10-29-2018

Art, Experience and Learning: Art As Enhancement Of Experiential Learning

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Submitted to the Program of Organizational Dynamics, College of Liberal and Professional Studies in the School of Arts and Sciences in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in Organizational Dynamics at the University of Pennsylvania

Advisor: Charline S. Russo

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Abstract
This capstone explores the relationship between art and experiential learning to support the hypothesis that Art enhances experiential learning. In doing so, it combines experiential learning theory from Kolb and other humanistic psychologies and pedagogists such as Carl Rogers with the philosophical approach to art as experience introduced by John Dewey. The study reviews a broad array of approaches to learn the impact of art in building skills for cognitive, emotional, social and even physical development. It also draws from educational philosophers and activists such as Maxine Greene, who have long supported the inclusion of art in education. I propose a modification of the experiential learning model that integrates creative processes to support art as an experiential learning process for both, the artist and the observer.

Keywords
experiential learning, art and education, art and learning, creative process

Disciplines
Philosophy

Comments
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by

Claudia E. Tordini

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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

2018
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Claudia E. Tordini

Charline S. Russo, EdD, Advisor

Alan M. Barstow, PhD., Reader
ABSTRACT

This capstone explores the relationship between art and experiential learning to support the hypothesis that *Art enhances experiential learning*. In doing so, it combines experiential learning theory from Kolb and other humanistic psychologies and pedagogists such as Carl Rogers with the philosophical approach to art as experience introduced by John Dewey. The study reviews a broad array of approaches to learn the impact of art in building skills for cognitive, emotional, social and even physical development. It also draws from educational philosophers and activists such as Maxine Greene, who have long supported the inclusion of art in education. I propose a modification of the experiential learning model that integrates creative processes to support art as an experiential learning process for both, the artist and the observer.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am extremely grateful to the professors of Organizational Dynamics – Organizational Consulting and Executive Coaching (OCEC) – Charline Russo, Linda Pennington, and Janice Jacobs – for their openness to allow and support me in using art during the OCEC classes. Likewise, I am grateful that all students of my class – Cohort V – were receptive, respectful and appreciative of my artwork while I shared it during classes. To all of the above, I am thankful for their collaboration efforts with my research project, dedicating one hour for me to interview each of them and fully engaging in the process.

I owe Professor Russo her inspiration to do this capstone project. Her guidance in deciding the right topic and her support all along the process was invaluable. I am pleased that I went this route as it immersed me in a journey of discovery and learning in an area that had been known by me but from an instinctive and empirical perspective. The outcome of it is inspiring, encouraging and engaging in future endeavors.

The very beginning of my artistic skills were inspired by a creative expression methodology proposed by Andrais Rochais, founder of Personality and Human Relationships. Since then, I have self-developed those skills by engaging in numerous processes of experiential learning. In that journey, I met Roseline Koener, a Belgian artist who had combined art and self discovery tools into several workshops. I am grateful for Rochais and Koener’s belief in creativity and in human beings’ capacity to learn.

Many thanks also go to Alan Barstow, the reader of this capstone, for his support and feedback, and to all those who positively engaged with my idea of art and learning.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“We gently knocked at each other’s door.
We carefully opened it, stepped out and started to walk unveiling ourselves.
And as we weave the threads of our unique colors, we are giving birth to a new reality: Our Togetherness”

Claudia Tordini
“On becoming a group”
Mixed media on canvas
24” x 48”

This capstone is born after the intention to challenge my own assumption and understand, beyond my experience, how art can support learning. The hypothesis of the capstone is that Art enhances experiential learning. I used art as tool for learning in the classes of the Organizational Consulting and Executive Coaching (OCEC) concentration of the Organizational Dynamics master program at University of Pennsylvania. At the core of this program there are six cohort-based courses that provide an experiential learning environment, particularly for groups dynamic, coaching and consulting. I was part of Cohort V which met for classes from September 2015 through April 2017.
As I traveled back home from the initial five-day class of Cohort V, the effervescence of the emotions and ideas stirred up during those days were disorienting me. I could not synthesize into words what had happened. The experience had yet to be born at a cognitive level. As I arrived home, I instinctively entered my art studio, chose a white canvas and played with raw materials and colors. This lasted several days. Only when I finished that process, I could start writing my reflective paper for submission.

The following class weekend I shared my painting with the cohort because, having I expressed the experience of being in the group for five days, my artwork was intimately related to the cohort. I could not dissociate my artwork from my experience and from the people who I experienced with. Had there been a different group dynamic or had the group members been different, my painting would have been different too. As natural and logic as this seemed to me, it was like foreign language for many.

I repeated the process of unfolding the content of my experience in canvas after every weekend we met for class. This was out of my need to reflect and incorporate the class experience into my learning. One of my classmates indicated that I had certainly taken advantage of the cohort experience more than him and others who, after a few days, witnessed the intensity of the weekend experience vanishing. Instead, I collected the emotions and thoughts of the experience into a piece of art. Furthermore, I explored the emotions and thoughts beyond what was at my conscious level as I played on the canvas and after.

I continued to share my artwork with the cohort with the intention to provide a new medium of communication and reflection and enrich the understanding of the
group’s identity and dynamic. My underlying assumption was that others could benefit from it as I did. I was introducing a new perspective on the same experience they were part of; challenging their senses and perception with new stimulus; and telling the story that bridged art and experience.

I am not an artist by training. A creative expression tool was introduced to me during a personal growth workshop twenty years ago and I discovered I had artistic skills. A few years after, I sought art to balance my engineering mind by fostering the emergence of my soft self. I, instinctively, developed a process that allowed me to dive into my emotional and psychological world at the same time of creating beautiful work. This process grew so intimate in me that I no longer can separate art from experiential learning.

In answering the research question of this capstone, I explore the impact of art in both, the artist and the beholder. Exploration of the artist’s process derives from my own experience as an artist as well as available works that build on interviews to several artists. The focus is on unveiling the intimate relationship between artistic creation and the personal traits, skills and capacities that are activated during the creative process. Taking a step further, I explore the transformational journey of the artist from beginning to end and identify the circumstances in which experiential learning occurs.

The understanding of the beholder’s process draws from interviews to the members of cohort V of - the OCEC program reacting to the art I created during the class period. The goal is to recognize if integration of the artwork to the experience they had during the classes changes their learning experience.
Bringing it all together and integrating the supporting literature will help answer the hypothesis question. My goal for this capstone is to increase awareness of the benefits of incorporating art in the learning environment. In particular, learning clusters such as the OCEC, designed to experiencing the theory of group’s dynamics can facilitate the personal and collective reflection using art. My secondary goal for this capstone is to ease the understanding of art for the audience so that people who do not have education in arts – formal or informal – can benefit from it.

My goal is inspired on my own experience in the OCEC program. The cohort classes were intense learning and dynamic experiences. Because of that, written or verbal reflection did not suit my needs. To fit the experience within the known vocabulary seemed a way to distort and or constrain it. It seemed as if for my mind to process it, I had to shrink it. Instead, on the canvas, I could just let it expand. I did not need to rationalize or explain it. I only needed to make sure that my work represented my experience the best possible. The work resulting of such a process offered a deep content that I could continue deciphering after. As a beholder, I could still explore the emotions that the art awoke in me. I had fun with this. I enjoyed it all: the classes, the creative process and the learnings derived from it. It was an incredible journey of transformations. I would like others to experience that too.

I started this chapter by introducing the topic of my research – art and experiential learning, the impact art has had in my learning and my goals for this work. In the next chapter, I review the relevant literature in search of insights to the hypothesis. In it, I define what art, creativity and experiential learning mean for this work. The literature covers philosophical and psychological approaches that explain the human forces
involved in the making and appreciation of art; insights yielded by neuroscience discoveries in relationship to art; works of scholars who advocate the use of art in education; and discoveries of research works on artists and their creative processes.

In chapter three, I describe my own creative process. I offer a thorough description of a process that I have followed extensively but in an instinctive way. I draw from the literature to identify relevant steps and actions, and propose a model for experiential learning in creative processes. I also highlight the aspects of my experience that support my hypothesis for art and learning and analyze it in light of the findings of other qualitative researches with artists.

Chapter four presents the research methodology I used to analyze the experiential learning of the beholder of art, including rationale for the selection of method and data sources, collection method and data management. I provide a summary of the data gathered, and my interpretation and relevant discoveries to support the experiential learning process through art. Finally, I offer a summary that builds on chapter two, three and four. I provide a synthesis of the model I propose for art as an experiential learning process. Additionally, I reflect upon alternatives for future development.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter of literature review is intended to offer a theoretical and research background to the journey across art, experience and learning. I am familiar with it from an empirical and instinctive personal experience. My journey to prove it to be a universal reality starts with looking at what others have suggested, discovered, and implemented throughout time in the field.

This journey of discovery follows a quasi-chronological order that starts with art philosophers of the beginning of last century and ends with current neurological researches on the impact of art and learning on human brain. I expose the reader to a collection of research, essays and ideas that explore the crossing paths of art and experience, experience and learning, and art and learning. This builds a platform from where to dive into the intersection of all three – the objective of my research: art and experiential learning. This last step takes place in the next two chapters where I elaborate on the theory and practice to propose experiencing art as a learning process. I bring together the literature review, my empirical experience as an artist and my research with the art observers.

To my surprise, I came across many scholars in the fields of philosophy, anthropology, sociology, education, psychology, and science but not artists. The latter are
regarded as object of study but not as the researcher or focused on the development of the topic of this capstone. This opens my appetite for better understanding of the relationships among the various theories and the practical application of them.

As an artist, understanding the forces that drive my experience of discovery and creativity brings a supportive foundation to expand the reach of my work and audience. Moreover, learning about the universality of that foundation encourages me to think about ways to make these tools and means more approachable to others. This journey of literature review has been fascinating in awakening me to a space of both, incredible need and potential, scarcity and richness, and difficulty and ease, and is inviting me to build bridges between them.

Key terms

- Art: Merriam-Webster defines art as “the conscious use of skill and creative imagination especially in the production of aesthetic objects”, and “the arts” as “painting, sculpture, music, theater, literature, etc., considered as a group of activities done by people with skill and imagination”

Defining art is challenging and scholars seem not to be able to agree on one definition. Art appreciation depends on time, culture, context, and its meaning has changed constantly thorough history.

Philosophers such as John Dewey and Herbert Read had a wide interpretation of art because of their focus on the aesthetic aspect of it.

Art, Read claims, is ‘present in everything we make to please our senses’ (Read 1943, 15). This extremely wide definition of art includes every form
of personal expression, from children’s drawings to following a career path. (as cited in Barchana-Lorand, 2015, p. 171)

Dewey (2005) also argues about art being part of human’s daily experiences:

When the art product attains classic status, it somehow becomes isolated from the human conditions under which it was brought into being and from the human consequences it engenders in actual life-experience … When artistic objects are separated from both conditions of origin and operation in experience, a wall is built around them that renders almost opaque their general significance, with which esthetic theory deals. Art is remitted to a separate realm, where it is cut off from that association with the materials and aims of every other form of human effort, undergoing, and achievement. (p.1-2)

Scientists, instead, think of art as a cognitive creative process:

Art should be regarded as a cognitive process in which artists engage the most perplexing issues in present experience and try to find a way of symbolizing them visually so that they can bring coherence to their experience. In consequence, the definition of art is constantly changing in relation to its time (Tyler & Likova, 2012, p. 3)

For the purpose of this capstone, all references to art will be use as an interpretation of Merriam-Webster definitions of art and the arts.

- Aesthetic: “responsive to or appreciative of what is pleasurable to the senses” according to Merriam-Webster.

For Dewey (2005), “artistic” refers primarily to the process of doing or making while “esthetic” refers to the experience of appreciating art.

The word esthetic” refers, … to experience as appreciative, perceiving, and enjoying. It denotes the consumer’s rather than the producer’s standpoint. It is gusto, taste; and, as with cooking, overt skillful action is on the side of the consumer, as in gardening there is a distinction between gardener who plants and tills and the householder who enjoys the finished product” (p. 49).
- Artist: a person who creates objects of art in all its ways (visual, written, musical) or performs art (music, dance, drama)

- Creativity: is easily defined as the ability to create. However, everything a person does that results in a product is a creation. There has historically been significant philosophical discussion around the definition of creativity but the standard one establishes that creativity requires both originality (novelty) and effectiveness (value).

Art and Experience

As I start my journey reviewing the literature, I stumble on John Dewey’s description of a job interview in which applicant and interviewer behave in a very mechanical way, following an interview protocol and showing no external signs of anything else going on. However, an interplay of new experiences takes place at each person’s emotional level and between the two of them. The initial primary emotion of the applicant might be hope but as the interview progresses, secondary emotions emerge. At the same time, the interviewer sees the candidate through his own emotional lens. Both people navigate the process settling into every situation based on their emotions and information amid uncertainty and suspense. Dewey (2005) says about this process that “its nature and import can be expressed only by art, because there is a unity of experience that can be expressed only as an experience” (p.44).

I am at awe that Dewey describes the way I have been experiencing life and art for years. At the same time, I am curious and feel drawn to understand the drivers of
these processes and experiences. Thus, this journey of unveiling the meaning of art and experience starts.

Dewey pioneered the idea of art as experience. According to Dewey (2005), life happens through interaction with an environment and experience is the result of that interaction. When that interaction is carried to its full, there is participation and communication. “Art is thus prefigured in the very processes of living” (p.25).

To see art in everyday life, one needs to move beyond the performing of actions or the objects of interest, turn on the senses and be attuned to the human emotions that take place during those actions or in the creation of the object. There is the need to bring attentive eyes and ears to see and hear the delight of a cook bringing ingredients together, or the joy of a child playing with a pet, or the enthusiasm of a spectator watching a TV show. This is the esthetic quality of life experiences that blend with art.

Dewey explains that experience occurs continuously because of the interaction of creatures and the environment. This is for all living creatures. However, when the conditions involve resistance of conflict, emotions and ideas arise and conscious intent emerges for human beings. Art emerges from that unbalance, the tension, the opposites and the need to bring unity and restore balance. For Dewey (2005), the existence of art is proof that man uses materials and energies of nature with intent to expand his own life, and that he does so in accord with the structure of his organism – brain, sense organs, and muscular system. Art is the living and concrete proof that man is capable of restoring consciously, and thus on the plane of meaning, the union of sense, need, impulse and action characteristics of the live creature. (p.26)

An experience has a pattern and structure. Two parallel paths – doing and undergoing - take place and interconnect through perception. For example, to put one’s
hand in fire (doing) is not necessarily an experience. The pain, the fear, the anger, or any other emotions that arise from the burning feeling complete the doing into the experience.

Hans Kreitler and Shulamith Kreitler (as mentioned in Shimamura, 2015) developed a theory of aesthetics based on the dynamic of tension and its relief. For them, all forms of art – visual, musical, dramatic and literary – create tension in the beholder who tries to resolve it. The tension builds as the beholder personally involves in experiencing a painting, for example, and trying to understand the intentions of the artist. If the painting depicts a scene, the observer may place herself or himself in it. Pleasure emerges from this experience and, in particular, when she or he resolves and understands it.

The imaginative nature of the art experience allows us to be open to thoughts and feelings in a safe environment such as an art museum without actually involving ourselves in real-life events. (Shimamura, 2015).

Dissanayake (2002) talks of a therapeutic quality of art for it allows a sense of connection between internal and external reality, integrating conflicting emotions and allowing creative expression. Art is also adaptive and desirable because it “allows direct, “thoughtless” (or unself-conscious) experience”. (p.66). Shifting us away from the analytical faculties, art connects us directly to the substantial immediacy of things and we become more aware of the color, texture, smell, or the particularity of the subject matter. This increasing awareness of, and sensitivity to the environment around us trains our perception of reality and builds a foundation to experience future unfamiliar situations. Additionally, art increases our capacity to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty, useful and adaptive abilities. Art then “has the unique faculty of preparing us for the onslaughts of
life” (Jenkins, as noted in Dissanayake, 2002, p. 68). A refined perception helps navigate new situations orienting us to the parts of the reality that may be more relevant (Berlyne, as noted in Dissanayake, 2002).

Dissanayake (1995) presents art as a human behavior or as the satisfying of a human need meaning that it is something that humans do because it helps them to survive and to survive better than they would without it. Art has the power to physically, sensuously and emotionally satisfy and please human beings. Originated in activities concerned with survival, art has been throughout human history helping its evolution.

Boyd (2009) also characterizes art as a behavior – a set of activities designed to engage human attention through appeal to rich and patterned information. In the deciphering of the patterns, art stimulates a flexible mind. By engaging the mind repeatedly in this activity, over time, it alters its wiring to modify key human perceptual, cognitive and expressive system such as sight, hearing, movement and social cognition.

Art … stimulates our brains more than routine processing of the environment. It offers what biologist call a supernormal stimulus, an incentive more intense than usual, in this case a rush of the kinds of patterned information that our mind particularly crave. Because neural connections establish themselves piecemeal through experience, and because we find art self-rewarding, because we engage in it eagerly and repeatedly, art can over time fine-tune our minds for rapid response in the information modes that matter most to us. (p.94)

Art also cultivates creativity. It develops in us habits of imaginative exploration opening up to new dimensions of possibilities. “Artistic thinking produces possibilities that scientists can evaluate for efficacy in here and now” (Robert Root-Bernstein, as cited in Boyd, 2009, p.124). Some examples are George Serat’s pointillism that showed the roots of computer pixilation and the technique of false-coloring objects began with Emile Bernard, Paul Gaugin and the Fauvists at the end of the nineteenth century used now by
scientists “to emphasize inobvious elements of data” (Robert Root-Bernstein, as cited in Boyd, 2009, p.124)

Art builds our confidence in shaping our own destinies. In art we can chose what moves us and, in doing so, experience control over our situations.

By refining and strengthening our sociality, by making us reader to use the resources of the imagination, and by raising our confidence in shaping life on our own terms, art fundamentally alters our relation to our world. (Boyd, 2009, p. 125)

**The artist and the beholder**

Maxine Greene begins her article “Aesthetics and the Experience of the Arts: Toward Transformations” by quoting W.H. Auden’s poem “In Memory of WB Yeats” in which he says “poetry makes nothing happen”... Poems and works of art themselves cannot change anything, of course. It is the transactions, the live encounters with poetry and other works of art that bring about change by changing people. People are transformed when they “wrench themselves from their submergence in the ordinary and live for a while in the imaginary world” (Gulla, 2018, p. 115).

Shimamura (2015) presents the I-SKE model that captures the artist’ intention (I) to offer an artwork for aesthetic evaluation, and the beholder’s reaction with respect to sensation, knowledge, and emotions (SKE).

The artist is a human being and offers her or his artwork with the intention for it to be sensed by the beholder.

**Figure 1 – The I-SKE Model**

To understand the beholder’s experience Shimamura argues it is important to look into which ways the artwork enhances sensation, knowledge and emotion, following the various mental processes of the beholder when experiencing art: whether he
expects the artwork to depict realistic scenes and events, or evoke emotions; or she or he expects to interpret the underlying meaning of the artwork. “We never view art in a vacuum but instead use our knowledge to guide experience”. (p. 25). What we see and feel is influenced by prior knowledge and past experiences, sometimes even in an unconscious state. Based on his model, Shimamura (2015) defines art as thinking with feeling.

Art excites, surprises, and humors us by creating an imaginary world filled with ideas and feelings. In this manner, aesthetic experiences arouse our perceptions, memories and emotions without any reason other than to evoke pleasure. It is often the intention of the artist to make us perceive, think and feel in new and different ways. (p. 191).

An interesting perspective presented by Shimamura (2015) is about art and empathy. When we watch a play, read a story or stare at a painting, we may feel as if we are experiencing life through the eyes of the author. This bonding with the artist or the subject of the artwork stimulates empathy in the beholders when imagining themselves in the situations and feeling alike. Every artwork presents a personal point of view. When we consider the point of view of the artist, we somehow become the artist. Philosopher
Arthur Danto said “responding to a painting complements the making of one, and spectator stands to artist as reader to writer in a kind of spontaneous collaboration”. (as indicated by Shimamura, 2015, p. 240).

Many philosophers and art critics have argued that what is important is not the artist intentions in the making of art but the feelings and thoughts the beholder experiences. The beholder might have thoughts and feelings that are far from the artist’s intentions yet they are valid and helpful for the beholder to develop a personal perspective and gain personal knowledge. This is my belief too. As an artist, I am not concerned about the beholder understanding my emotions or intentions. What is important to me is to reach out to the observer in a way that helps connect either with herself or himself, with me or other people or with life. I do not seek approval or agreement from the beholder but a reaction, an awakening to a dormant part of life within her or him.

**Brain and art**

Experiencing art is a whole brain phenomenon. There is no art center in the brain. Thus neurons interact dynamically interconnecting various regions of our brain to drive the experience. Zeki (as mentioned in Lauring, 2014, p. 117) emphasizes parallels between art and the brain. “The function of the brain is to represent the constant, lasting, essential and enduring features of objects, surfaces, faces, situations, and so on”. (p. 118). Artists such as Monet and Derain isolated and emphasized color, and others such as Calder emphasized somehow exploring the organization of the visual brain. On Zeki’s view “artists are neurologists, studying the brain with techniques that are unique to them
and reaching interesting but unspecified conclusions about the organization of the brain.”
(p. 117).

Segev, Martinez & Zatorre (2014) highlight a similarity between art and science:

Both art and science seek to explain—each with their own unique set of concepts and tools—the unknown. Both science and art often claim to seek the “truth.” The focus of modern brain research is to unravel the physical basis that underlies the emerging capabilities of the brain—perception, behavior, emotions and brain-related diseases, whereas the arts elaborate intricately and persistently on these brain-related properties including diseases exploring, and in this process also expanding, the range of brain’s perceptual and emotional capacity. This is a unique forte of the arts, which utilize the powerful capacity of the brain to adaptively (plastically) change following perception and action, and propose new ways to view and interpret the world. Indeed, as highlighted in the present volume, art may invoke new “brain states” that are otherwise less likely to be activated by our day-to-day “reality.” Art therefore serves to explore and expand the potential capacity of the brain, e.g., via the recent invention of abstract art. (p. 1)
Experience and Learning

John Dewey disagrees with traditional education theory because it focuses on building knowledge through acquisition of information and skills built on a remote past. For Dewey, knowledge is what students learn from their experiences. Through experience, people build skills and insights from the opportunities of the present that can apply to future endeavors. For experiences to be educative, they must lead out into the real world and prepare the person for future experiences. New experiences should relate to previous ones at the same time of offering sufficiently unfamiliarity to cause conflict between current and new knowledge. Dewey states that “no experience is educative that does not tend both to knowledge of more facts and entertaining of more ideas and to a better, more orderly, arrangement of them.” (as cited in Grady, 2003, p.8).

There are two important aspects in considering experiential learning for Dewey. One is time for reflection so that students can make a connection between the actual experience and the knowledge they draw from the experience. The other is the social nature of mankind. For Dewey, human experiences are social and involve contact and communication. “The principle that development of experience comes from about interaction means that education is essentially a social process”. (as cited in Grady, 2003, p.2).

One of the complexities of experiential reflection is the principle of theory-ladenness denounced by several prominent philosophers in the 1960s and 1970s. Dewey formulated this observations in 1925 in his book *Experience and Nature*:

Experience is already overlaid and saturated with the products of the reflection of past generations and by-gone ages. It is filled with interpretations, classifications, due to sophisticated thought, which have become incorporated into what seems to be fresh naive empirical material. It would take more wisdom than is possessed by
the wisest historical scholar to track all of these absorbed borrowings to their original sources. (as cited in Miettinen, 2000, p. 63).

Dewey considers that one of the purposes of reflection is to be conscious of the layers of cultures weaved in the observations. Once they are more visible and reflected upon, they can enrich thoughts and actions.


Figure 2 - Dewey’s model of reflective thought and action

The reflective thought starts with a disturbance in the routine doing of human-environment system and the need to assess conditions, resources, difficulties, obstacles and aids (1). The person formulates the problem (2). The way the problem is conceived shapes the selection of relevant data and criterion. The analysis and diagnosis of conditions takes place and a possible solution (working hypothesis) is constructed (3). The viability of the working hypothesis is evaluated and tested in the light of the
knowledge and resources available potentially leading to reformulating the working hypothesis (4). The working hypothesis is tested by trying to realize it in practice (5).

For Dewey, only the practical testing of the hypothesis in material activity makes it possible to draw conclusions of its validity. The testing of the hypothesis does not always lead to the confirmation of it. However, the hypothesis makes learning possible because the outcome can be compared to the initial assumptions implied in it. This differentiates the process from bare trial and error.

Dewey’s process has two kind of results. The direct one is the solution of the initial problem. Another, indirect and intellectual outcome is the elaboration of ideas and meanings that becomes a foundation for future situations. Dewey says:

And it may well be that this by-product, this gift of the gods, is incomparably more valuable for living a life than is the primary and intended result of control, essential as the control of having a life to live. (as cited in Miettinen, 2000, p. 67).

Carl Rogers, emphasizes the central role of experiencing in the learning process of the person: “He uses his experiencing as a direct referent to which he can turn in forming accurate conceptualizations and as a guide to his behavior” (as cited in Kolb, 2009). Rogers (1989) describes the key aspects of the process of emergence of an adult: 1) opening to the personal experience, 2) increasing trust in self, 3) development of self-reflection, 4) acceptance of growth and learning as a process rather than a product.

Kolb builds on Dewey’s and other foundational theorists of experiential learning – William James, Kurt Lewin, Carl Rogers and Paulo Freire – who placed conscious intentional action based on experience at the center of the learning process and built the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). The ELT model (Figure 3) presents two dialectically related modes of grasping experience - Concrete experience (CE)
and Abstract Conceptualization (AC) – and two dialectically related modes of transforming experience – Reflective Observation (RO) and Active Experimentation (AE). Experiential learning is a process of constructing knowledge that involves a creative tension among the four learning modes.

The process describes an idealized learning cycle: CE is the basis for observations and reflections (RO). These reflections are assimilated into AC producing new implications for action. These implications can be actively tested (AE) and serve as guides in creating new experiences.

Flauvell (as cited in Kolb, 2009) introduces the concept of mega-cognition to the study of human learning bringing intentional consciousness in the learning experience. Nelson and colleagues (as cited in Kolb, 2009) build on that and developed a model that
emphasizes processes of monitoring and control in meta-cognition. Figure 4 (Kolb, 2009) shows and adaptation of Nelson’s model to include Kolb’s ELT model. This variation of the model adds a layer of learning to the learners who can understand better their learning processes and adjust their learning strategies based on that.

Figure 4 – Nelson’s Meta-Cognitive Model Modified to include the ELT Learning Model

The individual is engaged to learning at the object level of direct concrete experience. At the same time, using reflective monitoring, the individual can compare her or his learning process against the ideal ELT model at the meta-level and evaluate and identify if her or his process needs adjustment (e.g. if the person is not spiraling through each stage of the learning cycle).

At the core of these models is the fundamental belief that a person has the capacity to learn. This faith in an individual’s innate capacity to grow and learn makes experiential learning particularly attractive for adult learning and development and for the
idea of life-long learning. Kolb (2009) remarks that a key aspect of meta-cognitive knowledge is also the person’s belief about their own capacity to learn. For instance, if a person does not believe she or he can learn, then she or he will not. Learning requires personal commitment, conscious attention, effort and dedication and this does not happen if people think they do not have the ability to learn. Paulo Freire (as cited in Kolb, 2009) reflects on his extensive work to help people achieve personal and social transformations necessary to overcome negative, fixed self-identity by creating critical consciousness in people through “reflection and action on the world in order to transform it”.

The ELT concept of learning self-identify is based on the works of Carl Rogers and Paulo Freire (Kolb, 2009). Learners are those who

1) Trust their personal direct experiences: experience is at the center of the learning process and is the focal point of their choices and decisions. They own their choices and validate them in their experiences.

2) Trust the learning process: the primary focus is not on the immediate performance or goal achievement but on the ongoing process of learning from their experiences.

3) Learn from failure: failure is part of the learning process. They understand that failure is inevitable part of doing something new and see it as an opportunity to learn.

4) Reassess their beliefs about how they learn and what are they good at: Through self-reflection, they can re-define themselves as learners. They balance their attention to failure and success.
These characteristics and attitudes are very similar to my personal experience with the creative process: trust my own senses, trust the creative process, be attentive to be genuine in the expression and be open to going back and starting over, and reflect on the art creation.

Neuroscience supports the ELT model in the holistic learning, active learning, and emotional connection of experiences.

Emerging neuropsychological evidence demonstrates that certain types of learning involve both pre-frontal lobes and brain stem activity (Immordino-Yang, 2011). Experiential learning integrates different neural networks during the learning event (Piaget, 1950/2001), resulting in multiple memory pathways (Hebb, 1949) and connections between abstract concepts. For example, having students provide personal explanations or demonstrations of the concepts through multiple modalities produces higher retention (Craik & Tulving, 1975). Elaboration through a number of modalities creates more linkages, unlike learning styles, which is often interpreted to suggest that an individual learns better and can perform better when their “learning style” is accommodated (Pashler et al., 2008).

Experiential learning also addresses the student’s need for an emotive connection with the physical world (LeDoux, 1997), which triggers a release of dopamine, significant to memory formation (Gazzaniga, Ivry, & Mangun, 2002). Experiential learning provides novel experiences, stimulating attention, and limbic/emotional systems, which facilitates memory formation (Gazzaniga et al., 2002). (Schenk & Cruickshank, 2015).

However, the ELT model neglects other cognitive foundations such as the learner’s need to determine what information is important, the hierarchical shape of learning abstractions, cognitive load theory and priming. In 1980, Kurt Fischer (as cited in Schenk & Cruickshank, 2015), introduced Dynamic Skill Theory. He describes that learning has an s-shaped oscillation (Figure 5) that progresses as increasingly abstract concepts are understood and it repeats every time something new is learned. Learning curves are linked in a continuous learning process starting with simple concepts and
developing to higher levels of complexity. The limit on how fast and high a person develops is set biologically and potentially, affected by the environment too.

Figure 5 – An interpretation of Fischer Developmental Skill Theory (as cited in Schenk & Cruickshank, 2015) illustrating dynamic phases in cyclic-like reiterations

Dynamic System Theory provides means to help explain the complexity of the brain learning process.

Energy efficiency is the rule when understanding the fundamentals of brain processes. This understanding has led us to conceive of a learning model that is a spiraling fractal and has two parts: the energy-efficient front-end of learning and the energy-demanding back-end. The front-end of learning involves non-conscious systems of appraisal, attention, and affect. The appraisal system uses peripheral vision and the body’s relationship with the environment to evaluate a situation. The attention system manages all the incoming stimuli, identifies and directs your attention to what is important. The affect system is the ebb and flow of emotional states that course through you right now in a milieu of electrical signals and neurochemicals. Thoughts and sensations
are encoded with emotion as they come and go, meaning that a person’s emotional state is emergent and fluid. These processes happen below the surface of consciousness and are regulated/modulated with lower energy consumption compared with full processing at a consciousness level (Gazzaniga et al., 2002; Stanovich, 2009). Addressing and intentionally influencing these processes as a teacher/facilitator can preserve energies needed to carry students through the back-end, or the hard part of learning.

The back-end of learning is more challenging in that while non-conscious systems still need to be considered and stewarded, this second part of the process happens above the level of consciousness. In it, new connections are being made. Neural growth is stimulated through the actions of the learning event and requires more energy. This back-end of learning does not always happen spontaneously, and therefore, learning is most effective when guided and facilitated by a teacher (Fischer, Yan, & Stewart, 2002; Parziale & Fischer, 1998).

By stewarding a student’s non-conscious systems well, there should be more energy (i.e., glucose) for the neural growth of long-term memory. Reducing barriers to learning should allow more energy for deeper processing of concepts, permitting us to take a student farther through the learning process. Future research into this area could elucidate these assumptions. (Schenk & Cruickshank, 2015).

Schenk & Cruickshank (2015) proposed a Co-Constructed developmental Teaching Theory (CDTT) supporting a learner’s multiple dynamics states in different contexts, at different scales in a re-iterative fractal-like process. CDTT addresses the learner holistically and aims to meet them where they are. This model promises to an improvement over other experiential learning models but its validity is still to be proved.
Art and Learning

To encourage imaginative approaches to create an effective and forward-looking society it is essential that we recognize the role of arts, culture and creativity in issues of citizenship. Creativity has high currency as an aspect of contemporary life. It is becoming an essential feature of Life-Long Learning as education is called upon to prepare people for a world that now is changing more rapidly than ever before. (Laal, Aliramaei & Laal, 2013, p. 4050)

Laal, Aliramaei & Laal (2013) advocate the importance of art in lifelong learning. Because the focus is on people learning everything, at all times, art not only helps build many skills and capacities, it also offers learning opportunities in many settings: at home, on the street, in school rooms, in art school, at art galleries, museums, libraries, in cultural institutions, in public places, through the media, and via internet. (Swift, & Steers as cited in Laal, Aliramaei & Laal, 2013).

Education in art and art history can bring skills and values that Laal, Aliramaei & Laal categorize into two main groups:

- Intrinsic: creativity and imagination, self-expression and perception, spatial awareness, visual aptitude (perception of color, tone, composition, size, etc.), and physical acuity (drawing, hand-eye coordination, etc.); and
- Extrinsic: enhancing power of explanation, evaluation and problem-solving, developing intercultural awareness, planning and accomplishing art projects, spreading and supporting perspectives, and collaborative peer working, self-directed learning.

Cuco (2014) expands on several of this skills and values with a particular focus on adults. “For an adult or an old person, art can be a salvation, a means of re-activating, strengthening, enhancing existential joy” (p. 301). With this in mind, Cuco explains six main purposes of art in adult education:
1. The formation of the ability to perceive: the ability to be receptive and welcoming of beauty starts with sharpening of the aesthetic sensitivity through which color, sound, and gestural messages will be perceived in the works of art. Afterwards, the adult becomes demanding of more complex stimulating emotions related to deeper human personality and complexity, requiring dealing with the sense of opposition, tension and unbalance already mentioned by Dewey (2005) – pleasure – lack of it, personal – impersonal, interested – not interested, etc.

2. Increasing the ability to capitalize, appreciate, judge aesthetic objects or situations: expression of one’s opinion supposes the formation of value criteria. This refers to one’s reaction either spontaneous or based on prior aesthetic experiences. Aesthetic judgement – the internalizing of an evaluation framework and autonomously making hierarchies – is a sign of a behavior with a specific spiritual maturity.

3. Developing the necessity of valorization and integration of aesthetics in one’s life: developing an aesthetic lifestyle and creating an intimate space for art help counteract the invading technology, consumerism ideologies, and pressure for depersonalization.

4. Forming the ability to create or generate the aesthetic: each individual creates an environment formed out of objects personally created or already-made but arranged in a new format. A certain usage of an object or a specific way of life portrays creativity – the discovery or the beauty of the entire world on one’s own.
5. Strengthening the ability of shaping and accepting one’s private cultural identity: art brings unity and energy to people. It helps reconnect with a more spiritual self and with the spiritual traditions of the community – rising awareness regarding history of the group and possible dimension of the own specificity that can be linked to the cultural baggage that we carry.

6. Integration in humanity through knowledge and internalization of universal aesthetic values: art opens the way for knowledge and respect for diversity. Through art we learn about others’ ideals, aspirations and behavior including other geography and time. This facilitates communications between civilizations and generations and the creation of human solidarity.

There is an increasing level of neuroscience research that supports the idea of enhancing transfer of learning abilities from the arts to other cognitive domains. Hetland et al (as cited in Tyler & Likova, 2012), made a qualitative, ethnographic meta-analysis of the kind of cognitive skills taught in art classes and identifies eight habits of mind:

1. to observe – to see with acuity;
2. to envision – to generate mental images and imagine;
3. to express – to find their personal voice;
4. to reflect – to think meta-cognitively about their decisions, make critical and evaluative judgments, and justify them;
5. to engage and persist – to work through frustration;
6. to stretch and explore – to take risks, “muck around,” and profit from mistakes;
7. to develop, craft; and
8. to understand the art world

This work is the first to demonstrate objectively the kinds of thinking skills and working styles taught in arts classes. The group is now investigating the possibility that the skill of envisioning taught in visual art classes may foster geometric reasoning ability.

Tyler & Likova (2012) talk about two other main aspects of arts and learning: creativity and inspiration. Creativity shows up in the artist in the midst of the creation process, which they define as insight into a novel solution to a problem. For them, “inspiration is an integrative mental function at the intersection of (a) cognitive, (b) emotional, and (c) conative processes” (p. 4) where conative processes are goal-directed functions including desire, ambition and will. When people feel part of a larger reality, they are inspired to learn, to achieve and to pursue a meaningful career. Additionally, inspiration helps build self-esteem in line with realizing the potential one is capable of doing.

Specifically, the concept of inspiration focuses on the experiential rather than the functional aspects of this form of achievement—inspiration describes the feeling or awareness of extending one’s physical or mental operations beyond the previous capabilities to achieve a new or enhanced capability. (Tyler & Likova, 2012, p. 5).

There has been many advocates of the importance of art and education. Herbert Read (as cited in Barchana-Lorand, 2015) believes that “art is a condition required for the healthy cognitive and emotional development of the child and, thereby creating a society mentally stable and productive citizens” (p. 170). Read invites to “enable individuals to fulfill their potential so that every professional direction they would later take would be “art” (p. 170). Read has been considerably influential in the evolution of educational theory, with particular relevance to creativity in education and in therapeutic and diagnosis through children’s drawing.
Maxine Greene was an incredible ambassador of art experience and learning. For her, “the most important aspect of learning is the child’s experience”. “Encounters with art have the power to “create occasions for the new beginnings,” leading to results that can be unpredictable”. (Gulla, 2018, p. 110). Through art, one learns to open to other interpretations of the world at the same time that helps know oneself. Greene recognized “the potential for meaningful encounters with work of art to release students’ imaginations and to help them find their voices” (Gulla, 2018, p. 111).

Tomšič Čerkez (2015) reflects in current reality of students who are exposed to a highly dynamic and varied media such as television, internet, video, and video games that offer colorful, fast-moving sequences of images. This reality offers the possibility to leverage the use of combining images and experimenting with different tools and experience space perception and representation. Integrating sensory experiences are fundamental to normal human learning. “Through the creative use of these competencies, the individual is also able to communicate with others.” (p. 5).

Spatial experiences are particularly helpful for developing the capacity to imagine spatial relationships in the fields of geometry, geography, biology physics, chemistry and sports. It is particularly important in the visualization within history, literature and in learning a foreign language. Additionally, refined visual and auditory perception are useful for almost all activities. Art expression in all of its variants offers a path to deep insight into and reflection on a range of content from different points of view, fostering integrative and multisensory experiences. (Tomšič Čerkez, 2015, p. 6).

Atkinson (2017) talks of the force of art as “a deeply affective force, particular to art’s event, which precipitates ontogenetic potentials for evolving what it is to be human
in its various relationalities” (p. 147). This force “can be conceived as a process with a potential for the individualization of new worlds to see that other worlds or that enables us to see that other worlds might be possible”. This is what allows a learner to move into a new, more expanded space of himself. (p. 142). It is this force of art that pushes us to go beyond the established knowledge and challenges us to think. Atkinson (2017) advocates that this force is the driver of learning in the arts education space (instead of the established frames and criteria).

Summary

This literature review walks the path of understanding the connection between art and experience, experience and learning, and art and learning. Experiencing art transforms our brain processes, develops emotional and cognitive functions and helps build a broad array of skills such as imagination, creativity, tolerance to ambiguity and uncertainty, reflective skills, empathy, and self-esteem among others. Art also helps refine perception and spatial awareness, improve communication and problem solving skills.

Experiential learning models complement the art experience and give a framework to understand the learning opportunities in experiencing art. In the next chapter, I build on Kolb’s ELT model to show the learning cycle of the artist experience. In doing so, I propose the ELT model for creative processes and bring examples of my own experience as an artist to illustrate its validity. In chapter 4, I do the same with the beholder’s experience.
CHAPTER 3

THE ARTIST PROCESS

This chapter brings together art, experience and learning in the artist process. I focus on identifying experiential learning during the creative process. I discovered this aspect of art many years ago, when I started using creative expression as a tool for growth and self-development. I find it particularly enriching when experiencing intense, complex or deeply emotional situations. Sometimes these experiences are beyond the threshold of consciousness and the mind cannot fully grasp them. In the process of putting words to describe them, the mind needs to fit the experience within the known vocabulary. At times, for the lack of better words, we use words with lose definitions. That is the case of “magic”, used to describe the OCEC Cohort V experience. Magic represents the threshold to an unknown reality but once named, it is not explored anymore.

Expressing the raw experiences in an artistic way bypasses the need for understanding and naming. The focus, instead, is on making sure that the colors, shapes, materials, and sizes resonate the best possible with the experience within the artist. This process in itself is an experiential learning one because it involves active experiencing, reflection and discoveries for further application. Later observation and reflection upon the art is also an experiential learning process, this time as an observer.

In this chapter, I start with looking into other artists processes based on existing observations and research. Following, I bring my own experience as an artist to better illustrate how art and learning combine in the creative experience.
The creative process

The first model of creative activity was revealed by Graham Wallas (as cited in Sadler-Smith, 2015) in his book *Art of Thought* published in 1926. His research is based on studies of eminent thinkers and scientist such as the great German physician and physicist Hermann Helmholtz (1821-1884), French symbolist poet Remy de Gourmont (1858-1915) and French mathematician Henri Poincaré (1854-1912). His focus is on the process of making a new generalization, creating a new invention, or in the poetical expression of a new idea (Sadler-Smith, 2015).

Wallas (as cited in Sadler-Smith, 2015)’s break down of the process into four steps is as follows:

1. Preparation: the problem is investigated in all possible ways and knowledge is acquired.
2. Incubation: a period of latency where there is no conscious thinking about the problem – a subconscious activity.
3. Illumination: the “Aha!” moment, the appearance of the “happy idea”. Wallace refers of it as a “flash” or a “train of association” ending with a final “flash” or “click”
4. Verification: the inspiration is further reflected upon, arranged, expressed and tested.

Wallas model has been foundational in creativity research. “Although some creativity researchers have proposed finer granularities (e.g. Cropley & Cropley, 2005, 2012; Doyle, 1998) most have adhered to the basic [four-step] framework” (Sadler-Smith, 2015).
Botella et al. (2013) studied 27 professional artist who make a living based on their artistic activity, enjoy recognition from galleries and art centers, have considerable years of experience, and are engaged in various domains of visual art (painting, digital arts, sculpture, multidisciplinary arts, and drawing).

The results of their qualitative and quantitative report is summarized into a six-step process represented in figure 6. This new process does not defer from Wallas’ model but completes it with more granularity and specificity. What is most interesting about it, is that is “aiming to capture the integrality and unity of the creative work in its cognitive, conative, emotional and environmental components” (Botella et al., 2013, p. 168). It denotes the complexities (physical, emotional and cognitive) of the creative process, the various forces and tensions that take place between environment and artist and within the artist, and depicts a path of transformation and creation.

Figure 6 – Activity stages in art and their links to the physical and social environment
Since the hypothesis of this capstone is that art enhances experiential learning, the question that arises is “where is learning in this process?” Or, is there any learning during this process? On a high level analysis, it seems to me that Wallas’ four-stage creative process could be expressed in terms of Kolb (2009)’s experiential learning model leading me to confirm that the creative process is an experiential learning process in itself. Figure 7 shows my proposal to translate the ELT model in terms of Wallas’ four-stage creative process. Following, I will walk the reader through my rationale in building it.

1. Concrete experience – Preparation is the starting point of the creative process. Wallas (as cited in Sadler-Smith, 2015) describes this as a conscious, voluntary and regulated stage that includes logic, mathematics, experimental
and observational sciences. Botella et al (2013) report in their findings that the creative process begins with an idea or vision triggered by an image, a sight, or a sound that resonates with the artist – a concrete experience under the ELT model.

2. Reflective observation – Incubation is a period where “we do not voluntarily or consciously think on a particular problem” (Wallas, 1926, p.86 as cited in Sadler-Smith, 2015). However, this “not thinking” is intended to give room to subconscious thoughts.

    Incubation is a fertile resource for the creative thinker, therefore posing the problem in conscious thought (Preparation) as early as possible maximizes the amount time for ‘extending’ and ‘enriching’ the mental operations of subconscious thought. (Sadler-Smith, 2015).

    Myers (2016) highlights Carl Jung’s psychological theory and its implication in screenwriting and stories. “One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious” (as cited in Myers, 2016) supports Myers’ reasoning that movies are powerful tools to reach out the inner darkness that Jung refers to in a person and make it conscious by turning it into a cinematic drama.

    Botella et all (2013) observe that “most visions were incomplete and needed careful consideration that amounted to an “incubation” phase” (p. 166) where the artist looks for more information required to turn the vision into reality. This is involved in the documentation/reflection stage that many times blends with the first sketches stage. While there is no mention to inspiration or unconscious activity, Botella et all (2013) reports that lack of inspirations is one of the possible obstacles encountered by the artist in this stage.
3. Abstract conceptualization - Illumination is a singular moment or “a rising train of association” which may “ascend” towards the threshold of consciousness at different rates and therefore last for varying lengths of time”. (Sadler-Smith, 2015). Wallas refers to this intimation as a phase leading to illumination. For Poincaré

Illumination is a “manifest sign of long unconscious prior work”, moreover unconscious work is possible and “only fruitful” if it is preceded and followed by a period of conscious work. Sudden inspirations “never happen” unless they have been preceded by “fruitless” voluntary efforts which may not have been as “sterile” as they appear because “they have set agogo the unconscious machine” which, without conscious efforts, “would not have moved and would have produced nothing” (Poincaré, 1908/1952, p.27 as cited in Sadler-Smith, 2015)

In Botella et al (2013)’s representation, the illumination happens at the testing forms and ideas stage that originated from reflections and preliminary works.

Artists were very “tactile”, open to the “physical, sensorial, sensible properties of space” and required the dialog, the “confrontation” with the art object… The object “posed a question” to the artist, not the other way around (Botella et al, 2013, p. 167)

4. Active experimentation - Verification includes the shaping of the inspiration insights, arranging them and wording or expressing it and testing its validity. Verification takes place within the socio-cultural environment and its members (e.g. critics, curators, grant awarding bodies, peer reviewers, journal editors, prize committees, investors, venture capitalists, etc.). “Creative insights do not exist in a vacuum because their Verification is culturally and
historically bound to traditions and social structures” (Amabile, 1996, p. 37, as cited in Sadler-Smith, 2015).

“Undergoing the final result at this stage invited evaluative judgments by the artist” (Botella et al, 2013, p. 167). In the Draft and Final Work the artists materializes the initial vision into a product or a series of products.

“Recognition from others, public and critics was sought after, although some artists rebelled and claimed that their works were not made to “seduce”.

(Botella et al, 2013, p. 167).

These four steps alternate conscious (preparation) – unconscious (incubation and illumination) – and conscious (verification) activity. The challenges for the creative person are three: letting the train of conscious arise as naturally as possible without interfering too much in the process, capturing the essence of inspiration as purely as possible, and “to make the conscious effort of expression” of it. (Sadler-Smith, 2015).

These difficulties and the need of the artist to reflect upon her or his creative behavior, making sure there is no interfering with the process and that inspiration is pure denote the characteristics of the Meta-Cognitive ELT model.

In the next section, I expand on my personal creative process as an artist to bring more light to this experiential learning process and the proposed model. In that illustration, I explore beyond the ELT model by zooming into the different aspects involved in the artist experience that offer learning opportunities.
My process as an artist

In this section, I am using the first of the art pieces I created during the OCEC program to walk the reader through the multiple creative processes I went through in making the artwork.

The kick-off of the painting process is the end of the initial five-day cohort experience. I left the class with a built-up a powerful emotional and cognitive content and I needed to express it in order for it to be reflected upon. In a way I could say that the experience was there but the learning was still to take place and to do so, the best means to me was to start with the creative expression process. In this way I could let it take volume and shape in the canvas and learn from it during the creation time as well as when finished, by contemplating the images and reflecting upon them.

Figure 8 shows the outcome of that process which I named “on becoming a group”. It depicts the experience of the cohort during the five-day course. While the whole creation of this artwork can be described as one creative process, I believe it is necessary to break it down into the multiple sub-processes that derived into the one consolidated painting. In this way I can help the reader understand of the importance of the process itself, the value of each of steps and the concatenation of cycles (experience, reflection, learning, and action).

The process I engage in creating a piece of art resembles the spiral of learning in adult development (Passarelli & Kolb, 2012): a concrete experience is enriched by reflection, given meaning by thinking, and transformed by action into a new, richer, broader and deeper experience. Further iterations of the cycle continue the exploration and learning and, potentially, a generalization to other domains.
The creative process is a process of emergence. As such, is a process that builds on itself. Full emergence requires that every prior step of discovery, unfolding and or expression has been completed in its order to become the starting point of a new, deeper, or more meaningful one. When I start an artwork I do not have a picture of a final product in mind. I only know the starting point: the predominant emotions of the experience. I launch myself into the expression of it as a journey of discovery. From thereafter, it is a continuation of the creative cycle: expressing the initial emotion on the canvas until it is exhausted or until it evolves into another one. Then the creative process with the new emotion kicks off and so on.

The painting shown in figure 8 can be decomposed into hundreds of small cycles of creativity: every material used in it (including the canvas) is selected using a process similar to figure 7 (preparation – incubation – illumination and verification). The same can be said of each color used, shapes and overall layout selected. The verification is done against the artist’s resonance of the experience to make sure that it reflects it well.

The artwork was created from bottom to top following a sense of emergence. There are three major sections (bottom, middle and top) that reflect the phases undergone during the five-day period: 1) beginning of the course (introduction of the group and individuals), 2) engagement in group activities and getting to know each other, and 3) the emergence of a collective reality: a group of people together for a purpose. Within each of those sections, there is a variety of shapes, movements and colors used to express that experience, involving several creative sub-processes to complete it.
This artwork tells from bottom to top the story of the initial five-day journey of Cohort V.

Twelve students and three professors came into the experience as individuals and came out of it as a young group. The process was a transforming journey both individually and collectively.

The painting reflects this transformation capturing the magic, excitement, dynamism, and celebration of the journey.

The central part of the art piece depicts individually colored paths that, as they unfold along the canvas, interweave and become a broad pathway that allows a collective reality to emerge. The group allows for the individuals to unfold at the same time that it gives birth to a collective shape. It is a non-rigid formation that balances structure and flexibility. Each person brings to the group her or his own history and unique qualities. Together, people awaken one another, prodding each other to come out of their safe cocoon, support one another, and risk the give and take of personal growth.

The many floating parts represent the juggling required for a group and its members to function in a healthy way.

The overall picture provides structure with little rigidity and illustrates that both flexibility and adaptability are needed to effectively work together.

The artwork echoes the belief that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. The contrast between the bottom section that shows fifteen isolated members and the top, where the parts come together to form a new collective reality, combine into a new creation. The open ending on the upper canvas gives space for continuing emergence and evolution through time, continuing to stress the fluidity of dynamic systems. The group is both a vehicle for individual growth and for group evolution.
Below are some examples of the creative sub-processes I engaged in the process of creating the painting. To describe them, I refer to the four-stage process displayed in figure 7.

A) First creative process: Choosing the canvas

1. Preparation: In contact with the five-day experience that resonates within me, I pose myself the question of what type of canvas would be better to represent it?

2. Incubation: I silently wander in my art studio looking at the various shapes and sizes of white canvasses.

3. Illumination: I instinctually click with a rectangular 24” by 48” canvas. “This is it!” Says my inner self.

4. Verification: “Of course!” Says my mind. “It’s a journey, it has to be longitudinal”

B) Second creative process: Choosing the orientation of the canvas

1. Preparation: I pose the question “what position better reflects the sense of journey? Horizontal? Vertical?

2. Incubation: I play with the canvas back and forth between the two positions


4. Verification: “Of course!” Says my mind. “It’s a journey of emergence. It has to be vertical!”
C) Third creative process: Choose the background colors

1. Preparation: What color/s better reflect the overall process of emergence?
2. Incubation: I glance across the color tubes in my studio without thinking but waiting for the click to happen
3. Illumination: white, yellow, gold clicked in me
4. Verification: “Yes. It’s a transformation of colors from separateness (white) to togetherness (heated yellow) to flourishing (gold)!”

A succession of multiple similar sub-processes take place as I let the content of the experience unfold within me and express it on the canvas. For the purpose of this capstone, I will focus on additional two challenging moments to provide examples of the importance of each step of the process.

Challenge 1: represent the interaction among individuals (middle body of the painting)

1. Preparation: I chose to use ribbons to represent the “unfolding” of individual paths in the formation of the group but I was challenged to represent the interaction, the interrelations, the mixing and combining of the member – a sort of mixing without melting dynamic.
2. Incubation: braiding!
3. Illumination: Yes! It represents the individuals paths in the collective interaction.
4. Verification: “No, it does not work”. As I started to interweave the various ribbons the outcome was a thick, tight, structured, restrictive, and narrow braid. It’s visual representation was way off from the experience that was resonating in me.

Reprocess of the creative cycle: back to prior step

1. Preparation: Ribbons felt the right material but the braiding was not the right setting. It had to be a layout that showed interconnection and some structure but without losing the individual freedom of the ribbons (people).

2. Incubation: I stopped working on it for a while (maybe a day or two) until I went back to it. I let it mature in me without forcing a solution. The question had already been posed: what layout could show interconnection, structure and freedom at the same time.

   A net! Came to mind.

3. Illumination: “Yes! I can show structure, interaction without losing the individual path”

4. Verification: “Yes! It works!” I confirmed as I put hands on it.

Challenge 2: transition from the middle body (the mingling) to the upper part of the painting (the experience of being a group)

1. Preparation: Ribbons don’t work anymore and there is the need to show a transformation into a different material and shape. The members keep their
individuality (top end of the ribbons) but the collective is a transformed version of them. The question is how to represent that.

2. Incubation: I did not know how to continue. I let it mature for a couple of days. I went back to look at the unfinished painting and glance at the materials in my art studio several times waiting for the inspiration to emerge.

“Expansion!”

3. Illumination: “Yes! I need to signal expansion before I can know what goes on top”

4. Verification: I drew the V shape with a pencil on the canvas. It felt in the right direction.

I continued the creative process that led me to display the wood sticks in blue and pink on the sides of the ribbons and forming the V on top. After, I went back to the questions of representing the transformation of the middle section.

I learn all along the process. There are two layers of learning in each of these creative experiences:

- Learning as an artist: this is a never-ending process that builds on my past creative experiences. As I keep engaging in artistic expression I become more familiar with materials, colors and textures and their wide variety of uses, and I expand the array of possibilities for my expression work. I am also more at ease with trusting the inner voice of inspiration and become patient in waiting for its right time. I loosen the need to control the process and I trust it. I grow my self-confidence as an artist.
Appendix A shows my evolution as an artist using a few paintings.

The reader can easily assess how my capacity to express has grown in complexity, richness and sophistication through time and practice. The succession of paintings also helps depict the spiral shape of the experiential learning. This evolution takes place by engaging in the creative process described before throughout the years. In it, the reflective phase is key for learning and growing in my artistic skills.

- Learning about the experience itself - group dynamic in this case: the intimate relationship between the experience and its expression is the driver of the process. The verification stage helps keep me in touch with it at most of the time or helps me re-direct the process when I lose track. To me this means that my representation of the experience contains the characteristics of it. Fine tuning colors, size, layout, etc. speak of the qualities of the experience. For instance, my challenge in representing the central body of the painting speaks of a confrontation between 1) a tight, structured, restrictive, and narrow representation that did not feel the right, and 2) a reality of structure and interaction without losing the individual path that felt right. It is the creative process that feeds my understanding of the experience and not the other way around.

After the artwork is finished, I become the beholder and the reflective process continues. I will expand on this in chapter 4.

There is also the meta level of the experiential learning process involved: my constant monitoring that I am following the steps in the right way. Special attention goes
to the incubation and illumination stage to make sure that I am honoring my inner time and fashion and that I do not move to a mind-level of control with ideas, desired outcomes, expectations of beauty, etc. This is very important because at that level there is no creativity and my process fails.

In the next section, I present the rest of the nine paintings that I created during the OCEC Cohort V program together with some high level description of the process. My intention is that the reader can grasp the sense of experience, creative expression process and learning coming together in each artwork.
This artwork depicts the beauty and energy ignited by the experience of inclusion in the cohort.

There are 13 large gems representing each individual of the group. They are organized around the center of the group's dynamic - a class discussion characterized by openness, acceptance, and learning.

Nurturing relationships create a strong current that invites individuals to unfold more and more of themselves. Like a magnet, healthy, emerging groups attract diversity - a diversity of shapes, sizes and colors - and creates a fertile environment for transformation in both the individual and the group.
This painting was inspired by the team's presentations during DYNM 722. While each team was presenting the researched topic, there was a general sense of fun and enjoyment. And, as in most joyful social encounters, the group and its members were building trust.

The artwork displays 13 large gems representing the students and the professor laid out in an evolving shape. A flow of energy emerges from inside out - from its center to the open ending and beyond.

Like trust, this flow of energy expands beyond the group and transforms the environment it touches.
This artwork was inspired by a class check-in one Sunday morning. Three members of the group raised some personal reactions to the group dynamic, initiating a cohort discussion of individuals and our process. It was an experience of managing conflict.

The artwork shows 13 circles, representing the 13 people around the table. While each of them is wired back in a different way – a different color, shape or size - certain features are shared in common between some individuals - a color, a shape, or a pattern.

The floating parts moving around at the very edge are the threads represent the positive and negative realities that interweave individuals, at a conscious or unconscious level. Yet, people are able to put the best of themselves on the table to get organized around a common goal.

That process of helping people shift from their wired self to a forward looking, goal directed self- organizes the chaos and is the essence of the coach and consultant's job.
The dynamic of the group has shifted, triggered by a competition project. The cohort was divided into three groups and was assigned a consulting project.

During the final presentations in the class, the groups organized around the professor, who was to evaluate each proposal, grade them and choose the best one. The professor, represented by the larger sphere, then became the center of gravity of the class dynamic.

Although the assignment was the same, each subgroup proposed a different approach to the solution. That is reflected in the different colored areas (blue, orange, pink). There are lines of connection reflecting the teams bonding between professor and teams, but noticeably lacking are the connections among the small teams.

Each individual is also wired back with his or her reality, but this time the colors are aligned with the team as a result of coming together with a shared perspective and solution.
This artwork was inspired by the individual presentations of our personal coaching philosophies during DYNM 724. The classroom was filled with social riches, as each individual presented their vision of service and leadership.

The professor, in the central role, took the place of a nurturing mother, encouraging us step by step, hand-holding when needed, to become confident, independent coaches.

The background displays some blurry images of the group members and represents the unconscious world of thoughts and emotions that were present in the class. Altogether, background and top, represent the collective humanity.
This artwork includes 15 ribbon circles representing 12 students and 3 professors of Cohort V.

The internal circle represents the colors of each person in segments. That is what each person sees.

The external circle around the group shows the complexity of unconscious forces that are emerging in and around the group. It represents the complex ideas and emotions that are reverberating within many group members but have yet taken shape or been expressed as a group presence and identity.
This painting was created by the cohort during a time of collective creativity. The only assignment was to express with color, shape, and size the feelings and emotions that were part of the cohort.

Each member of the group contributed to a piece of the whole with complete freedom of shape, color, size and location.

Taking into account that what is represented is each person's experience, the painting represents a portrait of the group.
This artwork was inspired by the last cohort weekend and intends to be a synthesis of the dynamic of the program - the progression of meetings.

From left to right, there are individual paths the move towards a group encounter. Each weekend together produced a storm of ideas, wisdom and curiosity that transformed each person as well as the group.

After each encounter, individually and collectively, the cohort was more refined and focused. The following weekend would bring another storm experience and more transformation would take place.

The transformation of materials and colors from left to right intend to represent that evolution.
Like in the cosmos,
we are individuals, part of the whole.
We exist in collectiveness.
Our colors dye everything they touch and expand beyond our control.
Our jobs as coaches and consultants is to help people chose the colors they want to transmit to others and the ones they want to embrace from others.
CHAPTER 4

THE BEHOLDER EXPERIENCE

It is my belief that experiencing art is a learning process, either as an artist creating artwork or as an observer. In chapter three, I explore that process from the perspective of the artist. I build on Kolb (2009)'s ELT model and Wallace's creative process (as cited in Sadler-Smith, 2015) to propose the experiential learning model of creative processes.

In this chapter, I focus on the art experience from the perspective of the observer. I use the findings of a qualitative research to illustrate and support the experiential learning model in encountering and experiencing art as a beholder. I also support the findings with information from my own experience as a beholder. Additionally, I bring forward the experience of sharing my artwork with the cohort during the class period.

Unintentionally, this research work started in 2015 together with the cohort classes. As I discover during this research, the control group was impacted by the paintings I was creating and sharing with them every class weekend. The research allows to understand the impact of the artwork originally as well as now, a year after the last weekend of class.

Research methodology

The research was designed to provide information regarding:

- The impact in the beholder of experiencing art
  - How does the beholder react to it? Can she or he connect with the art?
- Can the beholder connect to her or his past experiences through art?
- Can the beholder experience learning through art?
- Art as an enhancement of experiential learning
  - In what ways art facilitates learning?
  - What is art adding to the reflective process?

The research questions and methodology were designed based on the experiential learning theory. The interviews were intended to walk the interviewee through an experiential learning process, in line with the model described in Figure 7 and following the steps described below:

1. Concrete experience: encounter with the art and selection of paintings based on personal appeal. Each person was asked to select three paintings out of the total ten images provided.

2. Reflective observation: interviewees were asked to describe their personal reaction to the art - what made them chose it, and what feelings and emotions were awaken by looking at the painting.

3. Abstract conceptualization: interviewees reflected on how the art connected to the cohort experience.

4. Active experimentation: interviewees drew on the experience of encountering and reflecting on both, art and cohort experience: what was new and what they learned from it.
The control group

The control group was made of all of the OCEC cohort V students and professors: a total of eleven students and three professors. None of the participants had a formal art background or had developed particular artistic skills. All of them knew me, the artist, because I was part of cohort V. All fourteen people had seen most of the paintings before and heard from me the story behind them. They are familiar with the fact that my artwork tells stories of the experience of the cohort. Additionally, people are aware that all and each of them are part of the representations in my artwork.

Except for a couple of individual situations, I had not discussed the paintings outside the classroom environment and I had not held any conversation about my paintings with any OCEC members since the last weekend we met in school in April 2017.

Only three people had seen one or two of my artworks in original before the interview and only one person had the chance to see seven of them in original during the interview process.

Design: one hour guided interview

The interview was designed to coach the interviewee through an experiential learning process. The images of all ten paintings created during the cohort classes were provided ahead of time. Each person was requested to choose three paintings for the interview – the three painting that resonated the most with them or felt most attracted to.
The experiential learning process was repeated for each selected painting. Once concluded, each person was asked to take a glance at all the paintings together and reflect on the collective portfolio. Additionally, they were asked to reflect on how art was helping the reflection process.

The interviews were held by phone, Skype or personally, according to geographic possibilities. Appendix B provides a detail of the interview questions and process.

A detailed review of the interview process

In this section, I report the findings of the interviews in a detailed way. I do so following the four stages of the experiential learning process which mimic the interview process too. In this way, the experiential learning process can be validated.

1) First stage: concrete experience

Each person was asked to choose three paintings, the ones that resonated the most with them or they feel attracted to. The selection of painting is displayed in table 1 below. Additionally, every person was invited to look at all ten artworks and reflect on the collective work.

The understanding of the cause of the similar selection by 50% of the group, like in the case of the two paintings selected the most, is beyond the scope of this research project. However, it seems important to have a better understanding of it to leverage in further applications of the experiential learning in the classroom.
Table 1- Painting selection by the control group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Painting</th>
<th># Selected</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The power of enjoying together</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective consciousness II</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective consciousness</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized chaos</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The power of inclusion</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On becoming a group</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort Portrait</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort Portrait II</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The battlefield</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The power of togetherness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) Second stage: reflective observation

In this stage, people elaborate on the reasons of their selection. The main drivers of the selection can be categorized into four categories: a) visual appeal, b) emotions triggered by the artwork, c) connection with the painting, and d) awakening of past experiences. I add some of people's reactions to illustrate the reflective process. In some cases it is difficult to do a clear cut of what is the main driver so I use my judgment of what was the intention of the person when talking during the interview.

a. Visual appeal: a more instinctive reaction to the visual representation – a thoughtless experience away from analytical faculties and more attuned to color, textures and shapes (Dissanayake, 2002).

“Love the colors! It's vibrant.”

“It is very visually appealing to me”

“It's beautiful, cheerful, fun, relaxed and calm”
“It is pleasing to the eye”

“It's pretty”

“Appeals to me so much energy, cool colors. I really like the different sizes, colors, so much similarity but all different at the same time”

“I like the coloring. I am color blind but I see the different tones”

“I love the color pallet. I love the way there are various levels of color that come out and withdraw in the painting”

“I love the colors and combination of colors. I love the purple blue color. I felt alive when I saw that”

b. Emotions triggered: in all cases, a positive state of being awoken by the artwork - an aesthetic experience for Dewey (2005); the pleasing aspects of art experiences described by Dissanayake (1995).

“I like that it makes me feel good. It's very stimulating”

“So much going on with this piece. So many parts to look at and create a story with”

“It is energizing because of a little chaos but it also has some symmetry and order”

“I feel a sense of lightness, joy, calmness and purposeful chaos”

“The color, the yellow is happiness to me and the fact that it is a circular path seems like stones in a garden... This painting is very peaceful. The
chaos has been put aside. The sides look like laughter. There is the swirl, very open, even the curl coming in feels distributive and open”

“There is a sense of earthiness, a connection to nature with the feathers, the pearls and the stones; and the hearts are the essence”

“I followed my instinctive reaction. The three of them, for all, I had some sort of feeling to them and at the same time I saw some static theme”

“Makes me happy, playful immersion all together; there is a kind of mixing up and a sense of play. I see so much play, like school kids falling over each other, coming together to do something and then out again”

c. Connection with the painting: a sort of dialogue between beholder and artwork is triggered. The person is attracted or drawn towards the content of the art, like a magnetic force and feels the need to understand it. This is what Dewey (2005) and Kreitler and Kreitler (as mentioned in Shimamura, 2015) refer to in their theory of art experience as a dynamic of tension and relief and the need to bring unity and restore balance within the person by understanding these forces.

“This one caused me to stop and think the most. Confusion. I kept looking at it and asking what made me chose this over the other ones. There is something about it. Maybe the colors call my imagination. Calls me to stop and look at it”

“I am intrigued by the colors and spaces”
"It felt like it was alive. I can look at it and image all of this moving. It has fluidity. First looking at it as a whole and then focusing on individual pieces. Noticing patterns, uniqueness…”

"I am attracted to the wave-like movement. It reminds me of the beach, sea shells and waves. It makes me smile”

"The picture represents what I’ve been reading lately about effective groups”

"[This painting] has been a part of my life since you first shared it. It’s been my screensaver. I look at it so many times and each time I think something different”

"It makes me smile. When the pieces are flowing to the outside, I see us stepping out of our lines, the new careers, the unknown, we are heading out there, out of the circle and we know we can enter it again at any time. It expresses a confidence and it feels there is individual growth, social growth and relationship and social structure that is not going away”

"A feeling of togetherness, acceptance, and collective; separate hearts but in a collection. I felt happy when I saw that, encouraged that I was part of this group and that I did that. It makes me happy to see that”

"I love the medium, the feather themselves. The materials draw me in”

"I feel attracted to it. The colors let kind of see through the coolness and the warmth, the combination of the deep blue, and the pinks, the shapes”
“This image was so impactful for me. I still have powerful reaction to this picture. I don’t know exactly what it is but is so impactful, it might be the use of colors, the yellow, the sun, the reference to inclusion...”

d. Connecting with past experiences: remembering events linked to the artwork or to the beholder's internal world - what Shimamura (2015) defines for art as thinking with feelings – what we see and feel is influenced by prior knowledge and past experiences.

“Seeing the painting reminded me the experience of all of us painting together”

“I remember what I painted and remember doing it all together and having fun. We had this journey together. We became used to seeing your paintings but as passive players. Here we were active players”

“I still remember when you first revealed the art. I remember when you shared with us the piece in the context of what we were going through”

“It reminds me of a chess game”

“Every time I look at it, it makes me think of us in the classroom, sitting around the table with sort of a progression from beginning to end, every weekend: we all sit down, all the stuff that is going on the behind the big balls but at the time we sit down we focus on each other, becoming a smaller tighter group, and then to the center, we almost become one”

“It makes me think of us”
“It expresses where I am at in my life now: being authentic, sharing from the heart, vulnerable – I am working on it. When I saw that [painting], I thought this says it all”

“It reminds me of Van Gogh's starry night: circles, different colors. It feels darker than the other one. It’s all circles, colors are same as the other but they are in a deep dive and understanding of the darker side or the disconnect. In the coaching experience, it is important to be able to talk about something that is trouble and coming out of it and not staying in this dark place”

“I love this, it reminds me of the Fibonacci spiral, a mathematical theory of formation and symmetry”... “To me that one day felt chaotic yet everybody did a great job. In spite of all the chaos the group came together in a way that supported one another and the group. That evening we had fun”

“For me this is movement. This remind me of the chair yoga, the yoga movement, class room movement in the learning space, going from one journey to another, understanding who we are, people, self awareness, becoming more self aware, evolving, creating a new self, opening up, growing. I remember I was changing, learning different things, becoming a new person, gaining real time knowledge”

“It brings me back to the sense of closeness and trust, vulnerability”
What is most important of this stage is that the beholder reacts to the artwork in a positive or negative way. The reaction means that the artwork has reached the person and there is a point of contact. Feeling or emotions emerge. This represents the aesthetic nature of art that Dewey (2005) refers to. At this point, art has become an experience. Without it, there cannot be learning.

For me, this stage is very important because it sets the tone of my reflective process as a beholder. What calls my attention today is what is bursting to come out in me, today. It is the equivalent to the “Aha” moment as an artist. It is a point of connection between my conscious and unconscious self. Sometimes the content is not ready to fully unfold but it posses the internal question: “It attracts me. I don't know why but it invites me to stop and think”. It calls for some time of contemplation and silence until some more concrete ideas start to emerge.

I can see the same painting many times and each time the reaction is different because it depends on who I am at that point, how I feel and what is going on in me at that time. What is in my mind, consciously or unconsciously is a main driver. It might happen that I am observing myself in some attitude or way of functioning or working on some specific skill and that personal work that I've been thinking over and over resonates with the artwork in some fashion and a new content shows up. There is a new clarity, a new realization, a new understanding.

Sometimes I look for a painting to reconnect to a part of me that I am missing. Normally, it is something that brings me joy, cheers me up or brings back the beauty of life. I do that to balance something else that is going on in my life and is taking over and
shadowing my conscious world. It is a way to re-center myself into a more holistic experience rather than an temporarily emotionally bias me. Like some people reflected during the interview, artwork reconnects me with specific experiences or moments of life and the feelings of that experience.

This part of the research interview helps answer the first two questions of the research's goal. The beholder can experience art, react to the artwork and connect with it. Some of the answers collected also convey the understanding that the beholder can find connections to her or his past experiences through art. This last part is further explored in the next stage.

3) Third Stage: abstract conceptualization

All participants were able to associate the expression in the artwork with the OCEC cohort experience. For each of them the association is different in many cases but there are some common threads. These common themes are a) the diverse nature of the cohort, b) the experience of coming together as a group while keeping individuality, c) an experience of learning and growth, d) group dynamics, a sense of a journey, and e) new reflections about self or the group dynamic.

At this point, the reflection is not about the painting anymore but about the cohort and personal experience. The artwork is just the vehicle to reflect on them.

Below are more granular content of the common themes the group reflected on. I take the opportunity to draw parallels between the group experience and the art experience. Further understanding of correlations between both is beyond the scope of
this analysis but it could provide clarity on better uses of art in the experiential learning arena.

a) Diversity

The concept of diversity was mentioned by people triggered by the diversity in the materials used in the artworks. I use mixed media which means a diversity of materials. But there is also a broad array of colors, shapes, and sizes that also bring forward the image of diversity. Align with that is art’s quality to cultivate skills that help deal with diversity, among other things: increase adaptability, deal with ambiguity and uncertainty (Dissanayake, 2002), and build empathy (Shimamura, 2015).

“Like in the cohort, each of us brings their unique contribution and we all took a little bit of that”

“It takes me back to the connective-ness of the cohort. The cohort had a lot of depth individually and collectively. It was a beautiful mélange of different people and their contributions”

“On an intellectual level, what I know about cohorts: group of individuals that form a strong one. [I see] the individuality of the cohort, the sense of layering, experiencing on many different levels, on an intellectual level, visual, kinesthetic, sometimes a clueless level. I see a strong progression of group dynamics and the fact that there are so many colors, material, stones, feathers, ribbons, different textures is again the diversity of the group”
b) Coming together as a group respecting individuality.

For Cuco (2014) respect for diversity and individuality is one of the purposes of art in adult education – through art we learn about others’ ideals, aspirations and behavior which facilitates communication and solidarity.

“It absolutely amazing memories of the journey together and personal growth. We all started as seeds under the surface, protected, but we grew together full of color, getting to know each other, coming out of our comfort zone. Growth is a journey and it is showed visually”

“We all had different experience but came together. There are a lot of people and energy moving to the center. A drop of water blends but here, each person retains the individuality”

“We are separate and individuals but we are collective too. It resonates with Gestalt – the sum of the parts is different than the whole”

“The cohort is also a group of individuals coming together like the ribbons, like us, each of us is different. One doesn’t shadow the other. They blend but the uniqueness stays”

“It reflects what we went through. Who we were at the end was very different from how we came out of it”

“Each ribbon in the middle is unique but they all come together for a purpose. The product of the team is stunning and beautiful”
“There is all this chaos and there is the blue field and it has the cohort people in it, this representation of being their good selves. They are bringing themselves to the table and behaving but in the back is the reality of what is going on in their emotional psychological world. Each person is bringing the chaos that exists in all of them. I like that. Here we have all these complex individuals with all their colors, ideas, feelings, expectations, but they need to have clarity too and in order to have clarity they have to decide what part of them they are going to bring to the table. It’s a struggle for everyone but I see it in the cohort. The cohort mentally walked away from everything that happened in their mind and they come with their dedicated and clear mind to the group”

“A feeling of cohesiveness. Different personalities with a lot of individualization and still keeping our identities. But in the collective we come all with our strengths. A visualization for being all together in the same place”

c) An experience of learning and growth.

Increased and refined perception is one of the benefits of art. This process starts with a sharpening of aesthetic sensitivity (color, sounds, etc.) but it opens the appetite for deeper human personality and complexity (Cuco, 2014). This perception is then a source of learning and growth.
“So many layers in the painting, so many layers to every personality. Part of the experience was peeling off those layers and learning about others”

“The visual appeal of the art represents the intellectual appeal of the cohort”

“It was a great experience. I took a bit from everyone. I have more confidence. I am a better person because of it”

“We, as students, at the center and the professors in the periphery, the larger circles. I felt that way: we were students and professors took care of us. It’s a safe, calm, soothing environment”

“I have this feeling that we all individually and as a group evolved. In terms of our own persons, in terms of relationship with people, as a group and how that has impacted our lives outside of our groups”

“The collective is the most of the experience. There is a lot of self learning but it was prompted by the environment. The mind was an enabler but the collective enables self searching. The beauty overall makes me think of the beauty of the experience. You can take a look and, distance and feel like floating there. There were times when you could seat back and think of the ideas and what everybody was bringing in”

“A dynamic experience, powerful, vibrant, new, authentic, organic, free, non-complacent, no control, leader, friends, love, chaos, still things are
missing (that I’m still discovering), unfulfilled. I grew a lot, the paintings bring me back to that”

“The new insight is how powerful and important the experience was for me”

d) Group dynamics

All artworks reflect group dynamics because they are all describing experiences as a group and not as an individual. There is a parallel between the complexity of the group dynamic and the complexity of the art experience. As Zeki (as mentioned in Lauring, 2014) describes, experiencing art is a brain phenomenon where neurons interact dynamically interconnecting various regions of our brain. Experiencing group dynamic requires the same complexity of dynamism and interconnection between the individuals and within the individuals.

“There is a grounding there. The spirals in the center add an intensity on the center. When I think of the cohort in the room I think that there was flowing and a structure but it’s the members who bring the shape to it. There is a magnetic force that brings it all together but impacting each individual differently. Looking at it all I remember what was the collective like: energy, people, individuals and my own experience”

“So much freedom in the painting and in reality”
“The ribbons work as a team, they interweave with one another. Like in the cohort, we all worked together. We didn’t know each other but we all had one goal. We interwove and helped each other. We all have different personalities; different learning styles but we were all there for the other ones. Everybody put in something – their uniqueness – and everybody took something out. In order for you to complete the painting, you needed each ribbon, every piece of it. It’s the same for the cohort. We needed every piece of each of us”

“I see some people are closer than others and that some people pick up on the idea of being together and some others tend to stay on the fringes. I see that in this painting. Some are much more in it and others less so. What is interesting to me is all this is going on in the cohort and in the painting. The people more in and the people more out, the faculty is there too. What I see now is specially the certain consciousness melting and I think that for some people in the cohort was really like that but not for all or them”

“All the ribbons out there unorganized, rolling up together. I can be in that space but also going back to the mingle with others. That’s how people think, bring their ideas. It gets identified through the discussion. The center is the very conscious place, the consciousness of what you know and there is the unconsciousness of what you know. You know it but you have not organized it, put a title to it, it’s not fully conscious”
“When I look at this, I see how much communication is going on among students, how much that amplifies, changes, and illuminates them”

“the macro experience, the sense of being together as a group yet not in a comforting way. People’s individual quality and characteristics showed through, yet there is cohesiveness. I felt that each of us was represented by multiple pieces. That’s the thought that stroke me when I looked at it this morning. It shows a collective entity represented by individual characteristics but at the same time the experience of cohort”

“Reminds me the whole concept of groups dynamics: presence, authenticity, conflict, and empathy. These paintings to me represent group dynamics. Some people think of it as forming, norming, performing, etc…and think it’s very linear and is not, I think it goes back and forth. I see that in this paintings. I see group dynamics. All the use of colors. Some of them are more serene, some represent the learning process, the dynamic of the group, how they come in as individuals and maybe suspend the individuality into the group”

e) A sense of journey

As a creative process, art is also a journey. And “encounters with art have the power to “create occasions for the new beginnings” (Gulla, 2018).

“I see a journey, an amazing story”
“There were ups and downs. We all got through it. Relationship is a process like your paintings – it took time for you to create them”

“I see there were stages in the cohort, events, coming together as a group. I see an enormous amount of emotion of the cohort in all these paintings. It’s a story that you put together. They hung together so you could sort of see them all together and this would be a group of paintings that have a story and would have a narrative and that would be our experience of the cohort without having to put it in words. The narrative would be there. You can look at them and you have this unconscious story of what the cohort was, not verbally expressed story”

“I was left with the sense of a journey. The overall shape of that unfolding spiral. I saw this from a couple of perspectives: as you move from center to outer you see the pallet of pieces transforming and start to overlap and a blending. That was indicative of a journey, our journey. We are learning, we are gathering new perspectives, diversity of experiences individually. The background also has mixes of dark and indicative that it wasn’t the smoothest journey”

“The journey. They are so different. It’s not just one single experience. Every time we come together and we reflect, something different comes out. Different meaning. Changing. We can make so many different reflections and different experience even with the same people”
f) New reflections about self or about the group dynamic.

Atkinson (2017) talks about the force of arts that pushes us to go beyond the established knowledge and challenges us to think moving into a new, more expanded space of ourselves. Greene (as mentioned in Gulla, 2018) also recognizes that through art, one learns to know oneself.

“Makes me think about the abstract of our consciousness, what is underlying? What are we thinking about? What are all those layers?”

“I see ton of movement. Many circular – soft edges. It makes me ask myself when did I bring my soft edges and my hard edges to the cohort? I see so many colors. It makes me wonder what colors or energy I brought to the room? It makes me aware of how the individual impacts the whole”

“It tells me that an experience can be interpreted in so many different ways. There is no limit to how an experience can be interpreted or expressed”

“The paintings remind me of the complicated nature of being human and how everybody is having an experience that they can’t necessarily share. You were able to express it in way but not everybody can do that through art. It gives me a sense of realization; that we know nothing about others' experiences, so little and yet we think we know. We need to open our hearts and eyes to this... We need to find ways to help people find that outlet. Give people ways to being able to express. It makes me stop and step back and look at people wherever I am; we are all human, the human
experience is in the paintings. We are biased and we forget we are humans. Then you stop and let it in, you let it be, you (as an artist) are the mirror for others' experiences and then [others] are able to see it and articulate the experience. It gives me curiosity and empathy and wanting to know people more”

The connections that people make between the artwork and the cohort experience are varied and, in many cases, different from what I was representing when I made them. That is not important. The purpose of my expression is the art helps people connect with themselves, with some experience and awake them to their internal world. In this sense, the answers collected in this stage help confirm that the beholder can find connections to her or his past experiences through the artwork.

I was mesmerized by how accessible the liaisons between the art image and the cohort experience was to everyone. This is eye opening to me, as an artist. Many times during the classes, while I was sharing my paintings with the group and giving the background of it, I was left with the impression that people could not relate to what I was saying or to the artwork. This exercise proved me completely wrong which makes me happy and encourages me to keep going.

I enjoyed listening to all the reflections about the collective experience. I was left with a sense of high appreciation of the collective, the uniqueness of each of the members of the group, and learning and growth. Somehow, the art moved people to a very positive
place of reflection. It can be because my art is focused on the positive experience but it also speaks of an overall powerful experience. I will go back to this in stage four.

As a beholder, I experience two parallel learning paths, similar to the experience as an artist: learning about the process as an artist and learning about the experience. As I keep reflecting on the images and the content they bring to me, I become more confident on my process of creative expression - choosing materials, colors, layers, etc. As I reflect on the images, I not only grow and learn about me and the experience but also I learn to read the artwork in a richer way.

The images are always alive. They keep unfolding content to me no matter how many times I look at them. This leaves room for further research with the same control group. New iterations of the process would likely bring new layers of consciousness to the group.

The above brings me to the importance of time as a variable of reflection. As time passes and people are less personally engrained with events and the group, a more holistic appreciation of the experience can take place. With the help of the artwork as a tool to reconnect with the experience, people could keep building on the cohort experience and have a richer appreciation of it. This learning could also benefit members of new incoming cohorts.

Bringing some of the theory from the literature review to the reflections and observations of the cohort experience makes me aware of how the skills involved in experiencing art are common to experiencing our humanity: the “art of living”, “art of communication”, “art of dealing with people”, “art of leadership”, etc. This leaves room
to further research in possible ways that art can enhance the learning of dealing with people, communication, leadership, etc.

4) Fourth stage: active experimentation

In this stage, people reflected specifically on how art was helping them reflect or learn as well as what were their take-away from this exercise which used art to enhance the reflection. This is the outcome of the process that they can take for further development or enhancement of their life experiences. For Kolb (2009), this phase is for testing, adjusting behavior or planning a new course of action. For Wallace (as cited in Sadler-Smith, 2015), this is the verification stage – a time to further reflect upon the inspiration, arrange, express and test it.

In this particular research exercise, the control group was invited to take a step back and reflect on the experience of reflecting on the cohort using art. The answers were of four types: a) art as an enhancement of the reflection and learning process, b) realizations and take-aways for life experience, c) the impact of art in their lives beyond the class, and d) bringing art into the cohort experience. Following are some details and examples of each of them.

a) Art as an enhancement of the reflection and learning process: people commented on art adding new layers of information, bringing new, different points of view, new memories and information for reflection, allowing for a more holistic reflection, and allowing connection to self.
“It adds a layer to the experience. It's two different layers to it. I can look at the different parts and feel different depending on how I look at it”

“It forces me to look from distance because it's hard to digest it all. Every weekend was different. Getting home and reflecting about what happened. There was a lot of reflection to do so you had to take distance to gain perspective. I get the feeling I am more an observer. It reminds me of my reflection process”

“It brings me back to take a break and feel the experience. This is very valuable”

“It brings me back to that experience but it is different now; it's more self-reflective. When I was sharing them before, it was more about other things. Now it's more self-reflective”

“New memories come up. The art helps reflect on them. It also produces new reflections or understanding of a recent experience I had”

“The paintings help remember the experience”

“The painting helps reflect on the experience, remember it and have a different interpretation than at that time. It is different than thinking just on my memories.

The visual offers an image. In my mind I replay a scene of what occurred. Instead, this is a new visual with different information. It forces me to think about an event in a new way with a new reasoning. It is like having a photo book that I can go back and look at it with a new framework. At first you may not understand but then you let it come forth, thoughts emerge. It's neat to see where something takes
you... It's activating something in my mind. Thoughts, ideas, pictures, concepts... like the concept of transformation”

“The painting adds the fact that is a representation in a certain way of the cohort; a graphic way of feeling the cohort. As opposed of thinking in a removed kind of way. So the expression of the painting give the feeling of the cohort but it’s almost inexpressible as opposed of something that is empirical. It adds a short hand way of experiencing in my mind what the cohort was. When you see an image like this I can recall them and bring them to my mind and that will be the image instead of seeing you as individuals and voices. A way to represent people in a different way”

“The paintings make a whole out of what a bunch of desperate experiences and historically I have these paintings in my head and it becomes a cohort in a holistic way as opposed of a series of events that happened in real time. The paintings take it to a different level, space, quantum leap to a different way of thinking or experiencing the cohort; experience in images and colors instead of events that happened, very prosaic. This is a different level, more emotional, more psychological and more about the group as opposed to the individuals at the group”

“When I look at the paintings, I don’t know if they trigger a new thought or solidify a thought that I might have had or bring forth a thought that I might had in my recess, it brings forth to the front of my mind and imprints a memory that becomes much harder to forget. Probably a new thought of something that I had
not thought it in that way. It also builds on a smaller thought and makes it more structured, well thought out”

“It makes me think at it different now. For the most part, am looking at the people and I am seeing a lot of hearts”

“I live in my head and sometimes it's hard for me to talk about emotions. To go through this and you asking me questions and having the discussion around it was meaningful because it drew me out of my head, it made me go through the feelings. This is good timing for a pause and reflection, listen to a creative side of my brain. To take a pause this morning and look at this and reflect was very good. Another way to connect”

“This image brings the experience that we shared. It puts me back into the classroom. It makes me get that feeling again. Thing’s I forgot. When I see this I do see the cohort and remember. It might change my thought moment. It brings me to the good part of the experience because of the colors: they are bright, they are soft, heart, curves, the perfection of some of them, the imperfection of some of other. All of them make a good experience”

“As you think back of an experience, there are one, two or three reactions or memories that come. The rest is stored in the back of the memory. This painting is remembering a number of different emotions that I had to the experience. It reminds me of the journey. It’s not just what I remembered. It was a lot.

It personally encourages me to a more holistic experience than what I chose to remember”
“The painting is adding to the initial feeling. When I reflect on it, reminds me of the hopefulness and excitement of a new experience. I don’t think it’s the same without the painting. Because I associate to that beginning also a lot of uncertainty and anxiety of not knowing anybody, a general sense of unknown. The painting makes me have more positive reflection. I recall experiences that are not necessarily the same, I remember feeling very nervous and positive about it”

“I think image was so impactful for me when you presented it... but now... I still have powerful reaction to this picture. I don’t know exactly what it is but is so impactful, it might be the use of colors, the yellow, the sun, the reference to inclusion. I was intimidated because of everybody’s experience and brightness. I was struck by being truly accepted and it was very powerful. Probably I was so impacted by the painting because I had so extreme feelings - both ends – excitement and anxiety. This is like a visual representation of how I feel. So seeing that all that can be put in a painting is very impactful. The art puts how I feel together”

b) New realizations, awareness and calls for action: some people were reminded of the power of reflection and felt the invited to bring that back to there current life.

“It reminds me that we have to self-reflect. We will not have a professor or a cohort to challenge us every day. Going forward I want to continue growing. I am never done. Penn is far away. This exercised reminded me to reflect on the power of the cohort; feel grateful for having had that experience. It was a huge growth”
“The painting is a very calming presence. I should hang this picture in my office... Looking at the painting would help me look at the cohort in a way that I should be thinking about, I should trust the process... The chaos is ok. Maybe what I should be learning about this painting is trust the process. It’s a cohort learning for the students but I don’t apply it to myself.... The painting is giving me a new perspective. I never thought about it in that way before. It’s ok not to manage too hard because the chaos is part of the beauty. The painting would be empty without the chaos, it would not have the emotions it has from chaos”

“[It gives me] another level of consciousness of the learning process. What makes me think how I try to create a learning experience that will address everybody's needs but also for me it reinforces the power and the need for reflection and learning. I do it with clients and students. You reflected on the experience, the power of your reflection and how it can show in different levels. [It] reinforces the reflection and helps me learning about students and different ways of expression. Maybe art, visuals, maybe connecting learning styles, how do they express them and encourage their way to find expression”

“I don’t think it gives me a new way to look at the experience but a reminder to reflect on the experience. Your practice of working on a paining after coming back from a class, made me think of finding a ritual to stop and think and reflect. When I look at your paintings I can appreciate the huge value of processing, creating and expressing”
“When we understand things we tend to stop. The art enables to keep exploring, to think more about it and for my own self trying to go back to that place where I was then. This makes me think that I was happy then. I allows me to go back to be excited and be with people who take me there. It makes me realize I don’t have those experiences now but it prompts me to bring back those parts of me. It prompts me to self examine. I don’t like the environment I am in but I go there. It makes me disappointed of me”

“This is a pretty cool project. [It] makes more thoughtful. I miss being more thoughtful”

“The painting helps me regain purpose, a need for change, a need to no longer be complacent. It brings me back to that time and I need to start focusing and change my trajectory again. Reminded me how powerful that time was, learning and growing so much and is calling me to do the same now”

c) The impact of the art: for some people, experiencing art during the program transformed them in some way – a new behavior, a new way to experience art.

“I enjoyed the paintings during the class. Without them I would never look at art in the way I look at it now. It gave me a new perspective. When I see abstract art now I think to relate it to my life experience”

“This was fun, I don’t get to think about images much. I never get to talk this way. It’s very interesting, it’s not the easiest way for me to do”
“I have a portfolio that I take to meetings and in one if it pockets I have the insert that you gave us with one of your paintings. It helps me stay connected, and happy”

“[This painting] has been a part of my life since you first shared it. It’s been my screensaver… It has helped remembering and reflecting on the experience. Every time it catches my mind even if for a second helps me reflect on something of our experience. It brings back some type of memory. Is this type of relationship with art new to you? Yeah. I enjoy It because it has a dichotomy, in a way can be pure fun and enjoyment but on the other hand it can cause me to think. On one hand truly emotionally, on other thinking”

“One of the things I always appreciated of this, if you are not artistic like me, is that there is just something mesmerizing to look at something created by someone who does have those skills. It’s a completely different experience because I know you. It refers to you, to that person. There is a sense of wonder by looking at it. I remember you bringing them to the class and explaining what you were doing. How you took the ideas and thoughts and how you found a way to express that. There is an aspect of art as part of education, when you think of that, an enhancement… I think the art added to the cohort experience a completely new way of expressing and interrelating that forced me to learn that there are other ways of thinking and doing. The art brought to the class a completely different dimension of thinking about not just the social and the team experience in the cohort but the educational and reflective experience that came out of that”
“Art gave me connection, openness to new ideas, possibilities, a way of thinking, drive myself out”

d) Experiencing art and creativity in the class. Some people shared on their experience working on the collective painting and on benefits of using art and creativity during the program to facilitate reflection.

“I remember the experience of working all together. We needed something different and energizing. It was collaborative. The group had broken into smaller groups. It started to feel redundant and tired. It brought us together. The timing was perfect”

“That was fun. We all put unique ideas but in the end we came together in a beautiful painting. We came together as a group. It brought everybody together”

“Using art can help us after classes. It would have been neat to do something creative. It would have been beneficial after each weekend to come up with something creative. It could have been a poem, a piece of art, a medium to express ourselves. I think this could actually be incorporated into the program”

This section helps confirm that art enhances the reflective process by adding new layers or textures to the reflection, reconnecting the beholder to past experiences that were forgotten, bringing new information to the conscious of the observer, allowing a
more holistic appreciation of experiences, inspiring and stimulating learning and facilitating connections to theory.

The section also confirms that the focus group learned through the process. The learning was experienced as a new appreciation of the cohort experience, a new way to look at the past, bringing ideas together, and elaboration upon self reflection and calls for changes in ways of living such as being more reflective.

I am quite familiar with the enhancement that art brings to my experiential learning. I have adopted it as a life companion. However, when bringing together the feedback from the control group I feel at awe with its power. It is reassuring. It is confirming my beliefs. But especially, it is calling for action. How can this be brought closer to people's life? How can this be included in learning programs?

Summary

In this chapter, I boarded the journey of the beholder in experiencing art and learning. During one-hour interviews with fourteen members of the focus group, I walked each of them though an experiential learning process that combined both art and their experiences in the OCEC Cohort V.

The research project proved that the beholder can use art as a learning experience when engaging with it in a reflective process. Moreover, art enhances that process by enriching the content of the reflective platform – the person's experience. This also validates the proposed application of ELT model to creative processes (Figure 7) for the
beholder. This model is now validated for both, the artist and the observer, confirming that art experiences are experiential learning processes.

In the next chapter I summarize and refine the model proposal as well as open the door for further actions. Finally, I open the discussion of possible ways to include art experiences in the learning environment.
CHAPTER 5

ART, EXPERIENCE AND LEARNING – ALL TOGETHER

The story behind

This capstone has been a journey of discoveries and realizations that I started back in 2015, in an instinctive way, to digest and reflect on the OCEC cohort V experiences. I have been using creative expressions for years and, because of the experiential aspect of the cohort program, it seemed appropriate to use it as an enhancement of the learning process.

As I created artwork I felt the need to share it with the class. After all, I was expressing the collective experience and everybody (students and professors) in the class was represented there. Moreover, I experienced and increasing awareness that the artwork was completely dependent on the group's members and their dynamic together.

The experience of sharing brought mixed feelings. On one hand, I had the sense of bringing new experiences to the group. On the other hand though, I developed doubts about being able to convey any message to the class with my artwork. However, I continued to express in the canvass and share with the class. After classes were completed, I had a portfolio of nine paintings and one additional piece that was done as a collective exercise during class time.

Looking at the collection of ten artworks was a powerful depiction of the collective journey of the cohort. The art expression became more relevant as time passed and the actual experiences became more remote. They are more than the representation of
a group of people. They are live witnesses of human experiences. Their content is endless and eternal.

This research project is born as a way to unveil the foundation of my empirical process (experience - creative expression – reflection - implementation), and explore its possible universality.

A recap

In chapter one I state my working hypothesis that art enhances experiential learning. This statement is rooted in my own experience of art, as an artist. The literature review in chapter two explores the various connections between art, experience and learning. For over a century, philosophers, psychologists and educational theorists have advocated the power of experiencing art in education. Art stimulates creativity, imagination, and a flexible mind; increases capacity to deal with ambiguity and uncertainty; builds communication, self-expression, judgment and problem-solving skills; refines perception; fosters empathy, respect for diversity and opening to other interpretations. Art is inspiring, facilitates self-directed learning and collaboration. When incorporated in the educational environment, art promotes healthy minds and emotional development, enables individuals to fulfill their potential by opening their horizons and helping students find their voices. In our current fast-pace changing world art seems a key element of people's developments and life long learning.

Rooted on the belief that every human being has the capacity to learn and grow, humanistic psychologists and pedagogists such as John Dewey and Carl Rogers support
that people can learn through intentional reflection on their own experiences. In chapter three I am inspired by Kolb's experiential learning and Wallas’ creative process models to propose a view of art as an experiential learning process. I bring examples from my own experience as an artist to support the model.

In chapter four I use my qualitative research to support my proposal from the perspective of the beholder. Using the ten artworks created during the cohort class period, I interview all eleven students and three professors and walk them through an experiential learning process to understand how art enhances their experiential learning. The data collected helps me support my hypothesis. All fourteen people could connect with the artwork, bring back experiences related to the cohort period and reflect on them. All of them identified ways in which the art offered an enhancement to that reflective process. Additionally, in some cases, that enhancement allowed them to articulate take-aways to improve their current life.

In summary, this capstone work proves the validity of the initial hypothesis: art enhances experiential learning. Moreover, it supports my proposal that experiencing art is an experiential learning process. In the next section I summarize my proposal of the experiential learning through art model.

The Experiential Learning through Art Model (ELAM)

The proposed model is a four-stage process (Figure 18) that is valid for experiencing art either as an artist or an observer of art. It is essentially a process of
reflection initiated by an experience that resonates with the artist inspiring and expression of it or by the encounter with art by the beholder.

1. Aesthetic experience: an experience that awakes emotions or sensations in the artist or the observer of art. The experience is attractive - awakes interesting feelings and curiosity for further exploration.

2. Inspiration: A question is posed within the person and a call for understanding arises (Why do I like it? What does this mean?, etc.). Then the person awaits the internal answer to it. It is a conscious – unconscious dialogue. The tip of a thread emerges and the person starts pulling it to understand its content.

3. Elaboration: As the understanding of the emotions or sensations develop, the person can associate them to existing experiences or situations, in the case of the
beholder of art, or to specific materials, colors, shapes, textures, etc. in the case of the artist.

This is a process that continues until its content is exhausted. Only the person experiencing it can know when it is concluded. In Dewey (2005)'s terms, an experience is a complete process and it is determined by the cadence of its energy.

4. Expression and conclusion: the elaboration process brings a new understanding to the artist or beholder. It can be a new awareness, a new point of view, a call for action, new information about her or his own aesthetic profile, etc. This knowledge is incorporated into the person's foundation to draw on in future aesthetic and/or life experiences.

This new understanding can be a two path journey: self-discovery and a path to understand arts. This is what I describe about my experience as an artist in chapter three.

Further research work

This capstone journey has been enjoyable and inspiring. It is extremely encouraging to prove meaning and usefulness of art in learning. I come out of this experience with reassurance of my instinctive artist self and I moved to bring that forward to others too.

The findings of this work relates to my visual artwork and experiences during the OCEC Cohort V classes, which comprised the control group. To prove the complete universality of the proposed model there is the need to extend the research to third parties
– a control group integrated by people not part of Cohort V. Based on my own experience with other artists' work, I believe that research will prove the validity of the model and will enrich its potential providing new layers of information to it. Likewise, it would be beneficial to gather information regarding how other artists experience their creative process from a learning perspective. There is also the need to explore other forms of art such as music, writing, and drama.

Furthermore, I would like to turn the research initiated into a longitudinal study interviewing the same control group every two years. I would like to add a new control group to the research integrated by OCEC members of other cohorts in order to compare the potential of the enhancement power of the artwork (how is the reflection after program ended with and without artwork that helps people reconnect with the experience?)

I am also curious to explore two other aspects of the art process. The first one is related to the incubation period described by Wallas (as cited in Sadler-Smith, 2015), a period of not thinking about the subject of creation, a period stimulated by prior conscious search but to allow the emergence of the unconscious. I would like to bring a better understanding of that Aha! moment (conscious – unconscious interaction). Many professionals, coaches for instance, can benefit from the understanding and application of that process.

The second topic for additional research is related to art, mind complexity and leadership. I am curious to understand how art can support leadership development, in particular, by facilitating mind complexity development. Literature review brings several
benefits of art for leadership skills (e.g. dealing with ambiguity and uncertainty, flexible mind, brain interconnection, improved communication, etc.). I think of that journey in terms of Keagan (2009)'s evolution from socialized mind to self-transforming mind (this latter one corresponding to meta-leaders).

Finally, I am left with the question *How can art enhancement be useful in coaching and consulting?* I launch myself into this new journey of discovery. My first step is to build on the activities done with the OCEC Cohort V - group painting shown in chapter three: Cohort portrait II. Groups of people working together in creative expression is a great opportunity for team building and group dynamic learning.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

TORDINI’S ARTISTIC SKILLS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING SPIRAL
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PROCESS

A) Before the interview
Send pictures of the ten paintings at least one day ahead and ask each person to select the three paintings that resonate the most with them.

B) Interview

- Introduction and disclosure

Hi, it is good to connect again. Thank you for agreeing to share your OCEC experience with me. As you know, this survey is part of my capstone study. I will be happy to share the results with you. I will keep your responses confidential; I will group the responses by question, analysis; I will not attribute responses to specific members of the cohort.

- Questions for each selected painting
1) Can you tell me about that painting, what calls it to your attention?
2) When you are contemplating the painting, what emotions or thoughts are you experiencing?
3) Thinking about your OCEC experience, how does this relate to the experience?
4) I would like to give you my background of the painting (course, class, events related)…
How does this relate to your experience of that class/event?

- Questions after all three painting selected have been discussed

Please look at all of the paintings. What comes to mind when you look at all of the paintings? Are there common traits or aspects that emerge for you?

Thinking about the OCEC experience, do the paintings give you new perspectives, information about that experience? Can you tell me about it?

Thank you for sharing. If you have further thoughts after our conversation today, please send them to me or drop me a note, we can have a quick follow up call.