Art, Social Work, and Social Change

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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
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.

First, and significantly, I am indebted to each and every one of the community members across the Cessnock LGA who participated in the ‘Safe at Home’ project. Over one hundred community members were involved as research participants in this study and their contribution was essential to the creation of the artworks on which this thesis is based. My appreciation is extended to each participant.

Enormous thanks go to my past and present colleagues from the Cessnock Anti Violence Network who invited me to engage with them and our community in making art which might begin to address domestic and family violence. I am grateful for their willingness to join with me in research, try this brave experiment, work alongside me, and have faith that something would emerge. Appreciation is also due to the other human service agencies beyond the Network involved in the study. Most notably, thanks go to the staff and trainees of Northnet (Green Jobs Corps Australia) for their work on the construction aspects of the Hopscotch and Snakes and Ladders installations and the staff and clients of the Personal Helpers and Mentors program, Aftercare Maitland who scraped and tiled with passion. Recognition and thanks are also conveyed to the volunteers of Cessnock District Hospital Pink Ladies and Koe-Nara Schools as Communities Centre, for the hours spent folding surveys and packaging envelopes for the community-wide survey.

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Guided by the stars of Taurus I was fortunate to have had two of the most amazing women supervise this thesis. Words on paper seem inadequate thanks for the support, guidance and wisdom shared by Mel Gray and Anne Graham. Born on the same day but with extraordinarily different styles, they stretched me in all directions, and were quintessential to this thesis becoming a reality.

My thanks to Mel for maintaining a profound interest in this area of research, her ability to challenge me theoretically and conceptually, for teaching me to begin to write and find creative ways to get me to do so, her precise attention to detail and meticulous editing, and for sharing her passion for photography. All of this and more helped me in the journey from practitioner to scholar for which I am deeply grateful.

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I am grateful to my colleagues and friends who form the Social Work RHD group for their friendship and support. They generously shared ideas and their knowledge throughout the challenges and joys of completing a PhD and ensured the journey was not one I took alone.

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Finally and most importantly, thanks goes to my partner Col, who graciously tolerated the tears, tantrums, and sleepless nights that went with this thesis and the many ups and downs of life that occurred during the time that it has taken to complete. His steadfast love and unwavering belief in me continues to astound me. No words are adequate thanks for the man who is and remains the love of my life.
Publications originating from this research


Schubert, L. (2006). *Is social work art, or is art social work?* Presentation at the 4th International Conference on New Directions in Humanities, Tunis, Tunisia, 3-6 July.


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.


Exhibitions


*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 bi-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.