes me feel like to be queer you (have to) live in New York, Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, or San Francisco.

To live in Saskatoon, if you are queer, that means really odd. If I started at that point, I could probably feel comfortable because I *am* odd here. So when I hear the word queer, I'm thinking of it in terms of the original notion of just really odd, and unusual - different. I also like the way it removes gender...(also) it allows not just lesbians and gays, bisexuals, but it allows the transgendered, the hermaphrodite" (p. 100-101).

During the interviews, Christopher referred to himself as a faggot, as gay, as homosexual, as well as queer.¹ As a sartorial manifestation of the latter, Christopher notes that when he arrived in Saskatoon in 1992, he produced a T shirt using the Queer Nation graphic style to proclaim *Militant Queer, Watch Your Ass*. Christopher notes: "Those people in contact with me need to know that that is a significant part of who I am and to get it out there and over with...This is who I am, take it or leave it" (p. 101).

Subject B: Gayle Ryon, in response to this question, first added a further dimension in order to make a distinction between the denominations of artist and painter. "As a person who makes art, I actually call myself an artist...For a long time I called myself a painter...I think that there is something lost when one identifies oneself specifically within a particular art practice" (p. 20). Sharing a similar perspective to Christopher Lefler, Gayle Ryon also noted some variance in naming himself in ways which reference dissident sexual subjectivities. As an example, Gayle reported using the references to homosexuality, that is, "queer, gay, and faggot" (p.19), interchangeably.

Although I understand the delineations between them, I don't feel (inclined), as part of my political involvement or interest, within my identity, to separate and use only one. Part of the reason that I use words like faggot...(is that) it creates an area of discomfort where what is capable of limiting...and shutting someone into a very hostile and negative box is also a very powerful tool for opening that box...removing that stigmatization. So I think it can be empowering to use words like faggot. (p. 19-20)

Both subjects are non-dogmatic and independent thinkers who identified and spoke about, the complex imbricative fabric of subjectivities (gender, race, social class, sexuality)

which constitute any individual. There was, as well, a recognition of the need to resist the dominant culture and yet not become locked in the margins. Both subjects report some discomfort with the ideological and socially-enacted *baggage* that inheres with the assumption of particular identity labels. The dominant culture may use such words as "gay", "queer", "faggot", "dyke", etc. as mechanisms by which to assert social authority and enforce marginality. Consequently, for each subject who has named himself as gay or queer, it is more productive to use such terms as a point of entry into an initial engagement with the artist or his practice. While wishing to specify variance, it is imperative for each artist not to be constrained by the demeaning potentialities in those same naming strategies. To this end, Gayle Ryon suggests:

I don't feel like there is adequate space for me within a very generalized notion of what it means to be queer, or what it is to be gay..or from the outside what it is to be homosexual. That for me is a bit too limiting. (p. 26)

Implications

While both subjects utilize a range of terms which are, to varying degrees, considered interchangeable in any discussion of sexual diversity, the most prevalent terms utilized by the participants in the research were *gay* and *queer*. The implications of the noted variability, with an inclination to the variance and potency of the word *queer*, include a recognition that individuals whose concerns similarly address matters of significance to individual gay men, that is, bisexuals, lesbians, the transgendered, etc. and to their communities, are, as noted in Chapter I, not always in accord with respect to denominative preference.

The choice of the word *queer* by these urban and Western subjects suggests that *queer* as an identifier may be bound to specific cultural and geographic locales. As both research subjects are young and educated, it might also be speculated that the use of the term *queer* to describe one's identity may be a generational or educationally-related

phenomenon. Given the interest in the relationships of social power expressed by both subjects, queer may also emerge as an aspect of a critique of social-class in that what is opposed are bourgeois models of identity. Further, while the research participants also comfortably identify, however diversely and fluidly, as *gay* men, as a consequence of an affiliation with feminist principles, and in opposition to the socially-constituted and imposed constraints of gender, it is intimated that the adoption of the word *queer* is a means by which to bridge the gap otherwise centralized and insisted upon by the word *and* in the expression "gay *and* lesbian". In summary, while as a single word it might appear, at first glance, to disincite diverse readings, queer is seen rather as a mechanism by which differences within, and across, difference might be considered.

Affiliations: Identified Communities

The second specific question concerning the relationship between individual subjectivities and art practices addressed the notion of possible affiliation(s) with a group or groups. In other words, the research sought to determine the alliance(s), if any, of each artist/subject. During the process of the literature review which is documented in Chapter II, four possible categories, by which the relationships between homosexual subjectivities and visual arts practices in the broader culture might be classified, became evident. In the first group, homosexual artists may remain fully closeted throughout their lives - *posing* and *passing* as non-homosexual. Consequently, while there may be *suspensions* of sexual variance on account of biographic information or aesthetic interpretations, the artist's (homo)sexuality is either not named or not publicly known and is therefore not, in any substantive way, addressed in the literature. Second, homosexual artists, here more likely to be identified as *gay*, *lesbian*, or *queer*, may produce or participate in the productions of visual representations while remaining outside of any institutional (gallery, university, etc.) system. As examples, such a relationship is evidenced by the works of *gay* activist groups such as Act-Up or Queer Nation. Third, *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual*, or *queer* artists such as

David Wojnarowicz may work from within the institutional system, but actively reject the constraints of the heterosexualized mainstream and therefore interact and produce visual art from a confrontative place of resistance within, and toward, that system. Finally, homosexual, or, again, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, artists such as Attila Richard Lukacs and Ross Bleckner occupy simultaneous positions within the gallery and university/art institute systems as well as within the gay and/or lesbian communities.² In this last category, artists maintain a commitment to the group with which they are aligned and therefore to the dynamic of resistance and critique on behalf of themselves and their communities but, are, as well, interested in maintaining connections, including economic or market ties, to the dominant systems of visual arts culture.

Under the terms by which subjects were selected for the research, categories one and two are bumped by definition. In other words, both a public recognition of homosexuality *and* attendance at a post-secondary educational system were used as selection criteria. However, each artist/subject considered in the present inquiry clearly falls into one of the last two categories conceptualized through the research. Christopher Lefler meets the criteria as detailed in the third grouping - that is gay, lesbian, or queer artists who, while remaining within various university and gallery systems, manifest art practices which appear radical and are confrontative to dominant normative cultural standards of those systems and structures. While Christopher Lefler's art practice maintains a critical legitimacy as evidenced by supportive response from particular members of the arts, academic, and gay communities, the works considered for this research are nonetheless transgressive of an alternate set of values or standards which have been reified by other members of those same communities who have been invested with *greater* cultural power. Christopher's allegiances, in terms of art practices, are with groups who would also fall into the third category above. In discussing the contestatory works of Act Up and Queer Nation, Christopher notes:

Those are the seminal works in queer culture. I guess I identify with the ability of those to transform the world that I know, (to) reflect the world that I know, and to speak the kind of urgency to the world I want to listen to. Those are my heroes. Those are my comrades. (p. 107)

Alternately, Gayle Ryon meets the criteria established by the last of the quartet of categories. As an artist who paints with oils on canvas, Gayle's selection of mediums and methods themselves grant a legitimacy in the art world which is denied works of either a more ephemeral nature, or to historically female-identified mediums such as fibre-arts, which have not been endowed with the same (masculinized) cultural authority. Further, as noted in Chapter V, three of the four paintings considered have recognizable art historical referents, a feature which confers extended sanction within the institutions and systems of the art world. While the subject(s) of Gayle Ryon's canvases may be eccentric to cultural norms and may therefore elicit perturbative responses from certain viewers, there is nonetheless, a general recognition by the arts and academic communities that his work meets both normative and critical criteria for acceptance. As illustration, although at this writing he is now a recent graduate from the post-secondary educational system, Gayle Ryon is represented by Monte Clark Gallery in Vancouver, has, to date, held two one-man exhibitions with vigorous sales within that context, and, further, is scheduled for subsequent exhibitions in the United States.

Implications

As the difference in the experiences with the various art communities varied between and within subjects, the findings of the research suggest the possible impact of decisions which are made with respect to the selection of medium and methods. The selection of materials and processes may also influence affiliations in art practice. On the basis of the research findings, students/artists who adhere to long-held artistic conventions, in terms of materials and technique, and therefore to an association with

other artists similarly engaged, may provoke less punitive and extreme reactions from a wider range of spectators. In other words, while more broadly-informed and open viewers within the gallery and academic systems understood and encouraged the less traditional practices of performance and installation art, when combined with the controversy of its subject matter (ie. outing, challenge to institutional authority, etc.), the results were received with significantly higher levels of resistance than might be imposed on artists with more historically-validated approaches.

Art Practice and Lived-Experience

Sub-question three under the first primary research question sought an understanding of the ways in which each artist's art practice, in terms of content, medium, method, purposes, etc., related to his personal experiences and to his identities. As detailed in Chapters IV and V, the inquiry confirms that the role of experiences and subjectivities are centralized in the works of both research participants. While each individual obviously reflects a different *body* of experience, in terms of art practice, during the period of the research, each artist created visual work which reflected, and in fact, focused on, contemporaneous life experience. At an initial level, Christopher Lefler's practice revolves around matters of visibility/invisibility and challenges to cultural and institutional *authority* which he sees as *fixing* the boundaries, in terms of both art practice and sexual identity, in ways which are exclusionary. Gayle Ryon's paintings also address matters which relate particularly to personal experiences which, in this case, emerge from interest in matters of gender, sexual orientation, and sexually-transmitted disease. In considering the reasons why individuals are so willing to synecdochially identify themselves within sexual practice and/or gender, Gayle speaks to a focus, in his own work, on the sexual.

I know that...I respond very positively to pleasure stimulus and most of that is located within some modification of sexual play, or play on desire...When I'm

reading, I pay more attention to how something is written than to what is actually being written. Through that, I have developed an awareness of code or style in writing that in some way equivocates pleasure...that has...an erotic component to it - seductive (p. 21)... When I am making work, there is almost the equivalent of a mental erection, or that similar kind of energy that's produced in being in tune with the physical process of making work and having it come together (p. 29)...I don't necessarily get an erection from painting and yet the physical manifestations of the experience translates similarly (p. 30)... For me, (sexuality is of) enormous significance. I find that I relate physically, or outwardly to the world around, largely through what could be summed up as sexual stimulus. If I'm engaged in an activity, it is that much easier to perform, or do well at, if there is some kind of erotic charge to it. (p. 32)

Implications

In Chapter II, it is noted that *admitted homosexuals* have either been absent from discourse and representation, or have been, and continue to be, defined by the discourse of others on the basis of medical, legal, or religious terms. In response to this historical absence or derogatory presence, queer artists, such as Lefler and Ryon, make pivotal contributions to constituting themselves by centralizing their experiences and identities in their respective art practices. In locating themselves as queer, each artist's work is a means by which matters of visibility/invisibility as gay or queer men are explored and the former is asserted.³ As evidenced in the relationship between each subject's art practice and the experiences of their lives which is thoroughly, and often intimately, detailed in Chapters IV and V, it is apparent that each is ineluctably informed by the other. These artists make art as they live: these artists live as they make art.

Research Question B: Culture and Art Practice: Conclusions and Implications

The second broad research question concerned the relationship between the art practice of each subject and the broader culture in which it was produced. Sample interview questions included:

1.) What has been the public response to your art practice? Have you had particular feedback from education officials, gallery curators, community interest

groups, etc.? What has been the nature of that feedback? What effect has that feedback had on you personally, as well as how has it impacted your current art making practices?

2.) What purpose/function do you see your art practice has in contemporary culture?

Public Response to Visual Art Practices

As articulated in Chapters IV and V, the public responses to the works of both artists has been variant. The reactions to Christopher Lefler's work have been polar and extreme. Opponents have initiated their attacks by first of all constituting his practice as eccentric to the boundaries of art "in any sense of the word". In the specific, Christopher's art has further been described as inappropriate, unacceptable, offensive, reprehensible, potentially libelous, and unsuitable for exhibition. Alternately, Christopher has been commended by others for his considerable and serious intellectual abilities, as an artist who seeks the political enhancement of disenfranchised peoples, as a committed and independent thinker, as possessing scholarly thoroughness, good judgment, thoughtfulness, and a strong sense of responsibility.

While recognizing that his practice may use unorthodox medias and unconventional subject matter, supporters have recognized that Christopher Lefler's work is most often misunderstood and underestimated. Although the responses to Christopher's installations and performances were varied, the abrogative responses from those who held positions of *authority* in the Academy as well as within the Saskatchewan provincial government held sway. The support from other queer or feminist scholars and artists was ultimately impotent in its endeavors to prevent first his suspension, and then his expulsion, from the University of Saskatchewan. Further, as consequence of the squeeze of legislative pressure, the Government of Saskatchewan Arts Board was *forced* to rescind a substantial arts grant previously awarded by a jury of art's experts.⁴

Conversely, while there has been negative response to his subject matter, public critical reaction by art reviewers to Gayle Ryon's work has been, most often, exceptionally

positive. His drawing, painting, and intellectual skills have been exhorted in published critical accounts. In viewing the 1995 graduating student exhibition at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, in response to Gayle's canvases, while some visitors used the *Comment Book* to proclaim his paintings the "best work in the exhibition", a number of others made extremely virulent statements, most of which declaimed, in graffiti like gestures, the artist's audacity in choosing to portray such blatant homosexual, and sometimes homoerotic, subject matter.

Visual Arts Practice and its Function in Culture

The second research sub-question in this category was concerned with the ways in which each artist saw his work functioning within the broader culture. During the period of the inquiry, Christopher Lefler was, perhaps most aptly, a performance and installation artist, while Gayle Ryon was an artist who produced and exhibited paintings. As noted, Christopher Lefler received critical affirmation by selected groups of viewers but otherwise, he has been *refused* by the Academy and by arts funding authorities. Alternately, the work of Gayle Ryon has been critically and commercially affirmed. The aesthetic distinction, in terms of mediums and methods, has been noted. The variance however, is more complex. The differences are also apparent in the relationship of each artist's practice to language and the cognitive, as well as, to the *object*.

Picturing the Wor(l)d: Language and the Practices of Visual Art

Both sets of visual art practices are reciprocally, but diversely, implicated with language. While the nature of the relationship between visual art and language is contested and the liaison precarious, nonetheless, the latter is salient to any thorough understanding of the former. First, while it is evident that language is necessary to description and communication regarding the art practices of either subject, it is also apparent that both sets of work have the potential for at least an initial compelling experience of sensation unmediated by language. As an example, encounters with the paintings or performances of

either artist considered may leave a viewer breathless, raise the body temperature, increase the heart rate or tingle the groin. Perhaps the first, most profound responses to all of these works are visceral and the significance of those silent, wordless places, the pause between private and public which cannot be converted to language without becoming transformed or lost, is recognized.

However, it is evident that without language, we have no mechanisms by which to name these works as art, nor have we any other means by which they may be deliberated in the research or otherwise. In the extreme, it has been argued that language has erased art, which, now subsumed by (lingual) theory, has "finally become vaporized in a dazzle of pure thought about itself" (Danto, 1986, p. 111). In the case of both subjects, these acknowledged initial visceral junctures are potentially and likely only fleeting and are thereby vulnerable to an ultimate transformation by an essential language which informs individual, and makes possible shared, understanding.

With both artists, language serves not only to explain visual practices, but also, to produce them. It is evident however, that language and conceptual frameworks are a more necessary component for any, even rudimentary, *understanding* of the work of Subject A: Christopher Lefler. While Christopher's practices may elicit an initial corporeal response (eg. somatic arousal in the form of anger, confusion, elation, etc.), at least a degree of cognitive processing is necessary for the works not to remain perpetually tethered to the incomprehensible. In Lefler's case, any viewer, open to explanation and intent on illumination - that is, to an exploration of the *bounds* of knowledge, is perhaps quickly, and certainly inevitably, *pushes* or is *pushed* into the realm of the cognitive.

Alternately, as evidenced in the earlier discussions, Gayle Ryon's paintings are ultimately informed by language, but the viewer's initial corporeal response (attraction, ambivalence, repulsion as examples) may be sustained, by any particular spectator, as not merely adequate, but ample, to a specific consideration. In speaking of the role of the

visceral, in his personal responses to the canvases of another painter, Gayle notes: "I responded to (them) very physically, to the point where I could almost make the metaphor of breathing, like something caught in your throat...or like that feeling you get when you are infatuated with somebody... that absolute mental annihilation that takes place" (p. 29). In a similar way, on inspection of any of Gayle's four paintings reviewed here, as a consequence of the implicit and often abundant corporeality, the viewer's *body* is capable of receiving, coding, and translating, information - that is of *knowing* outside of language, and, viscerally responding to that *knowledge*. In other words, the paintings can be *understood*, a viewer may enjoy, be indifferent, or reject on purely sensual terms. There is however, a possible, and most probably *desirable*, movement in understanding which could occur from a visceral entry point to a more cognitively-inflected conclusion which will ultimately transform the viewer's initial, however pleasurable, neutral, or repugnant, experiences of soma.

Object-Based versus Non Object-Based Art Practices

In addition to the impact of particular mediums and methods (and therefore affiliations) and the differential relationship of each practice to language, the nature of the role that each artist/subject's work might play in the broader culture is also influenced by its approximation of the historically-privileged art *object*. While obviously related to the selection of materials and medium, this association, or not, with the object and its status within Western culture deserves a more extensive consideration. While Christopher Lefler's practice utilizes objects, it is ultimately, non-object based work. Its record exists only in photographs or videos of the *event* - that is, of its installation or performance. In its ephemerality, the work can never be reconstituted in its original form; it can only be revisited through memory and through its traces - that is, through accessing its documentation.

As a painter, Gayle Ryon, uses oils on canvas, often producing work of a monumental physical scale, and, as such, participates in and thereby perpetuates, perhaps the most historically-validated tradition in the visual arts. The contradiction between perceptions of the two approaches is built upon a prevalent cultural belief that because art most often resides in a gallery, it rarely exists outside of those walls. As an example, the role of the gallery in legitimizing art works was sufficient to *allow* Lefler's otherwise ill-fated couch of *Domestic Squabble-Couched Remains* to remain on pedestals in the pristine space of the gallery after it had been refused in the working-space of the artist's studio. The gallery setting which hosted *Staging Identities I* however, was not enough to *save* Christopher's *submission* to the otherwise legitimizing gallery-based system.

Christopher speaks of his objection to object-based work.

What I endeavor to do is see objects as neutral things...If I take something as neutral, if I inscribe a meaning on it, or if I situate that object in place where it takes on meaning because of its existence there - whether it was neutral or not in the beginning is questionable. That is what I see myself doing. To use the language of Western art history, that is my canvas, that is my paint, that is the way I push the paint. I use these signs to signify things in really specific moments in time and space. I believe that if we try to entrench meaning or value on these objects which cannot be removed or shifted (then it) is just to retrace these steps...I want to come to a point where those questions about the object come from another direction by saying: why do so many people want to embrace the object? Why do we want to uphold that this is the place where we need to be searching for answers? (p. 114)

Christopher however, acknowledges that there are artists who are "gay, queer, or homosexual who are working with art (objects) to produce some kind of identity from the work" (p. 106-107). While admitting that there needs to be other kinds of work, "all of us trying to articulate who we are in the world" (p. 116), Christopher's commitment to his own performative practice, stems not only from his belief in its potency, but his resistance to the *object* is also articulated by his concerns around inclusion/exclusion:

If I acknowledge that I take issue with being excluded...when I see the object standing in for me...the last thing I want to do is put myself in a vulnerable position where I can be excluded again - (that is) the object not being allowed...When I offer it out of me, into the world, others have control over what happens to the object. I try to get it in a collection. They don't want it. I try to get it in a show. They don't want it. I try to sell it. They don't want it. I'm making myself open to this vulnerability of being rejected or excluded...I...see the (fate of the) object, in the art world, regardless of who is making it, (as) always up to some arbitrary force that can say: "you're worthless. I don't care. Go away." I think that if I turn my practice into something that is conceptual, and I embody my practice, then I have to be dealt with. I can't be excluded. If I am excluded, then we are going to talk about why. That is going to be the practice (p. 116).

By utilizing performance and installation as alternatives to the object of art, Christopher concludes by suggesting that: "This kind of work doesn't stop. Once it happens, the ripple keeps going (p. 110).

Conversely, Subject B: Gayle Ryon speaks to his relationship to the object, to his affiliations with the historically-validated medium of painting, and to his insertion into the visual arts as a gay male painter of oils on canvas.

(There is) an awareness that (within) this structure, which is very institutional, very normalized, (which) has been used primarily, through patronage, to secure a representation, a form of understanding or viewership that is located within what has been called dominant discourse, or the authority of the white, male, heterosexual viewer. A very large (number) of the participants in that art making or image making process have been gay. So there is a willingness to continue to partake in that in an open and out manner in order to subvert and to address that issue in itself. (p. 23)

Gayle does not share Christopher's concern for the *life* of the object and its dependence upon the authority of others. Instead, by producing *objects* Gayle contends that because his work has a *longer* life - that because of its physicality, it is able to move backwards, in terms of a recognition of its lineage or its connection to art history, as well as to serve in the moment as a source of contemplation, of pleasure, or discomfort, and further, to participate in the construction of future ideological shifts and cultural understandings.

Gayle sees his work not as vulnerable to refusal but as enabling of cultural dialogue around the issues that he wishes to (ac)knowledge.

Art as (a Means to) Cultural Knowledge

In considering the relationship of each artist's art practice and contemporary culture, differences of medium/method, affiliation, relationship to language, and approximation of the art object have been noted. Both sets of practices however, are a means by which cultural knowledge(s) can be considered - that is, generated, refuted, confirmed, and circulated. Through their art practices, both subjects endeavor to reflect as well as to construct, but not to be constrained by, evolving identities as individual gay or queer men. Further both reflect and challenge their cultural locations as members of a group marginalized and silenced as a consequence of sexual subjectivities. These personal and collective identities of gay or queer artists, as reflected in their art works or practices, when placed in public venues, galleries, or on the street, etc., claim space in a culture which is evidently often hostile to its presence. By so doing, the work engages in a dialectic with its viewers, individually and collectively, in complex and myriad ways which inevitably cause shifts in the constitution of authority and meaning within the broader culture.

To elaborate more fully, gay men and lesbians, identified as *different* as a consequence of gender non-conformity and/or sexual practice, often serve as the site of the culture's sexual and/or gender alarm. It is consequently unsurprising that both artists utilize their (sexual) bodies in their respective practices of art as a means of examining knowledge and meaning. As a focus of theory or as an aspect of pedagogical strategy however, the body has most often carried little epistemological weight (McLaren, 1991). Conversely, it has otherwise been suggested that the body is the very *stuff* of subjectivity: it is cultural, gendered, sexual, and racially specific bodies which are the "mobile and changeable terms of cultural production" (Grosz, 1994, p. xi). In very diverse ways,

Christopher Lefler and Gayle Ryon insert their physical bodies into ideological, social, and political dialogues thereby giving *flesh* to their personal experience of the sexual, but also of gendered, racial, and classed difference and thereby each individual, or body of work reflects, and makes a reflection, on cultural knowledge. It is the penetration of their physical bodies and of their bodies of art into cultural discourse which extends the frameworks by which they are, or would be, otherwise contained. Hence, the multiply-inflected bodies of the artists are themselves *objects* and agents of action which *speak* corporeally of their individual relations to the exclusions of *bodies* of knowledge in society.

In the case of both subjects, art is seen as a means of generating, challenging, reinforcing, and circulating cultural knowledge(s). As a viewer is confronted with the work, the edges of what is *thinkable* are challenged and the relationship between knowledge and ignorance is explored. Critical to an examination of both sets of artistic practice, this relationship, as Britzman (1995) suggests, is neither oppositional or binary. Rather, knowledge and ignorance mutually implicate each other, structuring and enforcing particular forms of knowledge. "In this way ignorance is analyzed as an effect of knowledge, indeed as its limit, and not as an originary or innocent state" (p. 154). These artists offer unique insights which expand the limits of thought, not only by calling into question the stability of categories such as homosexuality/heterosexuality, control/submission, male/female, etc., but perhaps most succinctly, are an assertion of queries around the *unthinkable*. These works challenge the thoughts that can not be thought. By so doing, the cultural practices of these artists signify *indecent* subjects and *indecent* theories, even as they interrogate the very grounds of subjectivity and theory itself.⁵

Visualizing Queer Theory in Art Practice

In addition to naming themselves as queer, Lefler's and Ryon's art practices also might be more appropriately determined to be queer rather than merely antihomophobic. As in social research, a queering of standpoint in visual art practice is a vigorous challenge to what may be known, who may be the knower, and how knowledge comes to be generated and circulated. Openly gay or lesbian artists produce queer visibility through that which queer is, or that which it might become under its own auspices. Both artists provoke response in viewers individually and collectively in ways which are *queered*, and thereby expand, the limits of knowledge. Britzman (1995) has argued for a Queer Theory which provides a means of thinking through of the structures of disavowal using three methods: "the study of limits, the study of ignorance, and the study of reading practices" (p. 155). Britzman's proposal is relevant to the discussion of the cultural impact of the art practices of these artists who visually articulate kinds of queered theory in that these queered visual *theoretical* explorations facilitate an examination which confounds "the intelligibility that produces the normal as the proper subject" (Britzman, 1995, p. 157). In the production of visual art, the subjects of this research transgress the *normal* and, by so doing, challenge those in culture "whose labor (it) is to be recognized as normal" (p. 157).

While the role of each subject's physical body is centralized, in conceptualizing subjectivities as "unstable differential relation(s)" (Edelman, 1994, p. 3), identities as conceptualized in general, queered and unqueered, are seen, at least in part, as an effect of the relations of discourse. The consequence of the refusal to construct homosexual identity within the constraints of the homosexual/heterosexual binary where one is constructed as the deviant while the other is seen as the normal, is that the limits of anti-homophobic discussions, as an end, are seen as inadequate. As an example, Gayle Ryon notes that he is disinterested in participating in the repetitive discussions around matters of outing and the homophobia which are inherent in any insistence on differing conditions for

any considerations of homosexuality or heterosexuality. For Gayle, it is an old and tiresome story and one in which he does not wish to continue to participate. Rather, using the ground of his canvas as a means to explore the ground(s) of knowledge, with oils and the strokes of his brush, Gayle expresses that which is otherwise *unthinkable* and thereby refuses to reinscribe knowledge as either normal or subaltern, or to reinforce the boundaries of difference which support any inclination to construct, through those practices, the categories of the tolerant and the tolerated.

Similarly, Christopher's Lefler's art practices impertinently challenge the conceptual foundations which dictate that which must remain in the realms of the unthought. By his insertion of the previously not-public disclosure of the sexual orientation of a public figure into the public arena, Christopher challenges the (il)logic of the public/private binary as it is differentially applied to diverse sexualities. More precisely, the thinking of the unthinkable, the saying of the unsayable, emerges from (a) knowledge which holds that *being* a lesbian, or occupying a social locale as lesbian, is a legitimate site of sociality and not an occasion for shame. Accordingly, to name someone as lesbian is, among other things, neither impolite nor defamatory, nor, given the *publicity* given heterosexuality, is it a violation of privacy. Christopher's practice explores the limits of his own (queered) knowledges as constructed against the limits of the cultural norms of (unqueered) knowledges. In asserting the consequences of (his) thinking, Christopher's performances and installations are not a resistance to knowledge but rather, (his) knowledge(s), as articulated through his performances and installations, are themselves a mechanism of resistance which concomitantly makes evident the boycotting normative knowledges of the culture and specifically of the Academy. In other words, the Academy's knowledges are its own, however unacknowledged, mode of opposition. In using his own (queered) knowledge as a form of refusal, in retracing the lines of the thinkable, Christopher not only rejects the opportunity to *normalize* himself and his knowledges, but he thereby challenges

the entitlement of the Academy to its *ignorance*. By defying the terms which reinscribe the limits of the Academy's thought, that is, by resisting the limits by which sociality, including scholarship, proceeds, that which the Academy cannot bear to know, and by which it sets the terms of inclusion and expulsion, is exposed.

Camping in the Academy

Almost any study which addresses the experiences of gay men and lesbians as they relate to cultural production would be remiss if it were to exclude any consideration of the possibilities of the often immoderate invigoration *camp*. Camp is, by now, embedded in queer culture and if queers are to give themselves voice, the terms of that expression are bound to look, sound, and/or feel like *it* - queer, that is. While homosexuals have constituted its vanguard and most articulate audiences (Sontag, 1982), camp is herein considered a queer critique - that is a critique of, by, and for queers. Having gained a measure of academic cachet, camp: exists in a state of tension with other cultural practices; is often about exaggeration and artifice; and, is easily recognizable by those marginal to the cultural mainstream (Bergman, 1993). While it has most often been associated with male homosexual sub-cultures, more recent arguments, on behalf of camp, have been extended from a feminist perspective. Pamela Robertson (1993) suggests that camp offers feminists a "model for critiques of sex and gender roles" (p. 156). In arguing that women are also producers and consumers of camp, Robertson suggests that camp, as a form of cultural critique, offers a means to assert "the overlapping interests of gay men and women, lesbian and straight" (p. 156).

As an example of *camping* in the Academy, in an academic presentation defending camp and recognizing the disparity between the serious and the absurd on which camp is based, Long (1993) challenges gender binaries and exclusions and activates a camp perspective by suggesting that the audience imagine his essay delivered "by a small, mustachioed man wearing a gold lame cocktail dress, black pumps with three inch stiletto

heels, a raven wig, and a beaded cloche with peacock feathers" (p. 78)." As a male academic, to associate himself with women's apparel and accessories is, through affirmatives, to assert queerness which speaks beneath the surface of what might otherwise look like playing into the hands of a mainstream culture which already constructs gay men as effeminate, and which, in a misogynist climate discredits the experiences of, and denies critical authority to, the female.

Camp is an overall objection through which queers may articulate the (im)possibility of representing queer ontology via the sexual and gendered as well as the representational options of heterosexuality. Camp is not only a style or a form of characterization by which queer identities are made visible, but is, as well, a stance of resistance embedded in representational practices by which dominant cultural forms are challenged and dynamic queer identities are constituted. While not always utilizing objections to gender conformity, as the examples may imply, camp is, in part, a challenge to the effects of sexism and homophobia and emerges as one discernible mechanism by which to construct more embracing alternatives.

Both subjects in this inquiry utilized what might be described as the mechanisms of camp in their respective art practices. Christopher Lefler's *Wedding Closet* (Figure 4) offered a plethora of camp expression which were easily evident to viewers outside of the cultural mainstream. As noted in Chapter IV, as he handcuffed himself to the metal frame of the enormous *closet* which he *dragged* to his hearing at the University of Saskatchewan, Christopher gave considerable thought, not only to his epistemologies and methodologies, but to his *outfit*. Utilizing exaggeration and artifice, clad in simple white pearl earrings and matching necklace,⁶ platform pink Fluevogs, hair shorn and dyed blond, Christopher demurely minced the bridal walk. By confounding the otherwise non-confoundability of gender and sexuality insisted upon by normative cultural standards, Christopher's performance utilizes camp not only to challenge the *naturalization* and

exclusions of (female) gender and (dissident) desire, but also, as a style of object and/or of perception/communication, camp transformed reluctant bystanders into central performers in its theatricality.

In ways which are significantly different, Gayle Ryon's work also utilizes the potentialities of camp. As noted in Chapter V, Gayle's *Christina's World Revisited* (Figure 5) is an insertion of his (*masculinized*) male body into the position(s), both specific and general, formerly occupied by (*feminized*) women. Similarly, in *Venus n anadyomene* (Figure 6), the muscular male body inflicted with a life-threatening illness contracted through man-to-man sex prepares for bathing by daubing decidedly *unmanly* cold-cream on his face and wrapping his head in a towel. In both works, the (il)logic of the cultural constraint of gender and sexuality and the possibilities of transgression are thereby *campily* unveiled.

Implications

While the issues which are addressed within the artworks are diverse, perhaps most summatively, the artists present a challenge to the exclusions of *normativity* and to the expectations of conformity at all levels. More specifically, three of the four examples of Christopher Lefler's work here described are a challenge to the conventions of private/public binary as connected to sexual orientation. These heterosexualizing cultural beliefs and practices have been constructed as a regime wherein homosexuality is constrained by the first and heterosexuality is enabled by the second. The work of Gayle Ryon, as noted, also focuses on matters of the private versus the public, but, in this case, as they relate to the corporeal and to matters of sexually transmitted disease. The art practices of these openly gay male or queer artists serve as a challenge to the denunciative heterocentric discourses of powerful cultural institutions which have otherwise constrained expressions of variant sexual and gendered subjectivities and of representation. It can be argued that the art practices of each subject are not only relevant

to contemporary culture, but more aptly, they *are* contemporary culture. Because the boundaries of gender, of the erotic, and, of art are seen, by the dominant majority of that culture, as already and firmly established, the art practices of those eccentric to those borders are mobilized as an interrogative objection to the compulsory gender conformity and heterosexualization of all aspects of cultural practice.

Research Question C: Gay (Queer) Students and Post-Secondary Visual Arts Education: Conclusions and Implications

The final research question was concerned with the relationship of artists, who identify themselves as gay or queer, to the post-secondary programs of visual arts education in which they were enrolled. Sample interview questions included:

- 1.) What have been your art education experiences within post-secondary institutions?
- 2.) How do you feel your interests and identities have or have not been addressed?
- 3.) How might programs of advanced art education incorporate the needs of gay/queer art makers?

Experiences of Art Education

During the research interviews, sub-questions "1" and "2" merged into one another and subsequently, they will be addressed together in this section. First, while not anticipated prior to the research, in the case of both subjects, there were breaks in the course of their formal educations in the visual arts. As an example, both men spent periods of time in Japan which in some way, galvanized their responses to their homosexualities.

Christopher Lefler reports:

While I was (in Tokyo) it was really a hell of a year particularly as a gay man and as a white person...As an English teacher, white, North-American, I was like gold and highly desirable. Outside of employment I was scum...As a gay man it was incredibly frustrating. ...(There) you don't have gay, you have homosexual acts. Anything that is gay is imported and it's circulated only within that (gay) ghetto. But as a gay, white man, if you walked into one of the bars...sometimes you

wouldn't be allowed in because you have AIDS or because you are some kind of spreader of disease. You just couldn't find a place to preserve your existence within that culture. (p. 46-47)

Gayle Ryon notes:

(During) the six months I spent in Japan, I was completely sexually inactive. I spent a lot of time working, working out, and thinking. What came from that was the absolute resolve that I was a gay man and that I needed to address that and work that out. When I moved back to Vancouver, I moved directly into the West End and proceeded to out myself. Within a month I had told all my closest friends and family. I was becoming sexually active...just spending a lot of time becoming physically acquainted with that desire. (p. 13)

The need to break from the formal educational system is, in part, a consequence of the reported hostility or lack of gay presence in the post-secondary institutions. Young lesbian or gay male adults addressing matters of identity which include sexualities outside of the culture's permission are most often unable to find appropriate role models and/or support for their endeavors in the form of inclusive knowledge(s). In listening to, and looking at others in institutions of higher learning, gay and lesbian students do not see themselves reflected in any obvious ways. There is a lack of any emphasis, or rarely even any *thinking about* gay and/or lesbian subject matter, and few visibly queer faculty or administration. Christopher Lefler reports that as the only gay male "I found myself in that odd situation again of being in this notoriously homosexual ground called art-practice being the only one, and having faculty *above* me that are predominately straight men. It's a weird thing" (p. 53-54). Similarly, Gayle Ryon reports a lack of gay presence in both student and faculty *bodies* at the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design.

As noted, within the post-secondary institutions implicated in the study, the strongest support for work around issues related to their homosexualities came from feminist artists and scholars. Christopher suggests that his "foundations are really set in feminism. How can we not because misogyny and homophobia are linked?" (p.23). While Gayle Ryon's response from feminist-identified women instructors was also positive and

the most helpful, there was no concomitant negative or hostile response from others. There was rather, an absence of gay and/or lesbian presence which ultimately restricted his opportunities for learning.

Implications: Incorporating the Needs of Queer Students in Visual Arts Education

Cogent arguments have been made for the inclusion of life-experience in the processes of learning/teaching (Pinar, 1988; Grumet, 1988; Pinar & Reynolds, 1992; Pinar, 1994). If individual experience is centralized, pedagogy then becomes a shift or transformation in awareness which, as Lusted (1986) notes "takes place at the intersection of three agencies, the teacher, the learner, and the knowledge they produce" (p. 3).⁷ In the process of teaching, Pinar (1972) (see Pinar, 1994) notes that he comes "ready to respond, not only as a student and teacher of literature, but as a person" (p. 9). Like some painters, Pinar continues, "my students and I have come to feel that we rarely need to go to subject matter outside ourselves. We work from a different source. We work from within" (p. 10). Accordingly, the autobiographies of teachers and students remains "one important means to investigate the "subject" of education" (Pinar, 1991, see Pinar, 1994, p. 244). Similarly, knowledge is seen as evolving within human relationships. Grumet (1988) suggests and argues for the recovery of "our own possibilities" (p. xv) and specifically explores and centralizes the differences of gender as they relate to the experiences of education. In recognizing the diversity of human experience, Grumet acknowledges that it is the "'I" (which) is the location of a stream of possibilities" (p. 66).

In art education, Eisner (1993) affirms that experience is the bedrock upon which meaning is constructed. Hagaman (1990) notes that "meaning is constructed in the relationship between an individual or individuals and the issue being studied or questioned" (p. 32). Smith-Shank (1995) speaks to the significance of collateral experience in redefining teaching/learning processes wherein students are aided in connecting new experiences to their own lives:

When collateral experience is granted an essential role in the learning process, students come to an educational encounter with acknowledged resources. They cease to be blank slates on which teachers can write their topics. Rather, students' collateral experiences serve as a context from which they can make reasoned connections. In this way subject matter *and* students' histories are useful starting points for learning. (p. 235)⁸

Such pedagogical exchanges recognize that the "various orders we create are human constructs" (p. 240) and particularly recognize that when students bring the diversity of their own lives and experiences to the studio/classroom, they are not in alien territory.⁹

Gay male and lesbian students are indoctrinated and forced to *concentrate* in schools and the Academy. In other words, in that *concentration*, queers are brought to a narrow focus which may be inimical to their best interests. The art works/processes of Christopher Lefler and Gayle Ryon, all of which were produced within the post-secondary visual arts educational system, operate, in those systems, emerge from collateral experience and, as vehicles of autobiography, urge a (queered) expansion of knowledge around matters of gender, sexual orientation, social class, and institutional power, among others. In their respective academic settings, each work or performance by these subjects actively engages theoretical speculations in its proposition of any claims, in its address of systematic and unequal relationships, and ultimately, in its expansion of knowledge.¹⁰ In the Academy, these artists have *thought the unthinkable*. As agents of interrogation and often opposition, within post-secondary institutions of visual arts education, the representational practices of these *subjects*¹¹ are a means by which differently positioned students respond to present circumstances in ways which may be, but are not only, resistant or shocking. The art practices of each subject cite, and give sight to, a presence in the Academy which is constituted in productive and positive terms.

Implications: The University/Art Institute as a Site of Cultural Practice

As noted in the literature review of Chapter II, the post-secondary educational systems in which both subjects of this inquiry have been engaged, most often, have been unable or unwilling to adequately meet the educational needs of their gay or lesbian (queer) students. Britzman (1995) notes:

These cultural representations cannot be reduced to correct information about gay(s) and lesbians. Imaginative works have a very different and unwieldy function, and....treating representation - as if it were a realistic mirror is already to shut out the unconscious. Pedagogical thought must begin to acknowledge that receiving knowledge is a problem for the learner and the teacher, particularly when the knowledge one already possesses or is possessed by works as an entitlement to one's ignorance or when the knowledge encountered cannot be incorporated because it disrupts how the self might imagine itself and others (p. 159).

Christopher Lefler was constituted by faculty and administration at the University of Saskatchewan as a student whose educational expectations could not be met within that setting. The relationships between culture, knowledge, and social power were such that a gay male (queer) student who challenged the nature, extent, and authority of knowledge could not be *imagined* and therefore must be expelled from the system by those authorized to legislate its limits. While Gayle Ryon reports positive experiences as a result of the San Francisco Art Institute, for the most part, while Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design was not overtly negative, the absence of an evident gay or lesbian presence inhibited the possibilities of maximized learning opportunities.

While the Academy remains one of the major legitimizers of social authority, the university has been tardy in recognizing that "emancipatory projects are not distinct from but rather (are) constituted by such micropolitical contexts" (Robbins, 1987, p. 4). Visual representations constituted within what West (1990) considers the "new cultural politics of difference" (p. 94) are means by which art practitioners in educational settings locate and name, but do not constrain, themselves as eccentric to the limits of dominant normativity.

Individual queer artists thereby ally themselves with marginal and oppressed groups in order to "empower and enable social action and, if possible, to enlist collective insurgency for the expansion of freedom, democracy, and individuality" (p. 94). "The aim is to dare to recast, redefine, and revise the very notions of "" mainstream," "margins," "difference," (and) "otherness"" (p. 109). When the intentions embedded in the practices of art are successful, knowledge is created which reflects the homosexual subject's understanding, not only of their experiences of alienation, but of their progress towards their own and others' liberation.

As universal claims to *truth* and *knowledge* are challenged by individuals such as Christopher Lefler and Gayle Ryon who otherwise, as a consequence of *deviant* subjectivities, have been excluded from traditional epistemologies and practices, both within the university and outside its boundaries, social transformation is sought. Hence, a recognition of difference, of positionalities (gender, race, social class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, etc.) are necessary to effective pedagogy at the post-secondary level in the visual arts. It is perhaps only "through the interrogation of their own experiences that the oppressed will come to an understanding of their own power as knowers and creators of the world; this knowledge will contribute to the transformation of their world" (Weiler, 1991, p. 463).

Images are proliferate in postmodern culture. The teaching of art is therefore an especially powerful social practice which has traditionally, and unfortunately, primarily occurred as activities of inclusion, and therefore, of exclusion. Gay men and lesbians have been noticeably absent from curriculums which address the visual arts and have been prevented from fully accessing the institutions in ways which directly relate to their own experiences. Consequently, educators who are involved in the teaching of art practice, history, criticism, etc. are undeniably implicated in furthering or challenging those exclusions, or stabilizing the status quo, by the ways in which they not only recognize their

own positions within the social order, but actively seek the inclusions of others whose knowledges and subjectivities may differ from their own. As such, visual arts educators not only transmit cultural information, they are in the position of producing and expanding by not only allowing, but enabling, the production of perhaps contradictory cultural information (knowledge) in their students. Accordingly, as with Lefler and Ryon, those "who in large measure are divorced from or simply not represented in the curriculum... (are) able to produce their own representations, narrate their own stories, and engage in respectful dialogue with others" (Giroux, 1994, p. 298).

Finally, in order to provide for the needs of all post-secondary students of visual art, it is imperative that universities and colleges charged with the responsibility of providing relevant educational experiences include not only non-heterosexual subject matter, in terms of art history etc., but also, recognize the contributions of, and recruit as employees, *openly* non-heterosexual artists and educators in all areas of institutional programming.

Recommendations for Further Research

There are a vast number of possible research alternatives which emerge from the present autoethnographic case-study which considered the relationship between art practices and lived-experiences of gay male students of visual art. I have limited myself to two significant suggestions for further inquiry. Because I was prudent regarding the possible implications of personally undertaking a study with lesbians, as a gay male artist/researcher I limited this initial inquiry to the experiences of other gay men. As an *insider*, I have been afforded a particularly intimate look into the lives of the participants of the research that might otherwise have been improbable. An equivalent research project undertaken by a lesbian researcher with lesbian post-secondary students of visual arts education would provide fruitful comparative data. Further, while a small qualitative study

provides the opportunity for an in-depth consideration and therefore increased understanding, a larger scale investigation into the lives and art practices of gay and/or lesbian students of visual art would provide an alternate depth and diversity which this inquiry does not. However, to reiterate Sears (1992), the power of the data in this research "lies not in the number of people interviewed, but in the researcher's ability to know well a few people in their cultural contexts" (p. 148).

Conclusion

To write a closed and definitive summative conclusion to any research inquiry concerned with the art and lived-experiences of queer post-secondary students of visual art would be as inimical to the efficacy of the study as it would be to endeavor to so constrain or dissolve the diversity and fluidity of identities upon which the study is predicated. In other words, the inquiry has endeavored not to insist on closure in its corporeal or theoretical subject(s).

In undertaking this research, I have also been actively aware of the need not to *reproduce* and thereby *reinscribe* the inequalities by which the (queer) subject is drawn by the lines of the ubiquitous claims of *normalizing* discourses. The consequences are yet to be seen. While there may ultimately be reader agreement with respect to some particular aspects of the inquiry, as with the subjects and the art practices which the study describes, the conclusions are, by the dialectical requirement on which social research relies, dependent upon its engagement with the particular intelligences¹² and experiences of its readers. This inquiry is *dumb* without that exchange.

In conclusion, it is hoped that a continuing focus on the art practices and experiences of lesbian and gay male as well as other *eccentric* (queer) students of advanced education may foster an increased awareness and inclusion of variance in the

post-secondary institutions charged with the formal education of the artist's of its culture in ways which facilitate the social transformation of all of its subject(s).¹³

The recognition of sexual diversity acknowledges our humanity. Difference need not just be tolerated or of benefit only to those who are so named. The valuing of difference and a recognition of individual complexity does not deny a recognition of the commonalities which enjoin us. The incorporation of inclusive epistemologies, and the adoption of specific pedagogical practices which recognize and encompass diversity, does not exclusively value the individual and collective voices of gay men and lesbians in the studios or classrooms. For all of us, regardless of sexual orientation, the encompassment of difference acknowledges our humanity, our independence, enriches our collective human experience, and in the end, contributes to the constitution of more inclusive and humane cultural circumstance. (Honeychurch, 1995, p. 216)

Notes:

¹In noting that he had referred to himself as a gay man in interviews with a local newspaper, Christopher suggests that it is difficult to speak to *The StarPhoenix*, a local newspaper where they still hold the word queer in italics.

²The *coming out* process is often a long one. While there may long be speculation about an artist's sexual orientation, until the artist names himself/herself as gay/lesbian/queer, they cannot be considered to fall within this category.

³During the interviews, at one point, Christopher Lefler suggested that he felt like an "invisible man". In response, I asked: "How, given the media attention, could you feel invisible?" He replies: "If you take any one of those articles that mention my name, they have this notion of a person named Christopher Lefler. But, go through all of the media, try and find out who constitutes Christopher Lefler...- how they've constructed the identity of who I am...bring it back to me and ask me if I would agree that that is who I am?" (p. 102).

⁴At this writing, an investigation is underway by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission.

⁵This claim is made for Queer Theory by Britzman (1995).

⁶The pearl earrings and necklace, as often worn, as an example, by former United States *first lady* Barbara Bush, are an easy (outsider) reference to conservatism and to often homophobic politics.

⁷The interchanges which constitute pedagogy under Lusted's (1986) terms are complicated and appear most at risk in postmodernist conceptions which advocate the

protean nature of subjectivity. The unitary subject, so much a part of Western philosophical tradition, has been the shrinking subject of considerable speculation. The *sense* of the subjectivities in postmodern terms is a continually redescribed subject constructed, in part, through discourse. What dissolves in this postmodern configuration is the "unified, monolithic, reified, essentialized subject" (Lather, 1991, p. 120) and what occupies a space instead is a multiply-inflected subject engaged in the constructions of meaning and alternate social relationships and doing so provisionally in ways that change over time and by place. While noting that bodies are influenced by discourse, this inquiry also acknowledges that it is the corporeal body which is the site of agency.

⁸While students of a wide range of ages and grade levels will benefit from the examination of cultural diversity, it should be emphasized that the purpose of this research was the examination of the experiences of adults in post-secondary educational systems. As a consequence of that focus, and as a result of the interests reflected by the research subjects, there may be few direct *practical* applications which an interested reader might draw from this investigation. While this inquiry considered the day-to-day experiences of the subjects as students of visual art in post-secondary institutions, its outcomes reflect more broadly-based concerns, that is, as an example, the ways in which categories of *deviance* themselves come to be established and to have meaning. For more direct applications to the public school classroom see Lampella (1995), and Lampella (1996).

⁹Such claims to the significance of personal understandings are not without critique. Schubert (1986), as an example, offers an overarching "counteradvocacy" (p. 26) position which admonishes that the school is not the place for striving for self-knowledge" (p. 33).

¹⁰Carroll (1995) argues conversely that a viewer does not acquire a theoretical point from the artwork but rather, that he/she must already know the point to understand the artwork.

¹¹Again, I use the word *subject* cautiously to refer to both the topic of the various art works as well as to the embodied individuals who make those topics possible.

¹²By *intelligences* of the reader, I do not refer to degree of, or capacity for, *higher* cognitive functioning, but rather, intelligences is meant to address the diversity in acquired knowledges and the exercise of *understanding* which each reader brings to any reading of any work of visual art or activity of social research. As an example, a reader unfamiliar with the discourses and experiences around homosexuality and Queer Theory may be unable to experience any *truth* they cannot *see* for themselves.

¹³See footnote 10.

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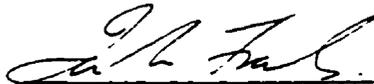
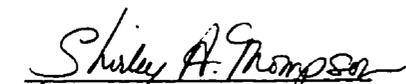
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Appendix 1: Certificate of Approval



The University of British Columbia
Office of Research Services
Behavioural Sciences Screening Committee for
Research Involving Human Subjects

Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR Chalmers, F.G.		DEPARTMENT Visual & Perf Arts in Educ	NUMBER B94-0130
INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT UBC Campus			
CO-INVESTIGATORS Honeychurch, K.G., Visual & Perf Arts in Educ			
SPONSORING AGENCIES			
TITLE: Dialogues of diversity: The protean self and contemporary art productions			
APPROVAL DATE APR 5 1994	TERM (YEARS) 3	AMENDED:	MODIFICATION OF:
<p>CERTIFICATION:</p> <p>The protocol describing the above-named project has been reviewed by the Committee and the experimental procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 20px;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  Dr. R. Corteen or Dr. I. Franks, Associate Chairs </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  Dr. R. D. Spratley Director, Research Services </div> </div> <p>This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the experimental procedures</p>			

Appendix 2: Consent Form/Primary Subject

Consent Form/Primary Subject

Researcher: Kenn Gardner Honeychurch
Advisor: Dr. Graeme Chalmers

Title: Dialogues of Diversity: The Protean Self and
Contemporary Art Productions

Description: The purpose of this study is to consider the factors of gender, race, sexual orientation, and age which may be relevant to your visual art productions. Secondly the study will consider your experiences in the post-secondary visual arts program in which you studied, and in the academic and arts communities with which you were involved.

Procedures: The project will involve three to four hours of recorded interviews. I will also wish to photograph your art work for inclusion in the study.

I, _____ (name) of _____
_____ (address), in the city of _____,
province of _____ hereby agree to participate
in the research project as outlined above. I also agree to
the photographing of my art work. I hereby give permission
to Kenn Gardner Honeychurch to use data from the recorded
interview and photographs of my art work for his Ph. D.
dissertation and for possible publication. I am aware that
my name may be used. I understand that, if I wish to do so,
I may withdraw from this project at any time.

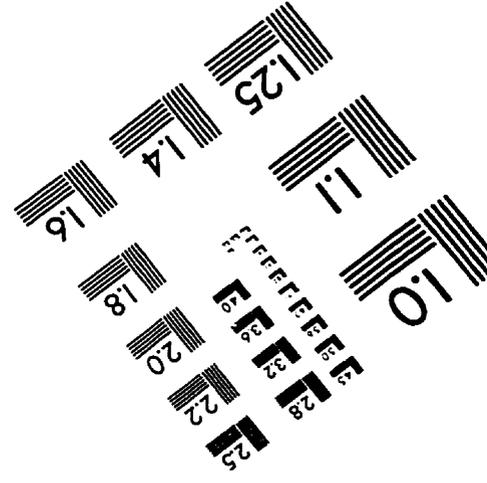
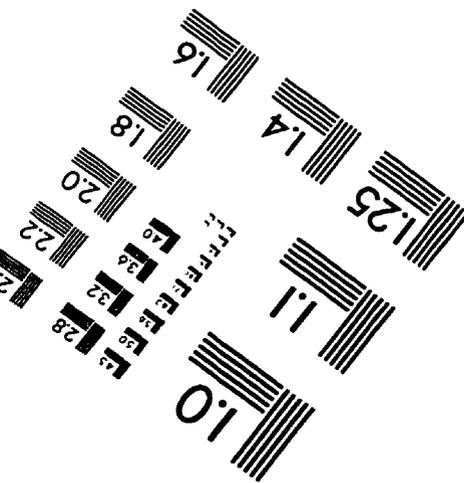
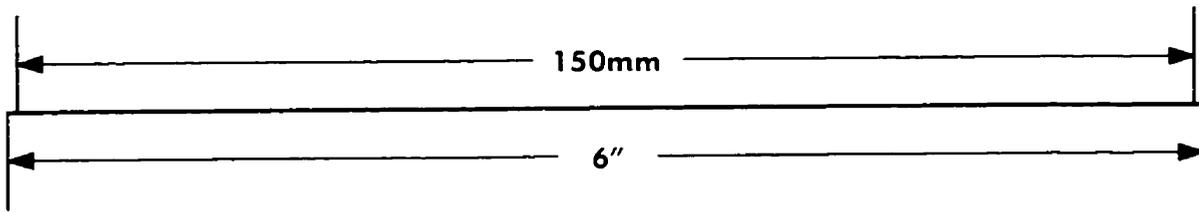
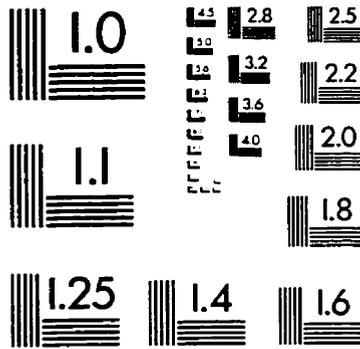
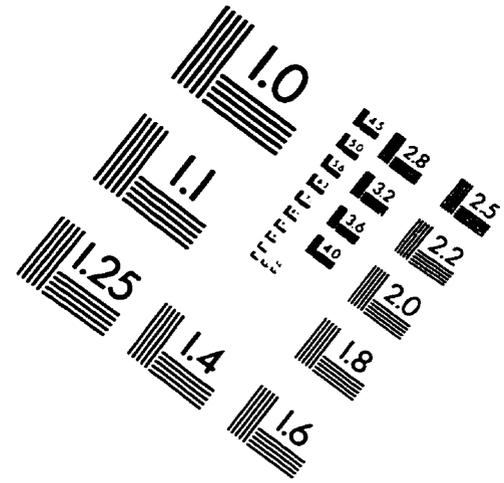
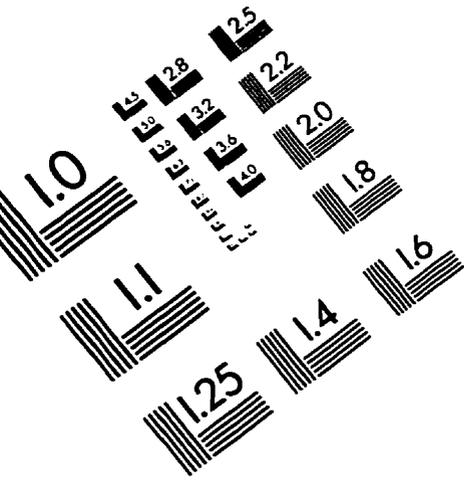
I also hereby acknowledge that I have received a copy
of this form.

_____ (signed)

_____ (date)

_____ (witness)

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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