Art, Social Work, and Social Change

Leanne Schubert

BSW, Grad Dip. (Cultural Heritage Studies)

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Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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Signed:.....

Date:.....

Dedication

In memory of my youngest sister

Aileen

who died during the intervention phase of this study

and continues to inspire me to live with integrity and courage

Acknowledgements

The conduct of research is never a solo venture and the study on which this thesis rests was a highly collaborative community effort, and would not have been possible without significant contributions of many people. I owe a great deal of thanks and gratitude to those who have been part of its creation.

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Publications originating from this research

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Schubert, L. (2011). *Looking for leverage – glimpsing inclusion: A critical review of a community art project against principles of inclusion.* Paper presented at and included in the refereed conference proceedings of the inaugural Leveraging potential: Social inclusion at work and play conference, Prato, Italy.

Schubert, L. (2011). The 'Safe at Home' project: A process record in pictures. Volume 1. Newcastle: Author. Available at http://www.blurb.com/books/2383028

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Gray, M., & Schubert, L. (2006). *Place, space and spirit: Imagining the everyday*. Hunter Association of Counsellors and Therapists (HAFCAT), Newcastle, 17 May.

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Gray, M., & Schubert, L. (2006). *Place, space and spirit: Imagining the everyday*. Presentation at the 1st International Conference on Arts in Society, Edinburgh, Scotland, 15-18 August.

Schubert, L. (2006). *Nature, nurture and narratives: The art of self care.* Presentation at the 1st International Conference on Arts in Society, Edinburgh, Scotland, 15-18 August.

Schubert, L. (2008). *Safe at Home: Using art to build community awareness of domestic violence.* Presentation to the Hunter Means Innovation Festival, Newcastle May 10.

Graham, A., & Schubert, L. (2008). *Safe at Home: "An interdisciplinary project."* Presented at The University of Newcastle, Drama Fine Art and Music Research Opportunities Workshop, Newcastle, 1-2 December.

Gray, M., & Schubert, L. (2008). *Safe at Home: Using art to build community awareness of domestic violence*. Presentation at the Safe Communities Conference, Christchuch, New Zealand, 20-23 October.

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Gray, M., Schubert, L. & Graham, A. (2009). *Turning water into wine: Distilling art, practice and experience into knowledge*. Presented at the 4th International Conference on Arts in Society, Venice, Italy, 28-31 July.

Graham, A., Schubert, L., & Gray, M. (2009). *Oh what a tangled web we weave: Art, community and collaboration in the public domain*. Presented at the 4th International Conference on Arts in Society, Venice, Italy, 28-31 July.

Schubert, L., Gray, M., & Graham, A. (2009). *Enhancing awareness through arts-based community development: 'Safe at Home' and beyond. Magical realism?* Presented at the 4th International Conference on Arts in Society, Venice, Italy, 28-31 July.

Schubert, L. (2010). *Art and social work in the changing social landscape: Crisis? What crisis?* Presented at the International 'Social Work & Society' Academy – 8th Annual PhD Network and Plenum (TiSSA 2010): Social work in times of crisis. What can social work deliver – and who benefits? Tallinn, Estonia, 22-27 August.

Schubert, L. (2011). *Embracing the art of social work: Visualising alternate identities*. Presented at the International 'Social Work & Society' Academy – 9th Annual PhD Network and Plenum (TiSSA 2011): Politics of identity – The changing face of social work. Hradec Králové, Czech Republic, 21-26 August.

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Artworks and exhibitions originating from this research

Permanent public installation works

Hopscotch. (2010). The Cottage, 58 Alkira Avenue, East Cessnock (premises owned by Housing NSW), ground mosaic.

Respect. (2011). The Cottage, 58 Alkira Avenue, East Cessnock (premises owned by Housing NSW), wall mosaic.

Snakes and ladders. (2011). Alkira Avenue Park, East Cessnock, ground mosaic.

Exhibitions

Collage. (2007). Watt Space, Newcastle. November 21–December 9. (Group exhibition of Second Year BFA Students, The University of Newcastle).

White Ribbon Day: The cut out project. (2008). Peace Park, Weston. November 25.

Domestic & family violence – Stop! I don't like it. (2008–2009). Centrelink, Koe-Nara Schools as Community Centre, Cessnock Family Support Service and Cessnock City Library. 1 December – 30 January (across rotating venues).

A fine line: Artists respond to the theme of pleasure and pain and the often fine line between. (2009). Podspace, Newcastle. October 7–24. (Group exhibition held in association with the Arts Health Conference #2, 7 – 9 October, Newcastle City Hall, Newcastle.

Suggested pathway for reading this thesis

This thesis consists of three primary modules: this tract and two volumes of visual process record which document the intervention aspects of the nested empirical component of this study called the 'Safe at Home' project. It tested the effectiveness of art as an intervention to raise awareness of and address negative attitudes toward domestic and family violence. It incorporated eight arts-based community development interventions including events, posters and coasters, cut outs, and several permanent public mosaic works. To orient and assist the reader through the various components of this thesis the following pathway is recommended:

1. Begin with the abstract.
2. Browse the two volumes of *The 'Safe at Home' project: A process record in pictures* (available at http://www.blurb.com/books/2383028 and http://www.blurb.com/books/2382799) for an orientation to the artworks completed in the intervention phase of the empirical study. The reader is encouraged to return to specific aspects of these volumes at relevant points within the thesis text.
3. For an orientation to the whole study the introduction provides an overview and outlines the component parts, mapping the whereabouts of the key elements within the thesis.
4. These steps will provide a context for the discussion and conclusion if the reader prefers to begin at the end.
5. Throughout the text the reader is directed to supplementary material and examples of work located in the Appendices. The reader is encouraged to refer to these as they arise.
6. For a sequential reading of the theoretical and conceptual aspects of the study it is recommended the reader pursue the remainder of the text in the following order:
    1. Literature review (Chapters 2 to 5).
    2. Methodology (Chapters 6 and 7).

3. Findings (Chapters 8, 9 and 10).
4. References.

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Abstract

Art sits at the heart of social work and is central to social change. This thesis provides a beginning evidence base for this long held disciplinary view by examining the role of art in social change within communities. A shared history and common ground between art and social work was established using mixed methods within a creative heuristic methodology to define art and its relationship to social work. Inspired by the need identified by Hugh England for a theory of social work which incorporated a theory of art, this thesis redefines art in social work, from a bio-ethological perspective against a list of criteria for art, to suggest social work is art. It distinguishes this from the art of social work, which it locates in practice. Situated within the context of community practice, that is, art in community and arts-based community development, this thesis proposes a model of creative community practice able to accommodate both disciplines. Extensive literature findings were examined empirically to ascertain the effectiveness of art as an intervention through the 'Safe at Home' project. This nested study tested the effectiveness of arts-based community development in raising community awareness of and changing attitudes to domestic and family violence within a real-world context, and the implications for practice. This is a unique study in that no empirical research could be found which had been designed to determine if art raises awareness of or changes attitudes to domestic and family violence. Blending art with science, a social intervention research model was used to gather baseline data via a community-wide survey, implement eight art-based interventions using an embedded art practice as research method to collect data, and gather post-intervention data via a neighbourhood survey. Limited to the early phases of the social intervention research process, findings suggest art is not effective in achieving short-term attitudinal change, but establishes a climate conducive to change. The difference between disciplines in community practice centre on ethics and findings support the inclusion of ethics in art education. Findings indicate art is a form of unconscious knowledge which opens the potential for greater understanding of the tacit workings of social work practice.