

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**The potential of multimedia art to stimulate personal expression of, and reflection on childhood experience**

Yeh, Yu-Ling

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**The potential of multimedia art to stimulate  
personal expression of,  
and reflection on childhood experience**

**Yu-Ling Yeh**

**Ph.D.**

**2008**

**The potential of multimedia art to stimulate  
personal expression of,  
and reflection on childhood experience**

**Yu-Ling Yeh**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the University's  
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**Director of studies**

Rolf Gehlhaar

**Supervisory team**

Andree Woodcock

John Burns

## Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) plays a significant role in human emotional well-being, personal growth and life satisfaction. Self-awareness is said to be a key to the development of this form of intelligence. It has also been claimed by art therapists and educators that the expressive arts can assist people in self-expression and emotional awareness.

In accordance with this belief, the motion picture (a movie) as a form of expressive product has been used to help people become aware of their own hidden feelings and thoughts (i.e. viewing or making an autobiographical movie can promote emotional awareness). However, there has been little research that specifically addresses how the process of making (one particular form of expressive art) may help a person to engage with their emotions.

Therefore the central aim of the research was to show firstly how the development of autobiographical animations may engender therapeutic opportunities for greater reflection thereby facilitating personal development of, and emotional awareness in the artist and secondly, to demonstrate that the viewing of such animations may prompt viewers to gain the understanding of the feelings of the animator and be stimulated to reflect on their own experience, followed by the subsidiary goal of demonstrating that making animation could provide additional opportunities to the growth of greater emotional awareness in therapeutic and school education settings.

To achieve these aims, a practice-led research approach was adopted. The thesis presents the reflective journey undertaken in creating the final installation 'A residual cleft in my beautiful life: childhood' based on childhood memories, showing how reflection-on-practice and in-practice formed key components in shaping the research and accompanying artistic endeavours. The development of the installation confirmed that the processes undertaken in producing an animation provided opportunities for self-knowledge and personal growth (in the artist), and that the audience were stimulated to consider their own childhoods as well as the childhood presented to them. The evidences

of the animation installation production and the audience's responses to the artefact further support the positive feedback on the values of animation to assist in increasing self-awareness from interviews with art therapists, and an online survey with school teachers. Observation of s three month animation teaching placement is also reported to invite further study to explore animation practice and school education.

In conclusion, this research contributes to knowledge firstly, by providing a practice based account of the researcher's exploration of, and development of emotional insight through her therapeutic art; secondly by evidencing the potential of a new form of expressive art - animation – to be used as an expressive arts technique to engage the emotional intelligence of individuals and audiences.

# LIST OF THE CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b>	I
<b>LIST OF CONTENTS</b>	III
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	VI
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES</b>	IX
<b><u>1. INTRODUCTION</u></b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 BACKGROUND	1
1.2 REFLECTION ON MA ANIMATIONS BEFORE AND DURING THE PH.D	1
1.2-1 'GIVE UP THE WORLD'	2
1.2-2 'THE ONE YOU NEVER GET'	2
1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES	4
1.4 METHODS	5
1.4-1 CREATING THE ANIMATION	5
1.4-2 UNDERSTANDING THE BENEFIT OF 'ANIMATION' PRACTICE	6
1.4-3 EVALUATING THE EFFECTS ON THE AUDIENCE	7
1.5 CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE	7
1.6 THE CHAPTERS OF THE THESIS	8
<b><u>2. LITERATURE REVIEW</u></b>	<b>14</b>
2.1 SELF-AWARENESS AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCES	14
2.2 EMOTION	17
2.3 EXPRESSIVE ARTS THERAPY VIEWPOINT	19
2.4 MEDIA USAGE IN THERAPY; MOTION-PICTURES/FILM/MOVIE/CINEMA	28
2.4-1 A FICTIONAL APPROACH TO SELF-AWARENESS WATCHING MOVIES	31
2.4-2 PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AND FREEDOM IN WATCHING MOVIES	32
2.4-3 MOVIES IN SOCIAL CONTEXT	32
2.4-4 THE FILMS THAT ENCOURAGE VIEWERS IN SELF-EXPRESSION AND REFLECTION (SELF-AWARENESS OF EMOTION)	33
2.4-5 BIOGRAPHICAL AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL APPROACHES TO SELF-AWARENESS; MAKING YOUR OWN MOVIE	37
2.5 STORYTELLING	39
2.5-1 A BIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH TO SELF-AWARENESS; THE FILMS '20, 30, 40' AND 'NOBODY KNOWS'	40
2.5-2 AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STORYTELLING	43
2.5-3 AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH TO SELF-AWARENESS; THE FILMS 'A TIME TO LIVE, A TIME TO DIE' AND 'A ONE AND A TWO; YIYI'	44

2.5-4 EMOTIONAL IMMERSION IN THE DIGITAL AUTO/BIOGRAPHY	48
2.6 ANIMATION IN THERAPY PRACTICE	51
2.6-1 ANIMATION IN EDUCATION	52
2.7 ANIMATION PRACTICE AND LEARNING STYLES AND MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES	54
2.9 SUMMARY	58
<b>3. RESEARCH APPROACH</b>	<b>60</b>
3.1 REFLECTIVE PRATICE-LED RESEARCH	61
3.2 METHODOLOGY	66
3.2 CONCLUSION	70
<b>4. GATHERING NARRATIVES</b>	<b>71</b>
4.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS IN TAIWAN	72
4.1-1 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	72
4.1-2 THE NARRATIVES	73
4.1-3 SUMMARY OF THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS	77
4.1-4 THE DILEMMAS	78
4.2 AN EMERGING CHANGE DURING THE RESEARCH PROCESS	78
4.2-1 THE PERIOD OF STRUGGLE TO COMMENCE AUTOBIOGRAPHY	80
4.3 ‘ARE YOU TERRY’	80
4.3-1 EVALUATION OF ‘ARE YOU TERRY’	82
4.4 REFLECTION ON ‘ARE YOU TERRY’; THE CHANGE TO USE AUTOBIOGRPHAY WAS COMMENCED	83
<b>5. AUTOBIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>6. THE INTERACTIVE ANIMATION INSTALLATION ‘A RESIDUAL CLEFT IN MY BEAUTIFUL LIFE: CHILDHOOD</b>	<b>105</b>
6.1 THE AESTHETIC STYLE OF THE INSTALLATION: COLLAGE	107
6.1-1 APPLYING COLLAGE METHOD TO MY OWN PRACTICE	109
6.2 WHY COMBINE ANIMATION IN AN ART INSTALLATION?	110
6.3 ‘A RESIDUAL CLEFT IN MY BEAUTIFUL LIFE: CHILDHOOD’ –INTERATIVE ANIMATION INSTALLATION	111
6.3-1 THE ANIMATIONS	112
6.3-2 THE PHYSICAL ELEMENTS OF THE ANIMATION INSTALLATION	121
6.4 THE PHYSICAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE INSTALLATION	124
6.5 POST-PROJECT REFLECTION-ON-PRACTICE	127
<b>7. EVALUATION OF THE INTERACTIVE ANIMATION INSTALLATION</b>	<b>183</b>
7.1 PRESENTATION METHODS	183

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7.2 EMOTIONAL IMMERSION OF THE VISITORS	184
7.3 THE VISITORS' EXPRESSION OF, AND REFLECTION ON, MY CHILDHOOD STORIES	185
7.4 THE USE OF MULTIMEDIA ART	189
7.5 ANIMATION IN A THERAPEUTIC SETTING	191
7.6 ONLINE SURVEY WITH SCHOOL TEACHERS	192
7.7 CONCLUSION	195
<b>8. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION</b>	<b>201</b>
<hr/>	
8.1 INTRODUCTION	201
8.2 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS	203
8.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH	204
8.3-1 RESEARCH TO OVERCOME THE LIMITATIONS	205
8.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	206
8.4-1 MY CURRENT POSITION AS AN ANIMATOR	206
8.5 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE	207
8.6 CONCLUSION	208
<b>9. REFERENCES</b>	<b>209</b>
<hr/>	

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Still images from the animation ‘Give up the world’	11
Figure 2 Stills images from the animation ‘The one you never get’	12
Figure 3 The diagram shows the stages of reflective practice that led to the sequential actions undertaken to complete the animation installation	13
Figure 4 The Dunn and Dunn Learning Styles Model (Dunn <i>et al.</i> 1995)	55
Figure 5-1 The storyboard of the animation ‘Are you Terry’	86
Figure 5-2 The storyboard of the animation ‘Are you Terry’ continued	87
Figure 5-3 Still images from the animation ‘Are you Terry’	88
Figure 5-4 More still images from ‘Are you Terry’	89
Figure 6 Collage work ‘The Mind’	129
Figure 7 Collage work ‘The Edge’	130
Figure 8 The production of the 3D character of Debby	131
Figure 9 The production of the 3D character of Debby continued	132
Figure 10 Some visual components of the collage work ‘Are you Terry’ and ‘A residual cleft in my beautiful life: childhood’	133
Figure 10-1 More visual components of the collage work ‘A residual cleft in my beautiful life: childhood’	134
Figure 11 The three stages of the processes undertaken to complete the animation installation followed by the description of reflection-in-practice and emotional awareness gained during the processes and post-project reflection-on-practice	135
Figure 12 A still image of the mathematics animation	136
Figure 13 Another still image of the mathematics animation	137
Figure 14 A still image of the Barbie doll animation	138
Figure 15 Another still image of the Barbie doll animation	139
Figure 16 A still image of the piano animation	140
Figure 17 Another still image of the piano animation	141
Figure 18 A still image of the mirror animation	142
Figure 19 Another still image of the mirror animation	143
Figure 20 A photo of the collage shoes shelf	144
Figure 21 A photo of the collage black front door	145
Figure 22 A photo of the collage bookshelf	146
Figure 23 A photo of the suspended staircases	147
Figure 24 A photo of the collage staircases	148
Figure 25 A photo of the collage toilet	149
Figure 26 A photo of the collage canvas	150

Figure 27 A photo of the collage sink	151
Figure 28 A photo of the collage bath tap	152
Figure 29 A photo of the collage shower	153
Figure 30 A photo of the collage washing machine	154
Figure 31 A photo of the memory-snapshot graphical clock	155
Figure 32 The designed fabric placed in the approximate locations before they were suspended to form the installation	156
Figure 33 The designed fabric were suspended by fishing wire attached to wooden sticks	157
Figure 34 The fabrics were suspended to form the back wall of the installation, representing construct the bathroom and corridor	158
Figure 35 The second suspended fabric that was used to construct the stairs and living room	159
Figure 36 A view of the front of the installation	160
Figure 37 The family environment viewed from the front	161
Figure 38 The front of the family environment, this time showing an enclosing wall	162
Figure 39 The projection of the mathematics animation, was located in the living room	163
Figure 40 The mathematics animation was projected onto a piece of suspended white fabric	164
Figure 41 The projection of the piano animation, located in the bathroom	165
Figure 42 The piano animation was projected onto the top of the bathtub	166
Figure 43 The projection of the mirror animation, which was displayed on the other side of the bathroom	167
Figure 44 The mirror animation was projected onto the fabric partition suspended between the bathroom and corridor	168
Figure 45 The Barbie doll animation was located at the corner of the corridor	169
Figure 46 The Barbie doll animation was projected onto the window (small piece of white fabric) of the dollhouse	170
Figure 47 Chairs used in the installation	171
Figure 48 Lighting (lamps) effects that was used to enhance the domestic appearance of the whole installation	172
Figure 49 Childhood toys were displayed on the suspended on green paper rolled wire built frames	173
Figure 50 This illustration shows the intended interactivity involved in viewing the mathematics animation in the living room	174
Figure 50-1 Some still images of the intended animation before the PIR was triggered to play the mathematics animation	175
Figure 51 This illustration shows the intended interactivity in the Barbie doll animation in the corridor	176

Figure 51-1 A still image of the intended interactive jigsaw game, that the visitors were expected to complete in order to view the Barbie Doll animation_____	177
Figure 52 This illustration shows the intended interactivity in the mirror animation in the bathroom_____	178
Figure 52-1 The intended still image before the PIR was triggered to play the mirror animation_____	179
Figure 53 This illustration shows the intended interactivity in the piano animation in the bathroom_____	180
Figure 53-1 A few still images of the intended animation before the PIR was triggered to the piano animation_____	181
Figure 54 ‘Debby’s’ old drawing of her diary_____	182
Figure 55 Some photos of the opening day of the animation installation_____	197
Figure 56 A photo of the questionnaire area, which was displayed opposite the animation installation_____	198
Figure 57 The illustration printed on the participation information envelop enclosed a questionnaire form_____	199
Figure 58 The invitation card to the show_____	200
Figure 59 These are some examples of the students’ designs_____	255
Figure 60 More examples of the students’ digital work_____	255
Figure 61 Some more examples of the students’ work_____	256
Figure 62 The students’ still animation ‘Feeling bad’_____	257
Figure 63 The ‘Feeling bad’ continued_____	258
Figure 64 The ‘Feeling bad’ continued_____	259
Figure 65 The ‘Feeling bad’ continued_____	260
Figure 66 The second team’s still animation ‘Disappointment of love’_____	261
Figure 67 The ‘Disappointment of love’ continued_____	262
Figure 68 The ‘Disappointment of love’ continued_____	263
Figure 69 The ‘Disappointment of love’ continued_____	264
Figure 70 The images are some of the students’ book mark designs_____	264
Figure 71 Still images of the two students’ animated Moon Festival e-cards_____	265

## LIST OF APPENDICES

- Appendix 1:** A CD of the animation ‘Give up the world’. It requires flash player 7.0 to be installed on your computer in order to view this work
- Appendix 2:** An interactive DVD of the animations ‘The one you never get’ and ‘Are You Terry?’
- Appendix 3:** An interactive DVD of the animation installation ‘A residual cleft in my beautiful life: childhood’
- Appendix 4:** The questionnaire design for the semi-structured interviews in Taiwan\_\_\_\_\_218
- Appendix 5:** Examples of the viewer’s feedback on the animation ‘Are you Terry?’\_\_\_\_\_220
- Appendix 6:** Examples of the visitor’s feedback on ‘A residual cleft in my beautiful life: childhood’ \_\_\_\_\_226
- Appendix 7:** Examples of the online survey with school teachers\_\_\_\_\_237
- Appendix 8:** A case study of teaching animation in schools\_\_\_\_\_249

## Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the present research incorporating sections relating to the background, aim, objectives, methods and the proposed contributions to knowledge followed by summary of the structure of the thesis and chapter outlines.

### 1.1 Background

This study was driven by my own practice in multimedia art, particularly animation, as developed on the MA course: Media Art, undertaken at Coventry School of Art and Design in 2003. Before discussing my PhD, I would like to briefly describe the animations I created on the MA, as it was the reflection on these that led to the provisional aim of this research - that viewing animation might help the audience to identify with issues and facilitate the perception of their own feelings. This initial aim was revised as the research unfolded to examine whether (1) creating autobiographical animations produced therapeutic opportunities for greater reflection, insight and emotional awareness in the practitioner, which was supplemented by demonstrating that (2) the viewers of such animations might gain insights into the feelings of the practitioner and be stimulated to reflect on their own experiences, and lastly that, if these are true that making animation could provide additional opportunities to increase self-awareness resonating with greater emotional intelligence in a therapeutic setting and school education.

### 1.2 Reflection on MA animations before and during PhD

When I produced the animations ‘Give up the world’ and ‘The one you never get’ on the MA course<sup>1</sup>, I discovered the facility with which I could produce a fuller context of stories compared to other media. The first animation questions the inequality of the moral system in society, and the latter mirrors my own personal struggles as portrayed through other people’s biographies. As I found that I

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<sup>1</sup> The DVDs of the animations accompany this thesis.

was emotionally altered from telling stories through animation, I thought that my audience might draw similar benefits.

#### 1.2-1 'Give Up The World' (Figure 1),

This animation concerns a girl who lives in an underwater world where people cannot survive without oxygen supplied through helmets and bodysuits. She works in a company in which the work ethic is not equally shared. The animation narrates her discomfort with individuals who use their work privileges to fulfil their private needs.

Although on the surface this might be perceived as an account of the abuse of power, when I look back on it, I see that it also inadvertently portrays my own jealousy towards those who can work or exploit the system to achieve their own goals in a guilt free manner. As I see jealousy as a negative attribute, it felt alien to my ideal of a 'good person'. I created an animation which dealt with a societal problem rather than my own jealousies. I lived in a state of tension in which I hid my true feelings from others, so that they would not feel bad about me. However, I needed to release and confront these emotions. The animation helped me to express this through the actions of the characters in the creation without being personally judged.

#### 1.2-2 'The One You Never Get' (Figure 2)

This animation was based on a biographical book, 'The Minds of Billy Milligan', a case study of the first person to be found not guilty of the crimes he committed due to multiple personality disorder. Whilst those suffering from similar conditions remained anonymous, Milligan appeared in the US media and was examined by health care professionals who lacked a full understanding of this particular disorder. Milligan's description of the multiple personalities who interact in his brain influenced the style of 'The one you never get'.

Inspired by Milligan's story that childhood plays an important part in personal development, I re-scripted three Taiwanese semi-biographical memories. The central character, Debby has a flip top

brain in which three different personalities exist (Zero, Monica, Alpha). The viewer is taken through the pupil of Debby's eye, along a blood vessel into each of these interior worlds. The three animations show how childhood experiences have contributed to the adult's distorted view of reality. For example, Zero's confusion about the role of women in society and his identity as a man was shaped by his being raised by a single, distressed mother; Monica sees Zero's story and her feelings of loneliness, related to her envious nature, are triggered; when Alpha looks at Monica's story, she projects onto this her feelings of isolation, which may in turn, be attributed to her dysfunctional relationship with her mother.

The animation ends with a collage of images depicting the faces of Debby, Zero, Monica and Alpha. This is used to illustrate questions of who am I, what do you know of me, how do I know when I am real, when should I present my true self? The stories represent depression (Zero), isolation (Alpha) and envy (Monica). The first letters of which form the word 'Die', which represents the hopelessness of emotional conflicts.

To recapitulate, the idea behind the script was triggered by a documentary on multiple personalities. I used this idea as a vehicle to collect biographies in order to produce a fictional narrative onto which I could project my own thoughts. It was only later that I realised that I had used other people's stories because I did not want to present my own experiences in a direct manner. I found it easier to tell other people's stories than my own. I was initially unaware that I was distancing myself from my own emotions.

After completing 'The one you never get', I felt that it had provided me with an emotional release (i.e. therapeutic experience). However, I was more concerned with its effect on viewers i.e. that it would help them to achieve similar emotional insight; that it would help the audience to understand the impact of childhood experiences or view their own childhood in a different way. Therefore, I proposed that animation could have developmental and educational value. With this in mind I started

the PhD with the intention of creating an animation that would stimulate viewers to reconsider and re-evaluate their own childhood experiences.

I had the opportunity to use animation to express my own emotions though this was not envisioned at the start. I discovered that the creation of multimedia art might provide opportunities and space to reflect on, and display emotional events. Therefore, this reflective and practice-led research builds on the themes of my MA and addresses the potential of animation to stimulate reflection on, and the expression of, emotional experiences related to family events in childhood.

Crucially, during the course of the PhD I came to realise that ‘the process’ of creating the animation led to an engagement with my childhood experiences, and provided me with the space to confront issues in my past, and that this in itself was as important as the final outcome (i.e. the animation).

### 1.3 Aim and objectives

One attribute of practice-led research is that the aim may change as the practice progresses (Scrivener 2000). As already stated, the aim was to investigate whether viewing animations might help to assist the viewers in perceiving their own feelings from different perspectives. However, following my reflection on the creative process, this aim was reframed to take into account new and emerging considerations and unexpected results not envisioned in the original proposal.

The reformed aim of the research was firstly to explore how the process of autobiographical animation practice could facilitate the animator to express and reflection on emotions- in this case, childhood events- that may be hidden or difficult to confront, thereby leading to increased emotional awareness and secondly, to demonstrate that the multimedia product- in this case, the interactive animation installation- may trigger visitors to reflect not only on the content of the animation, but also to relate this back to their own experiences, and reflection on personal experiences. By providing the evidence regarding the aims, the subsidiary goal was to demonstrate how the creation of animations may help to facilitate self-awareness in a therapeutic setting and school education.

## 1.4 Methods

Figure 3 shows that this creative production is reported through four stages of reflective thinking- pre-project reflection-on-practice, reflection-in-practice, post-project reflection-on-practice and reflection on reflection-on-practice. The last is concerned with an analysis of how one approached the project from beginning to end. Thus, the context of reflection on reflection-on-practice is established first by descriptions of what have been acquired during the former three stages, and secondly by the provisions for future research. Each stage of reflection explains the actions taken to complete the production.

At the stage of pre-project reflection-on-practice, I reflected on my MA animations ‘Give up the world’ and ‘The one you never get’, which also led to the provisional aim of the research. In order to achieve this aim, a biographical approach to semi-structured interviews was produced in Taiwan. Reflection during course of this activity, and on its transcripts, led to the product of ‘Are you Terry’ animation. The cycle of reflection was repeated during the production, and on the outcome of the animation. This prompted me to reflect again on the production of my MA animations. Subsequently, the aim was reformed as to demonstrate how animation making as a means of self-expression could trigger therapeutic experiences that lead to self-awareness of emotion, the expression of which was the autobiographical animation installation (i.e. ‘A residual cleft in my beautiful life: childhood). This in turn was a response to knowledge acquired through the previous cycles of reflection-in-, and –on-practice. Additionally, an experimental animation class was conducted in a junior high school in Taiwan to illustrate that this technique could be used in educational settings. In post-project reflection-on-practice, the impact of a still art work and moving image on viewers is discussed, and the outcome of reflection on reflection-on-practice is the written work which describes how I approached the research from beginning to end.

### 1.4-1 Creating the animation

In order to achieve the aim, it was necessary to create an animation. The first step in doing this was to develop a narrative- or storyline for the animation- which would be related to the theme of Taiwanese

childhood experience. In order to do this, I collected stories from 28 people aged from 15-65 years old, using semi-structured interviews designed to provide information on everyday family conflicts and issues. I also gathered information about whether it was felt that media (such as watching movie) could be used to express such incidents.

During the collection of the narratives, I found it difficult to explore the interviewees' deep thoughts about the impact of their own childhood experiences on their personal development. Creating a biographical narrative for the animations was restricted due to their limited responses to my questions. Although I successfully collected various childhood stories, I was not able to gather the narratives of the interviewees' reflection on the impact of childhood experience on their personal development. As I thought that it was important to produce a story that contained not only the descriptions of family incidents but also how one could learn from the past, this led me to produce an experimental animation 'Are You Terry' based on a case study about a girl's emotional journey with an art therapist. This enabled me to determine whether I could create an animation recounting someone else's story, and whether an audience would relate to the girl depicted in the animation, and reflect on their own childhood memories. Positive feedback from the audience at this stage would provide confirmation of my belief that animation could trigger reflection in the audience.<sup>2</sup>

#### 1.4-2 Understanding the benefits of animation practice

A reflective diary was used to document the effects of 'animating' on my self-awareness of emotions and personal growth. This was kept throughout the research, but especially during the construction of the final installation ('A Residual Cleft in My Beautiful Life; Childhood'). This material forms the basis of the chapters dealing with reflection-in- and -on- practice. The descriptions support the statements made by expressive-art therapists and school educators on the values of animation.

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<sup>2</sup> It will be seen in the following chapters that this approach did not show how creating animation could benefit the creator. The arguments for adopting a more autobiographical approach are not present in this chapter for reasons of clarity and brevity.

Given the benefits I felt I derived from animating critical childhood events and my own perception of the impact of childhood experiences on my emotional development, I was interested in establishing whether others could derive similar benefits from creating animations. Thus, I taught an animation class in Taiwan for a term with three students in an urban junior high school. During this time, I observed their responses and whether making animation could be used as a tool for them to tell their own stories and express their emotions. This teaching experience was evaluated by the teachers in the school. However, due to the limitations of the study (e.g. short period of the class placement, small sample of students, one-to-one setting, and professional animation software learning), the report is presented as a supplementary material, together with a small online survey with school teachers considering the value of animation in schools I wish to invite further studies to explore how the inclusion of animation lessons might benefit students' growth of emotional intelligence.

#### 1.4-3 Evaluating the effects on the audience

Given that my original interest was in creating an artefact the viewing of which might promote self-awareness of the viewers, I needed to examine whether my animations would stimulate the viewers to express their thoughts and feelings relating to the characters and stories, and whether they would be prompted to reflect on these in such way as to show their awareness of the emotions presented in the visual representations. This part of the research was undertaken by gathering audience feedback from questionnaires on the animation 'Are You Terry' and the installation 'A Residual Cleft in My Beautiful Life; Childhood'. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and confirmed my original hypothesis about the value of animations.

#### 1.5 Contributions to knowledge

The reflective research provided an indepth study of the relationship between animation practice and understanding of emotions. The context of which was used to demonstrate that the viewing and making of animation could facilitate emotional self-awareness in the animator and audience. This evidences the value animation would have it was to be included in expressive arts therapy and school education. Thus, the research contributes to knowledge in three areas, that (1) how making animation

as a expressive tool could be used for therapeutic purpose that led to emotional awareness, (2) reflective practice of the animator (in this case, myself) documented in this thesis provides other creative practitioners with a different way of conducting and viewing practice-led and digital-art-based research, and (3) the values of using animation in expressive art therapy and educational settings were evidenced.

## 1.6 The chapters of the thesis

The research is presented in two parts:

- (1) A DVD and a CD containing examples of digital work, animations and a representation of the final installation
- (2) An accompanying narrative (the thesis) explaining the course of the research. This is presented in the following chapters.

### Chapter 2 Literature review

This provides a background to emotional intelligence and state of the art review of techniques used to promote personal expression and emotional awareness in both therapeutic settings and in school education. These are important in setting the context of this research in terms of the relationship between new media and self-awareness of emotions.

### Chapter 3 Research approach

This chapter provides an overview of reflective and practice-led research and current debates concerning the value of such research. This is used to contextualise the following chapters. The effects of reflection on the course of the research are also described.

### Chapter 4 Gathering narratives and early feedback

This chapter explains how narratives were collected for both animations (i.e. 'Are You Terry' and 'A Residual Cleft in My Beautiful Life; Childhood'). The first was based on a written case study. For the second, main animation, the original intention was to develop a 'generic' childhood story based on

vignettes provided in semi-structured interviews. These interviews took place and were duly analysed. However, reflection on the process and the quality of the material produced, along with audience feedback from the viewing of 'Are You Terry' led to a reframing of the research- and a more autobiographical approach to the work.

#### Chapter 5 Autobiography

Continuing from the discussion outlined in Chapter 4, this is an account of my childhood and adolescence. It is used to depict how my own experiences form a driving part of my research as an artist and how I became a subject in this research to provide the context of an increased self-awareness of emotions with a view to moving from personal practice to societal contributions to the domains of expressive art therapy and school education, which is further elaborated and presented in chapter 6, 7 and 8.

#### Chapter 6 Reflective project 'A Residual Cleft in My Beautiful Life: Childhood'

This chapter describes the creation of the interactive animation installation and my own reflections on including the digital art productions, physical elements and the actual construction of the installation, and the impacts of increased emotional awareness on the creation. It will be argued that the reflection-in- and post-project reflection-on-practice provide evidence of an improvement in the emotional skills of the animator.

#### Chapter 7 Evaluation of the interactive animation installation

Visitors' responses to the installation are presented in this chapter. It will be argued that the comments provide evidence for the value of animation in facilitating visitors' ability to reflect on, and express the emotional aspect of childhood experiences. Interviews with expressive art therapists, an online survey with school teachers, and animation students were also used to determine the value of including animation in expressive arts therapy and the National Curriculum.

## Chapter 8 Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter provides a summary of the practice led research and its main findings. The limitations of the research and the possibilities to overcome these difficulties are described followed by the explanation of the benefits that could be derived from continuing to explore how animation can contribute to the development of emotional intelligence. This also includes a statement of the contributions to knowledge and descriptions of my current position as an artist.

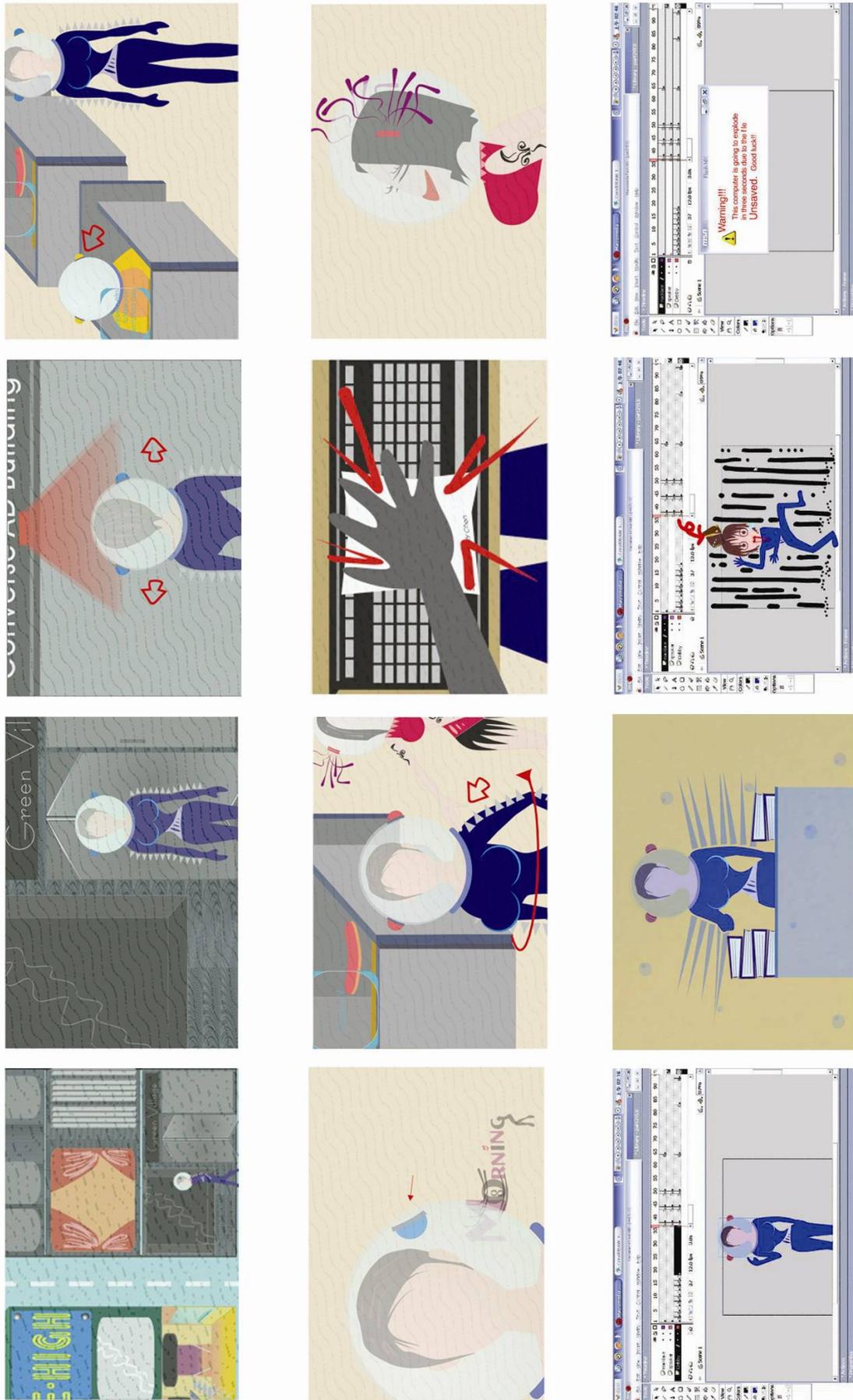


Figure 1 Still images from the animation 'Give up the world'

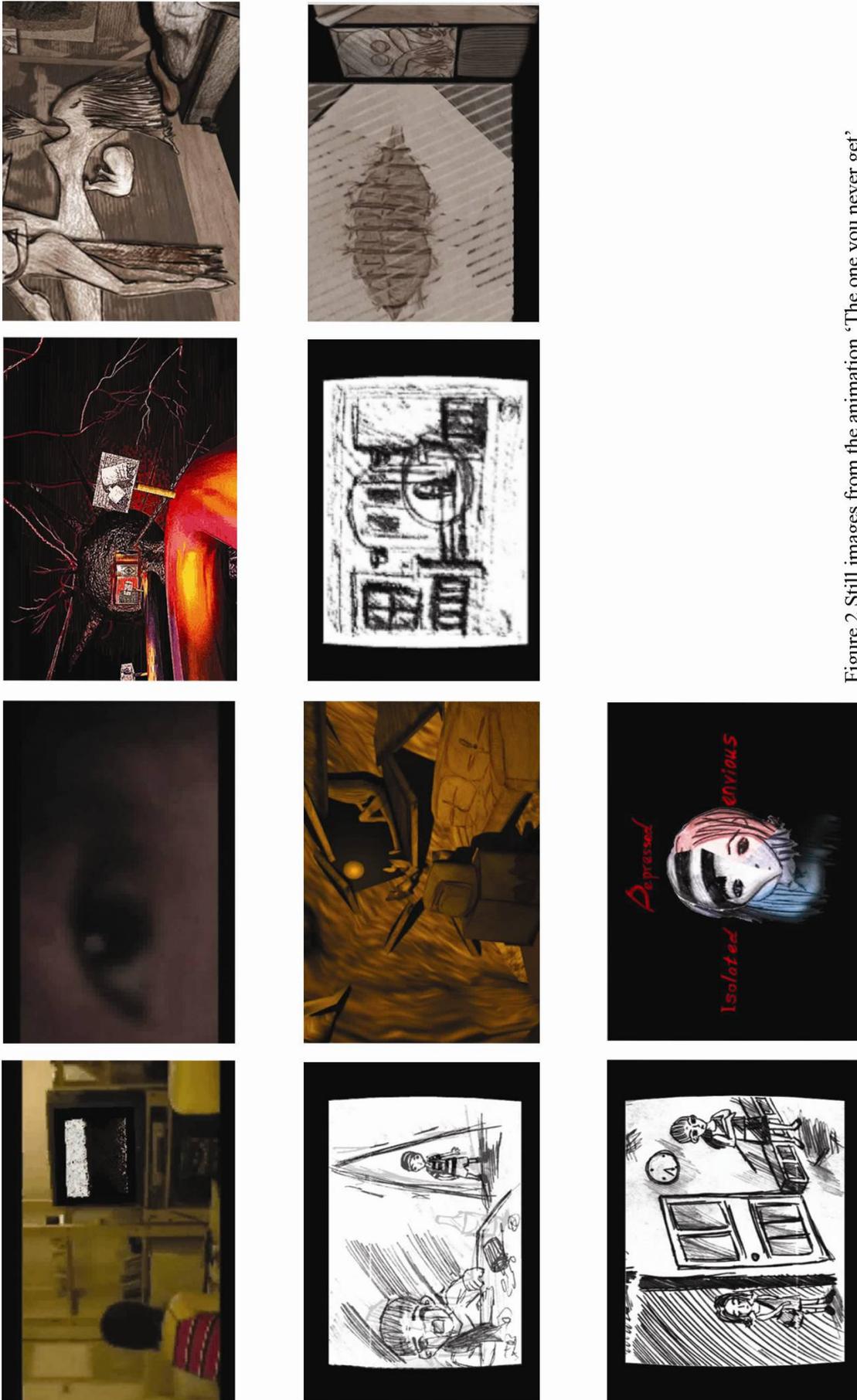


Figure 2 Still images from the animation 'The one you never get'

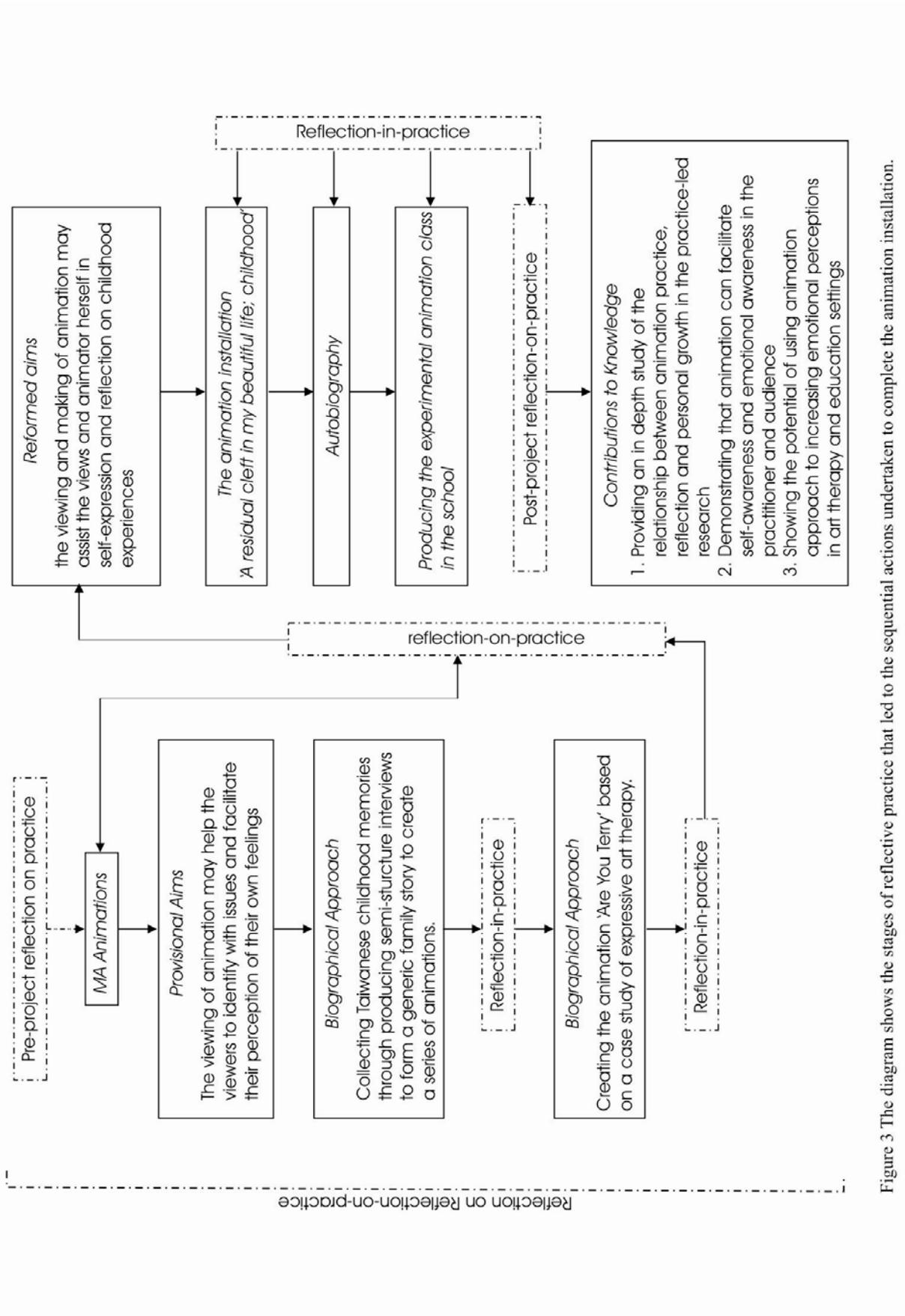


Figure 3 The diagram shows the stages of reflective practice that led to the sequential actions undertaken to complete the animation installation.

## Literature Review

To recap, the aim of this research is to investigate whether the process of autobiographical animation can help facilitate self-awareness and contribute to emotional intelligence. It is claimed that self-awareness can be achieved through an ongoing experience of expressive creativity (Radford 2002 and 2003). A literature review has therefore been conducted to examine the existing expressive arts that enable the exploration of feeling and thoughts as an approach to improving emotional awareness in oneself and others.

### 2.1 Self-awareness and Emotional Intelligence

There have been many studies indicating that self-awareness and understanding of one's own emotions (emotional perception) is a key component associated with emotional intelligence (EI) (Zeidner and Roberts and Matthews 2002, Zeidner *et al.* 2003, Kremenitzer 2005, Slaski and Cartwright 2003, Spence and Oades and Caputi 2004, Radford 2002, Radford 2003). Researchers have found that EI is correlated to academic achievement, workplace success, personal goal-attainment, personality integration, personal and interpersonal relationships, life satisfaction, self-esteem, stress and emotional/psychosomatic health (Schutte *et al.* 2007, Extremera and Fernandez-Berrocal 2005, Tsaousis and Nikolaou 2005, Bastian and Burns and Nettelback 2005, Spence and Oades and Caputi 2004, Slaski and Cartwright 2003, Zeidner *et al.* 2003, Schutte and Malouff 2002, Sheldon *et al.* 2002, Schutte *et al.* 2001).

Zeidner *et al.* (2003) reference Salovey and Mayer's (1990) concept of emotional intelligence as involving a set of 'the interrelated abilities of (1) perception and identification of emotion in the self and others, (2) utilisation of emotion to facilitate cognition and performance, (3) understanding of the antecedents and consequences of emotions, and (4) regulation of emotion in the self and others' (2003:70). Tsaousis and Nikolaou (2005) also reference Salovey and Mayer (1990) when explaining that EI is the capability of computing emotional information which includes 'accurate appraisal of

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emotions in oneself and others, appropriate expression of emotion, and adaptive regulation of emotions in such a way as to enhance living' (2005:21). These abilities are related to emotional skills such as self-awareness, self-monitoring, emotion regulation, clarity of feelings, emotional perspective taking (the ability to understand viewpoint of others), empathic concern (the ability to offer sympathy and concern), problem-solving, stress tolerance, relationship satisfaction, impulse control, coping capability and low anxiety (Schutte and Malouff 2002, Bastian and Burns and Nettelbeck 2005). Self-awareness is specifically constantly identified as the keystone of emotional intelligence. It often occurs before the other emotional skills develop, though the growth of emotional skills can proceed multi-dimensionally (Cook 1999, Slaski and Cartwright 2003, Zeidner and Roberts and Matthews 2002, Radford 2002, Spence and Oades and Caputi, 2004, Zeidner *et al.* 2003). "Through increased self-awareness, individuals are more able to detach themselves from events and regulate their emotions in order to prevent them from becoming 'immersed in' and 'carried away' by their emotional reaction" (Slaski and Cartwright 2003:235).

Insufficient emotional self-management has been linked to negative impacts on long term health through habits such as overeating, drinking and smoking (Tsaousis and Nikolaou 2005). It has been proposed that individuals who explore emotional narratives and are aware that they can use interior resources (emotions) to assist behaviour or events are more likely to derive benefits in six areas; self-acceptance/personal growth, intimacy/friendship, societal contribution, physical attractiveness, popularity/recognition and financial success (Sheldon *et al.* 2002). Hence, these studies indicate that increasing emotional self-awareness is a key to the formation of a positive emotional state that influences other aspects of life.

Education in emotional intelligence has long been promoted in psychology and school education. Miville *et al.* (2006) recommend that mental health professionals actively develop and improve their own EI so that they can work with diverse groups of people in a more reflective, progressive and empathic way. From another perspective, other researchers believe that emotional skills need to develop early in life (Zeidner *et al.* 2003, Zeidner and Roberts and Matthews 2002, Kelly *et al.* 2004,

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Hartley 2003, Kremenitzer 2005, Richburg and Fletcher 2002, Radford 2003, Radford 2002, Richburg and Fletcher 2002, Webster 2000). School teachers, care givers or educational programme leaders are advised to understand EI in order to help pupils improve their emotional development and to achieve successful outcomes as they move through adulthood.

The present research does not propose that animation practice may improve the EI of mental health experts or school educators. However, it is important to this research to present how the process of animation practice may assist in developing self-awareness and understanding of emotions. This in turn can provide experts with insights into how the processes of animation may encourage emotional awareness, given that an example of such artefact will help them understand how it can benefit personal growth in their profession.

Zeidner, Roberts and Matthews (2002) note that many EI improvement programmes emphasise EI skills such as live problem-solving, conflict-resolution and establishing social relationships but elude the primary “facets of EI (e.g., emotional perception and awareness, understanding, emotional regulation)...these facets have rarely been a central focus of preventive intervention” (2004:255). More studies that enable an understanding of the development of self-awareness are required if methods are to be created that will help its development (Zeidner, Roberts and Matthews 2004). Developing self-awareness is believed to be the first step needed for school children to acquire the ability to perceive how emotion influences thoughts and actions (Zeidner *et al.* 2003). Other researchers believe that the development of an increasing self-awareness happens in two different modes; through developmental growth and catastrophes (Sheldon *et al.* 2002). The first mode refers to personal growth such as increased self-monitoring, self-acceptance and interpersonal integration, which develops as people grow older. The second mode refers to the increase in self-awareness which accompanies a trauma.

The question remains of how to identify the components that enable a person to become self-aware. Zeidner *et al.* (2003) cited Izard *et al.*'s study, which notes that “emotional abilities are highly

correlated with verbal ability” (2003:80) i.e. the recognising and labelling emotional thoughts. Similarly, Radford (2003) indicates that the knowledge of emotional vocabularies is the cornerstone for self-awareness, and that the definitions of every possible feeling are clearly and consensually described in dictionaries which establishes a public platform that allows emotions to be shared by others rather than remaining purely personal experiences. Introspection requires the appreciation of an affective language that can lead to awareness of inner realities, and enable the description of subjective events (Radford 2003); one needs to find a form of expressive language that can be used to observe and describe emotional realities.

Radford (2002, 2003) additionally suggests that self-awareness can also be approached through expressive arts practice. Some people are capable of understanding emotion in the self and others through spoken language. However, a few may fail or lose this ability due to restricted childhood development acquiring this ability in adult life is difficult (Zeidner *et al.* 2003). It indicates that when a person misses the opportunity as a child to vocalise feelings, it is hard to gain the confidence to do so in later life. Thus, it may be suggested that in such cases students may perform better through expressive techniques. Furthermore, before one can develop the skill of appraising the emotions of others in complex situations, one has to understand one’s own emotions accurately (Burgess 2005).

## 2.2 Emotion

Human beings’ emotions form a complicated mind system that effects our functions in daily life. Hence, “in our understanding of human behaviour and our ability to establish appropriate social relationships it is important to understand those feelings from the perspective of our own experience. It may be that the emotions play a more fundamental role in other areas of understanding as formative or directional indicators in the context of judgements and decisions ” (Radford 2003:256-257). This indicates that our interpretation of other people’s situations and reactions depend on a critical understanding of our own similar experiences. If we can observe our own true thoughts and feelings, we may perceive these of others and this can help to establish greater communication.

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“When it comes to shaping our decisions and our acts, feeling counts every bit as much- and often more- than thought” (Goleman 1996:4). “All emotions are, in essence, impulses to act, the instant plans for handling life that evolution has instilled in us” (1996:6). People’s response to events is often affected by the old pattern of behaviours, i.e. by previous experiences where their emotion conflicts or confused emotions predominated (Leitch and Day 2000). Additionally, some people many feel confused when someone becomes angry for no apparent reason, yet few will be willing to try to understand the underlying reasons for the change in emotions. Therefore, the misunderstanding of true feelings can be very unhelpful.

Kennedy-Moore and Watson (1999) point out that expressing or inhibiting negative emotions can facilitate or degrade one’s emotional state depending upon where, when and who is spoken to. It is important that one should understand the link between internal experience and the outside world. “Emotional experience provides individuals with information about themselves and their environment, as they interact with it and adapt to it” (adaptive emotional regulation) so “emotionally insightful people are vividly in touch with the felt flow of their experience, and they are able to interpret the subjective meaning of their emotional responses” (Kenny-Moore, Watson 1999:63-64). The development of emotional expression contributes to rich self-knowledge. Feelings require discovery, examination and understanding by the person experiencing them; one needs to ‘learn to express’ emotional events to reach inner harmony in much the same way that people need to ask for directions to arrive at their destination when lost.

When a person is experiencing and exhibiting a long term personal emotional conflict, he or she may be directed to see a psychologist or a counsellor regarding their mental health. A growing interest and awareness of physical and mental healthcare has led to a range of possible solutions being developed that can be used to alleviate problems (Kerbaj 2003). For example, many expressive arts therapies have been developed to aid human emotional expression.

“The terms *expressive art therapy* or *expressive arts therapy* generally denotes dance therapy, art therapy, and music therapy. These terms also include therapy through journal writing, poetry, imagery, meditation, and improvisational drama” (Rogers 2000:1). However, this is not exhaustive as it has been observed that, “If it can be used to convey meaning, it is a tool for creative self-expression” (Basting 2006:16). More recently, the term expressive art therapy has been expanded to include innovative therapeutic settings assisted by technological advances; it includes new media such as music, photography and moving images (film/movie therapy). The experts who work in this area as art related psychotherapists look for different ways to engage different groups of people. For example, some professionals prefer to include simulated techniques to enhance the progress of work and establish strong rapport with their clients.

In this following section expressive arts therapy is examined to determine how animation may complement the existing expressive arts used by practitioners.

### 2.3 Expressive arts therapy viewpoint

The fundamental idea behind using expressive arts is that humans are fundamentally creative beings. Human creativity can be seen in cooking, decorating and building houses, gardening and dressing; food may be not appetizing without displaying a satisfying combination of colours; rooms are not comfortable to stay in unless pleasantly furnished; an organized garden embellishes the environs of a house; people dress up to socialise. These are all instances of the application of human creativity. An individual’s feelings and emotions can be revealed in different creative behaviours depending on personal preferences.

Although verbal expression is thought to be the fundamental vehicle for communicating first-hand information in real time, it is easier to talk about actual events than emotions. When it comes to speaking of something close to heart, talking may be ‘refused’. When the skill of verbal communication is withheld or speech becomes limited, expressive arts may offer an opportunity to

transform emotions into visual forms that may provide valuable information about one's internal state (Robbins 1994).

The therapies can be introduced in many ways, drawing, talking, improvisation, creation and movement with people of different ages in all kinds of communities; for example, ethnic minorities, those with learning difficulty, disadvantaged people and prisoners (Campbell *et al.* 1999, Rees 1998, Liebermann 1994). This can take place in private, group or family sessions. The powerful integrative process engendered by the use of nonverbal modes of representation provides an additional path to using verbal language to generate self-expression through both exploration and communication. Shapes, lines, colours, symbols and body movement/gestures are the components of a language that speaks back to the individual and embraces subjective meanings for each individual (Robbins 1994). The creative environment is a space to accept and understand feelings of vulnerability and fragmentation and can also provide a supplementary expressive media to help individuals find a way of talking. People symbolise difficult feelings by creating outer forms (visual representations), one's mind is involved in metaphoric expressions that enable bottled up feelings to come into view.

Roger (2000) describes expressive art, in its diverse forms, as a channel that allows one's inner voice to be heard. It is a responsive, supportive and powerfully integrative process of discovering one's thoughts from the emotional depths. Expressive art is a largely nonverbal mode of expression that inspires many parts of the self i.e. operating on many levels including sensory, kinaesthetic, conceptual and emotional. It emphasises the need to work on emotional aspects of the self and provides a visual transformation of everyday problems that enable one to envision a constructive future.

Rogers (2000) claims that since people have an innate ability to create<sup>1</sup> in a therapeutic setting, the outcome of expressive creativity often supplies important messages back to the creators. Self-awareness, self-understanding and insight are achieved through channelling feelings and emotions, an energy source, into the expressive arts where they can be eliminated and transformed. Such person- or client-centred approaches accentuate the belief that each individual has the capacity for self-direction. The concept is based on the therapists' faith in their ability to be empathic, caring and to help the person to project difficult thoughts. Rogers (2000) states that creativity involves both internal and external conditions that engender psychological openness to experience and dialogue. Thus, expressive art practice provides:

- (1) psychological safety (external) through unconditionally accepting 'the artist's'<sup>2</sup> existence as a human being; the process of expressive creativity has the capacity to provide a psychologically safe environment in which 'the artist' is not judged by his or her previous personal history but is accepted and empathised with.<sup>3</sup> In this non-judgemental platform, 'the artist' is able to develop a personal standard of autonomy. This safety may help to dismantle the artist's defence mechanisms.
- (2) psychological freedom (internal); this means that 'the artist' is given an absolute freedom to be, feel, think, and symbolise the uncovered issues without being criticised by culture or society. When the artist feels safe to reveal his/her stories, they should be able to express freely without feeling condemnatory voices.

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<sup>1</sup> One important thought about creations in a therapeutic setting is that people do not need to have professional drawing skills or the concept of an aesthetic (e.g. one is able to tell a story about simple lines he or she draws to represent certain issues they are experiencing).

<sup>2</sup> Due to the changing nomenclature of patients, participants, practitioners, clients and others who make use of these therapies, I have proposed to use the word *artist* for those people who may use such expressive arts therapies as discussed here.

<sup>3</sup> "It has been defined by the government's Special Education Unit as; 'A shorthand for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown' (SEU 1999). ....It is well documented that people with mental health problems suffer from a combination of the above and are constantly faced with prejudice, stigma and discrimination that results in social exclusion" (Mental Health Practice 2005:13).

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These characteristics of psychological comfort corresponds with Radford's (2002) statement that people need to perceive emotion as a common experience (public events) bridging separate minds. One's emotional thoughts should not be seen as subjective events which in turn helps to establish better interpersonal communication. In other words, viewing difficult feelings and thoughts as impersonal experience enables a person to feel safe and free to express emotional events thereby enabling communication with other people. For example, when people encounter a child who is traumatised by physical abuse, they can help him or her to understand that there are other children who share the similar experiences thereby helping the child to avoid feeling that he or she is different. Together with the empathic connection and understanding of the child's experience, this encourages the child to express these difficult experiences in a more psychologically satisfying way. Hence, the issues that worry the child can be revealed, considered and hopefully resolved.

Rogers (2000) later adds that expressive arts involves planning carefully and providing challenging experiences to stimulate 'the artist' to engage in the creative process of expressive arts rather than mere verbalisation. This last feature may support the proposition of Zeidner, Roberts and Matthews (2002) that the approach to emotional learning is to provide a person-situation interactive environment, with specific situational settings that are designed to help understand emotional perception related to feelings such as guilt, grief or anger.

If I may provide a personal example, I had difficulty expressing certain feelings such as frustration, sadness, disappointment so I tended to become silent or angry when I felt these emotions. I might have been helped to deal with these emotions by a programme designed to enable me to present the real feelings rather than covering them by false displays. For example, I might have joined a drama-play in which I was required to act the part of someone feeling sad, frustrated or disappointed, performing lines such as 'I'm disappointed because my friends never invite me to go out with them', 'I'm frustrated because I didn't do well in tests', 'I'm sad because someone said I looked ugly with my front teeth missing' or 'I'm angry because my friend said she doesn't want to go out with me.' Through taking the part of a character in the play, I might have learnt how to present negative feelings

in a manner comprehensible to others (rather than continually repressing them) thereby increasing my skills in nonverbal and interpersonal communication. Engagement in person-situated creativity offers an approach to self-understanding of emotions.

Expressive arts literally in this context means ‘expressing’ the emotions that have been repressed and releasing them, which can create a therapeutic experience. Many people have been using the arts as a psychologically safe visual approach for expressing personal, critical debates and struggles in politics, war, racism, cultural issues, gender, disease, sexual violence and religion (Kabakov 1999 and Kabakov 2000, Becker *et al.* 2001, Dietrich 1993, Gunhouse 2005).

The reflective process that accompanies creative endeavour can be recognised in the works of artists such as Frida Kahlo, Spence Jo, Judy Chicago and Jonathan Borofsky. In the following pages, I will discuss examples of artists who have used visual presentation for promoting self-expression and emotional awareness.

#### Kahlo, Frida

A remarkable artist who depicted her physical pain, suffering and emotional conflicts through the symbolism of self-portraits is the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo (1907-1954). Kahlo’s psychobiographical approach to representing anecdotal stories from her personal life shows that creative expression in painting can be appreciated as a dynamic language; a language that is used to tell unpleasant events that brings about emotional responses. Kahlo’s work ‘Self-portrait with Cropped Hair’ (1940) represents her struggle with her own identity as a woman whose husband was unfaithful (Diego Rivera- a communist artist); the work ‘Me and My Doll’ (1937) depicts her unbearable miscarriages; ‘The Two Frida’ (1939) suggests a dual personality (angel and devil) resulting from her unfaithful marriage and her own betrayal of Rivera. Her art acted as an “expressive medicine” that comforted her fragile soul<sup>4</sup> (Meskimmon 1996). Kahlo’s works may be interpreted as

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<sup>4</sup> Frida Kahlo’s works are [online] available from < <http://www.fbuch.com/fridaby.htm> > and <<http://www.tendreams.org/kahlo.htm>> [accessed 29<sup>th</sup> May 2007]

the expression and reflection of her emotional experiences and function as a mode of self-awareness. Her visual presentations also provide a communication platform where her inner events are presented to herself and others in her chosen expressive art; painting.

Spence, Jo

Drawing upon her own autobiographical experience in creating or 're-creating reality' through the use of the camera, Spence (1986) became a pioneer in the history of phototherapy; an integration of photography and therapy. Spence was interested in recreating the messages metaphorically hidden behind the photos. Since the middle of the last century, Spence took photos to narrate her experience of depression, breast cancer and interpretation or to explore what her models were trying to present to her through the photos taken either by Spence or themselves (Spence 1986).

Spence's commitment to discovering and presenting the different side of inner reality was presented in 'Remodelling Photo History 1981 To 1982' (Spence 1986). Her real self, so eager to seek out the missing love of her mother resulted in other outer activities, 'I remind myself that in the search for love outside the family I emotionally nurtured myself at the chip shop, on the look out for boys; circa 1949' (1991:232), and her emotional conflicts with her parents who abandoned her three times during the World War II (Spence 1991). These were detailed in Spence's autobiographies in 'Putting myself in the picture' (Spence 1986) and 'Family Snaps' (Spence 1991).

Later in her photo-autobiographical journey, Spence was especially interested in creative collaboration through which photographers tried to raise public awareness of political issues such as childcare, healthcare, racism, sexism, violence against women, women's roles in family and cultural issues. "It is not for me to explain what the work is 'about', but I hope it will be used as a jumping-off point for discussion and argument" (Spence 1986:13). Spence's (1986) intention in her phototherapy was not to provide the world with a definite solution, rather it was about 'making demands' for changes and 'taking control' of life through the empowerment of this expressive medium. Spence began by using photos to express and reflect on her relationship with her parents and later adopted the

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same expressive method to project social issues in attempt to raise public awareness of these concerns. This emotional journey constructed through her photographic practice indicates a significant process of self-awareness.

Chicago, Judy

Also, an influential art historian, Chicago's work (1999) shows how multimodal expressive techniques including "performance, installation, pyrotechnics, ceramics, textiles, needlework, stained glass, or micrography" (Chicago 1999:28) may be used to demonstrate reflective dialogues. For instance, her frustration about the absence of female artists in art history is illustrated in 'Female rejection drawing' (1974), her struggle as a feminist in a male dominated social culture is expressed in 'Through the flower, my struggle as a woman artist' (1970-1977), her disputes about women identity's in society is raised in 'The Birth Project' (1980-1985), her perception of her background as a Jewess is depicted in 'The Dinner Party' (1974-1979). Most of her works present the confusion about her own multiple roles in life as a woman (Chicago 1999)<sup>5</sup>. Chicago's enthusiastic approach to multimode expressive arts facilitates the establishment of certainty in the "content, and in particular the content of her life" (1999:16).

Chicago's works sustain a long lasting reflection in a wide audience, evidenced particularly in 'The Dinner Party' project that "attracted over 400 workers, some for several years" (1999:10) and in 'The Birth Project' that "involved approximately 150 needleworkers, some of whom proclaimed their allegiance to the imagery, though they had personal differences with the artist" (2000:10). Chicago's work suggests that metaphorical art, with motivational meanings, may complete whole chapters of human experience whilst bringing the subjectivity inherent in private events, into a public conversational sphere. Similar to the artistic contribution of Spence (1986), Chicago's projects also evidence a great degree of self-awareness in both personal and interpersonal contexts.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Chicago's works are [online] available from <<http://www.lewallencontemporary.com/judychicago/categories>> [24 Sep 2007]

<sup>6</sup> Chicago's projects are [online] available from <<http://www.throughtheflower.org/page.php?p=5&n=1>> [11 August 2007]

Borofsky, Jonathan

Ann Curran describes the creative journey of the artist, Jonathan Borofsky, also evidencing the value of expressive arts in his work. Starting as a young artist after graduating in New York, Borofsky flew to France for a summer course during the master course at Yale School of Art and Architecture. In the interview, he told of his early obsession with numbers and counting and later with his dreams. Both provided nutrition to many of his architectural art works (Borofsky 2002). Curran also reports that Borofsky visualises his dreams in his creations, which in turn presents him with answers to difficult human issues such as “why we hurt each other, why we help each other, why we do what we do... what can I learn from this subconscious area that can may be help me? It has given me some major symbols” (Borofsky 2002).

Prompted by his nickname ‘Jennie’ and Hitler’s history, Borofsky created a series of Jennie Hitler<sup>7</sup> work that involves music, drawings and photographs. Borofsky states that he was born when Hitler dominated the world stage and has always been curious about why a mind such as Hitler’s might exist? He states that this was also a study of the dark side of himself, by understanding Hitler’s mind he hoped to discuss in his life. Such issues might be ‘anger that I might be feeling, fear that I might be feeling, the need to control (and that’s the big one) that I might be feeling in my own life, that each person feels in their life. When do you feel powerless? When do you need to lash out? When do you need to control another human being? When do men need to control women?’ (Borofsky 2002). Whilst creating ‘Jennie Hitler’ he also asks questions about Hitler’s childhood such as ‘How was he raised? What possibility made him what he was, what led to it? If you confront causes, then you can possibly find the solution to keep it from happening the next time’ (Borofsky 2002).

These questions about the history of Hitler’s life indicated that Borofsky experienced the processes of:

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<sup>7</sup> The sound tracks of Borofsky’s ‘Jennies Hitler’ musical project are [online] available from <http://www.borofsky.com/music/jonniehitler%5Bm%5D/index.html> [22 Sep 2007]

- (1) self-awareness (expression and reflection) and the understanding of his emotions and those of others. Although Borofsky did not experience the same events as Hitler's, he tried to understand similar feelings that he and others might confront in their own lifetimes. Borofsky was aware of his darker emotions such as anger, fear or the need of control by raising the questions of why some people hurt other people and of why men tend to control women.
- (2) Utilising emotion to facilitate thinking and performance. Borofsky reflected on the history of Hitler in order to recognise the antecedences and consequences of human emotion. The recognition and understanding of Hitler's childhood may prompt Borofsky to better actions in the future which could prevent hurtful childhood events from happening again.

Therefore, it can be postulated that by engaging in the creation of expressive art, a person can be stimulated to become more aware of emotional events, which may lead to an understanding that can help to achieve better life outcomes.

#### Other expressive arts users

Additionally, individuals who experience psychological disorders such as schizophrenia, trauma depression, learning difficulties and intellectual disability, have also employed various art materials to verbalise painful, but common experiences<sup>8</sup> (Shingler 2002, Cary 2006, Welsby and Horsfall 2006). In such cases, the use of expressive art provides 'the artists' with a key that allows their inner voice to be heard in the wider community and also encourages people not to feel alone; "...knowing you're not alone is another important awareness in the healing process" (Solomon 2001)<sup>9</sup>. Professional and untrained artists are not the only visual practitioners who understand the power of the visual

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<sup>8</sup> "Hundreds of millions of people worldwide are affected by mental, behavioural, neurological and substance use disorders. For example, estimates made by WHO in 2002 showed that 154 million people globally suffer from depression and 25 million people from schizophrenia; 91 million people are affected by alcohol use disorders and 15 million by drug use disorders. A recently published WHO report shows that 50 million people suffer from epilepsy and 24 million from Alzheimer and other dementias" (World Health organisation 2005). "The current prevalence estimate is that about 20 percent of the U.S. population are affected by mental disorders during a given year. This estimate comes from two epidemiologic surveys: the Epidemiologic Catchment Area (ECA) study of the early 1980s and the National Comorbidity Survey (NCS) of the early 1990s" (U.S Department of Health & Human Services c. 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Solomon, Gary (1995-2001) is an important media-use psychotherapist who will be addressed later.

representation of emotional reality that enables a person to communicate and make changes in life, academics also understand its importance in a social context.

A project of over 7 years standing, 'Creative Practices of Hope' organised by a group of community workers, activists and academics has explored different expressive activities in multifaceted projects including 'No Interest Loans Scheme', 'Access Tourism, Residential Home Patterson Road', 'Living in Harmony Project' (telling-retelling success stories), 'Soapbox', 'Topic Tables' and 'Community Stories' (creative community workshops), 'Street Theatre Performing Community' (theatre play), 'Collaborative Mosaic' (visual creativity). The aim of such projects is to understand 'how the creative practices of hope can help to make a change to social concerns of environmental sustainable living, aboriginal culture and social welfare' (Horsfall 2006).

These reviews of creative activities suggest that expressive art can help its practitioners to channel their emotional thoughts onto a public platform whereby feelings are expressed, heard and shared by themselves and others; personal feeling need not be private but can become a common experience that people can learn from. Therefore, expressive art can function as an affective language that facilitates this promotion of self-expression and emotional awareness related to diverse parts of human life, political and social issues.

A film is an expressive product that involves the integration of script (writing, poetry, storytelling), scenes (imagery, photography, sculptures), sound tracks (music) and performance (dance, drama, play). As a product, it encompasses a wide range of the expressive techniques. It is this integrated expressive medium that I am going to address in the next section; to explore how the viewing of a movie may prompt viewers to express and reflect on feelings and thoughts and thereby become aware of emotions.

#### 2.4 Media usage in therapy; moving-pictures/film/movie/cinema

The potential use of film as a technique in a therapeutic setting began to receive attention in the 1990's and "owes its beginning to a clinical intervention know as bibliotherapy, a technique employed in the 1930s by psychiatrist Carl Menninger, who assigned fiction and non-fiction reading to hospitalized psychiatric patients to expand their horizons and redirect their attention" (Hesley 2001).

An increasing number of psychotherapists (such as Soloman, 1995:2001, Wolz, 2002, Wooder, 2003 and Ulus, 2003) have prescribed film viewing to help stimulate their client's emotional responses to life problems. Although it is said that there is not yet a clear definition of movie therapy/cinema therapy/film therapy, the psychotherapists that use the medium have reached the consensus that films can help people's emotional adversities and conflicts to rise to the surface, where they may be easier to confront, in a similar manner to that of expressive approaches such as imagery, photography and drama therapy.

Hence, film may help to unpack emotional issues in the self. It may also act as a catalyst in the development of rapport between the therapist and client. Solomon (1995) describes the language of motion visual expression as being beyond the use of thousands of words. It is an indirect language- a second language that may help individuals who possess insufficient verbal means of communication find ways to re-organise thoughts and actions regarding their emotions. Tangled thoughts and feelings may appear more powerfully through sequential images, complemented by movement and an audio soundtrack, than in static media.

Solomon (1995) also explains that our 'resistance' to revealing long-standing problems or feelings of denial can be alleviated by movies which provide a useful means to help people mirror and recognize their emotions and inner conflicts from an outside spectator's perspective. Film encourages people to meditate upon their emotional responses to difficult events from their own past or ongoing issues. Feelings can be explored and expressed through the characters and scenes in the film. The viewers are caught up in the emotional life of a movie that suspends time and space (Solomon 1995). What the audience experience through the characters is the identification and reflection on emotions that facilitate comfort and positive thinking.

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Films can project a visible light on a problem that may help the viewer capture something they have not been able to contextualise previously. The viewer of the film may identify with a character that fights to overcome his/her challenges to gain strength or to remove the negative impressions. This may lead to hope in the viewer and the uncovering of matters that have been repressed. Ulus (2005) explains that the therapeutic experience of group based movie therapy begins with the process of projecting thoughts, feelings and beliefs onto the characters before moving onto the stage of making possible suggestions for solving problems or raising questions on behalf of the characters. In this process of reflective thinking, the group participants are able to reflect back suggestions or alternative actions to their own situations and reflect on their own circumstances. Ulus (2005) claims that the role of the film is both as a co-therapist and educator that helps to promote emotional self-awareness.

The benefit of this approach is also briefly outlined by Wooder (2003) who claims that watching films helps individuals to identify problems and solutions, provides positive role models, clarifies relationship issues, unlocks unconscious and repressed feelings, and stimulates the viewer with inspiration and motivation in self improvement and personal growth. Thus, the emotional skills associated with EI can be enhanced by employing movie therapy. In the therapeutic context, watching films helps to:

- (1) facilitate the viewers in mapping out problems, responding to emotional experiences; this corresponds to emotional awareness,
- (2) provide positive roles; this relates to the ability to recognising emotions which in turn improve thinking and performance,
- (3) clarify the feelings or issues in relationships; this is associated with the ability to understand the antecedents and consequences of emotions,
- (4) trigger the motivation and inspiration of the viewer for personal growth; this may be evidenced by the regulation of one's emotional reality to the benefit of better future outcomes.

Solomon (1995) claims that he had experienced therapeutical emotional journeys through film viewing since his own childhood. Solomon explains that the story of his own experience with movie viewing as a path to self-knowledge was similar to a product of motion pictures; he did not learn to read or write until he was twelve, which led to difficulties at school, but nothing mattered to him except watching movies. His interest in studying 'biographies' and 'real-life stories' helped him to learn emotional acts such as trust, love, and empathy, that he was never aware of or received in his own violent family (Solomon 2001). Solomon thus started to realise the vital nature of sharing emotions through this particular medium and its value as a meaning of communicating his own inner realities. Living in the world of movies protected the young Solomon from feelings of pain, abuse and fear (Solomon 2001) and later alcoholism, caused by his failed business and marriage (Solomon 1995). On a similar level, Wooder (2006) was introduced to the world of movies by his mother when he was young, who often took him to see films while his father was away during World War II. Solomon and Wooder's awareness of their own emotional experience through films promoted an ability to help understand and elucidate the emotions of others, with the intention of improving the quality of human experience.

#### 2.4-1 A fictional approach to self-awareness; watching movies

The question raised here is what is it that attracts the psychotherapists to employ films in their expressive arts therapy approach. Is it because it is 'a little more fascinating and colourful than bibliotherapy' (Ulus 2003) or because more people watch TV than read books? It may be because it is faster to discuss a story about another person who has a similar life situation through the viewing of film than reading book, as reading texts requires greater time and levels of literacy. Wolz (2002) states that watching films can facilitate both learning and creativity by inciting the seven human intelligences; "the logical (plot), the linguistic (dialogs), the interpersonal (storytelling), the visual-spatial (pictures, colours, symbols), the musical (sounds and music), the kinaesthetic (movement), and the intra-psychic (mental model)" (Wolz 2002). The plot of a film, including the dialogs, leads the viewers to project themselves onto the movie's protagonists or antagonists. From this position they can explore the issues that they are struggling with. Through the digital storytelling, the viewers

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identify with a character, explore their own response to characters and their lives. Consequently, the viewers may become conscious of their forgotten and troublesome inner states and through projection these may be transformed, leading to greater emotional strength.

Wolz's notion that film triggers several intelligences including intrapersonal intelligence (i.e. emotional awareness), the concept of which might have originated from the Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory (see section 2.6 for more details). In response to the challenge of education in the multimedia century, Gardner's MI theory has been used widely to provide more educational opportunities. Veenema and Gardner (1996) state that watching a film can benefit different ways of learning; some individuals may prefer linguistic or narrative approaches; others may benefit through mere artistic description; and some others may relate more to a personal dimension- how social events impacts on real people (Veenema and Gardner 1996). These are different ways of exhibiting knowledge in which "individuals take in information, retain and manipulate that information, and demonstrate their understanding (and misunderstanding) to themselves and others" (Veenema and Gardner 1996). This posits that even watching a CD-ROM documentary can reach language, logic and other mental representations (visual, music and kinaesthetic intelligences).

#### 2.4-2 Psychological safety and freedom in watching movies

Reflecting on a situation-related movie can assist the viewers in developing the ability to visualize their difficulties through a big screen mirror of their own life in a non-judgemental environment (Wolz 2002). It is a secure space that may help reduce one's denial of negative feelings, thinking, actions or events that blocks access to the awareness of one's actual emotional state. This is similar to the features of the expressive arts outlined by Rogers (2000) in the previous section.

Projecting oneself in a psychologically safe environment is crucial as it helps to suspend disbelief allowing one to see oneself through the mirror of film (Solomon 1995:2001). The viewers feel safe because they are not judged, instead the events that resonate with their experience are encountered by characters in the movie. This helps the viewers to project their own thoughts and feelings freely, such

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that they may be able to find ways to overcome past and ongoing issues. The process of observation, emotional stimulation and reflection that leads to an increasing self-awareness, accurate understanding of the causality of emotions can be achieved by the viewer via an audio-visual presentation of life stories, thus helping them break down their emotional barriers.

#### 2.4-3 Movies in social context

The value of watching movies in social contexts has been noted by a group of educational communities and local Universities in Taiwan (Cheng Xaie Ing 2005). The video bibliography course is designed to raise citizens' awareness and concerns of political issues through watching, sharing and discussing movie narratives. It is believed that in this way citizens are motivated and encouraged to develop skills in observing social events and personal emotions and to contemplate these digital narratives in order to enhance life quality, social environment and advance the meaning of life's meaning (Cheng 2005).

The award winning American movie 'I am Sam' (Nelson 2001), for instance, is used on the course to encourage participants to think through and discuss issues relating to how they would feel if there was a disadvantaged person in the family; what issues should be considered in deciding the custody of a child; relationships with parents or money, is it right to gain one's own benefits by any means; what education is best for children and how can parents establish a good relationship with their own children (Cheng 2005). The process of reflection brought about by watching this movie and subsequent discussion of the digital narrative is related to the development of emotional intelligence. It starts from self-awareness, emotional perspective taking (what would you feel if there was a disabled member in your family), understanding the causes and consequences of emotions in the narrative to facilitate thinking and action (coping strategies related to issues risen from the movie). Both professionals and citizens have clearly shown that emotional development can be achieved through film viewing.

2.4-4 The movies that encourage the viewers in self-expression and reflection (self-awareness of emotion)

The Oscar nominated movie 'Frida', directed by Julie Taymor is a biographical account of the life of the renowned artist Frida Kahlo. The movie begins retrospectively by showing the artist confined to bed and being brought to her last exhibition. The plot cuts to shots of Frida's teenage life, culminating in a car crash, which badly damaged Frida's spine and temporarily immobilised her. Frida's boyfriend, who was also in the car accident, when he tells her that he is going to study abroad Frida starts to paint to release her sense of loss. She tries to regain her physical strength in the hope of being able to walk again and earn her own living. In these attempts her father uses the family estate to cover the expensive medical treatments. Frida's professional career begins with her showing her work to the famous artist, Diego Rivera, who admires her portraits. Frida's unique and strong character attracts Rivera and they quickly become lovers and marry. After the marriage Frida discovers his infidelity. Her complex feelings towards Rivera and subsequent miscarriages become the emotional resources which Frida transforms into a visual autobiography.

Despite its stunning visual effects and cinemagraphical design, the movie may be historically inaccurate. Kahlo is falsely represented as settling down and making art about her husband and other sexual experiences, concealing her contributions as a 'revolutionary, libertine, feminist' (Briley 2003). However, Bartra and Mraz (2005) argue that 'Frida' was not produced as a historical biography, rather it sought to reflect and raise issues, constructed from a written history and personal memories. The line voiced by 'Frida'- 'we don't belong here. I am tired of gringos, and I am tired of who you are when you are around them, reflecting her emotional encounters and the political situation in U.S.A' enable the audience to appreciate what it means to be an outsider, the issue of racism, the difficulty of understanding the culture, or even the differences that exist between couples.

The movie provided Taymor with an opportunity to recount Kahlo's story in a way that encouraged the audience to become aware of the emotional and political issues explored in the movie. 'Frida' challenges Hollywood's formula that everything has a happy ending, "Frida insists that life should be

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lived well rather than long” (Bartra and Mraz 2005:456). The movie encourages the audience to articulate thoughts and feelings about the artist’s emotional conflicts and reflect on the ongoing social issues voiced in the film. Through this process of reflection and discussion, movie viewing may increase the audience’s self-awareness.

‘Billy Elliot’ was directed by Stephen Daldry (2000) and tells the story of a boy growing up in a colliery village in Durham during the 1984 miner’s strike. The 11-year-old boy is a member of a working class family, including his grandmother, father and brother, the latter are striking miners. Enduring the early death of his mother and the distress of the miner’s strike, Billy lies about attending boxing lessons and spends the money on ballet lessons instead. His teacher discovers his ambition and talent. Discovering the lies, Billy’s father bans him from further lessons and his brother wails against Billy’s interest in dance. Venting his frustration, Billy performs an infectiously expressive dance, kicking against the walls of the house and dancing through the empty streets until he falls in exhaustion. A year passes and on Christmas Eve, Billy and his friend sneak into a gymnasium to dance. This is when Billy’s father recognises his son’s talent when Billy is caught by his father expressing his passion, determination and dreams of life beyond the colliery town through the language of dance. After gaining his father’s support and the help of his teacher, Billy attends an audition of the Royal Ballet School in London. In order to support this trip, Billy’s father has to abandon the strike to join the blacklegs and withstand the sarcasm of his peers. His support is justified when Billy’s commitment to dance secures a place at the Royal Ballet School. The movie ends with Billy’s father and brother waiting for him to perform in Swan Lake.

In an interview, Stephen Daldry, the director explains that in searching for a dancer to play the role of Billy they were looking for someone who could use dance as a ‘language of self-expression’, ‘for instance, it is actually a conversation, Billy is talking to his father through his dance. It was dance as action rather than as aesthetics; dance as conversation rather than as abstract; the kid expressing himself rather than the brilliance of the finished product’ (Daldry 2000). This statement is a claim that expressive art, dance performance in this case, can be a language of self-expression that transforms

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personal emotional awareness into actions. In the interpersonal context, the movie triggers the audience to express their own thoughts about Billy's emotional difficulties and reflect on the potential issues of growing up in a single family, with complex family relationship, living under a stressful economic circumstances and fears of difficult life decisions. Given the discussion to date, it is reasonable to postulate that after watching such a film, the audience themselves may be prompted in increased self-awareness.

'The Legend of the pianist of the ocean' -The Legend of 1900- (Tornatore 1998) is based on a monologue by Italian author- Alessandro Baricco. The movie, directed by Guiseppe Tornatore, depicts the story of Novecento's reputation as the best piano player of his era. He never leaves the cruising ship 'Viginian', which is the only world he knows. Novecento is separated from his parents and discovered by an engineer who works and dies on the ship. Novecento becomes part of the ship; although at one time he tries to leave it, for a girl he meets there. He decides to spend his entire life playing piano at sea. He performs as a member of the orchestra for first-class passengers and in other classes he entertains homesick travellers who voyage to new places comforted by his nostalgic music.

There are two scenes that show how Novecento's observations and emotional interactions are transformed in his music. In his playing he shows his understanding of the emotional state of the first-class passengers' and later in a piano contest with the famous Jazz music pianist, Jelly Roll Morton, Novecento projects his emotional response to Jelly Roll's music through his own music. This turns into an improvisational piece that saves him from losing a competition that he had no hope of winning. Novecento uses music reflectively as a dialectic conversation to deliver his interpretation of people's emotions.

In watching the movie, the audience observes Novecento using his affective language to express his own emotions and those of others, and his fear of leaving his familiar surroundings. When he has a chance to leave the ship, he stops on the stairs as he realises that the number of choices he would have

to make are overwhelming. The audience is encouraged to reflect on these dilemmas and decisions. In this way they establish perceptions and suggestions that may be adopted in their own lives.

The emotionally compelling movie 'City Of God' (Meirelles 2002) directed by Fernando Meirelles and Katia Lund, depicts Paulo Lin's autobiographical novel that recalls his youth- the real stories of drug dealing, armed violence, gang warfare, the seduction of children by the promise of easy money, and the struggles with living in a favela life in 1960 in Brazil. The movie starts with a retrospective flash to Rocket's childhood, how he deals with the death of his family, his brother's murder and his relationship with drug dealers, his escape from the life of favela through his interest in photography. Escaping from a life of crime, Rocket changes his life by becoming a professional photographic journalist whose camera records the shocking details of the troubled community. Rocket's story conveys an understanding that photography can be an expressive language that promotes awareness in the self and others. We learn to view the dangerous favela life through the eye of Rocket's camera, the truth about the emotional affliction and confusion present in a difficult world (Backstein 2003) - the audience are encouraged to reflect on the political issues raised in this movie, such as the welfare of orphans, drug dealing by young children and the violence dealt to children.

The discussion of the above films suggests the value of movie viewing in promoting emotional awareness in audience. However, drawing on Roger's third feature of expressive art mentioned previously, self-awareness of emotion can also be articulated through engaging in the process of movie making.

#### 2.4-5 Biographical and autobiographical approaches to self-awareness; making your own movie

The concept of using motion pictures for personal growth and the improvement of social environments has now evolved to a new dimension and is epitomised in the 'make your own movie' experience. In comparison with viewing films, the making of a movie may enable practitioners to make contact with their own emotions more actively.

Karr (2006) was a member of the Department of Psychiatry (the Human Sexuality Program) at UC Medical School in San Francisco specialising in cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) in individual, couple and group therapy settings. CBT is an approach that aims to re-establish the metaphors people live by i.e. to modify cognitions, assumptions, beliefs and behaviours by reconstructing negative emotions (Karr 2005). In the course of his private practice, he discovered that filmic therapy helped his clients mirror the unconscious level of their emotional behaviour when they were able to watch themselves performing in a movie. He uses video film therapy to prompt his clients to become 'more conscious of their various communication patterns including, non-verbal, and body patterns' (Karr 2005). By means of the making-your-own-movie process, Karr assists his clients to reflect on connections between unconscious messages and verbal presentation (conscious). Unconscious states can be communicated through 'body posture, affect, eye movement, gestures, facial expressions, eye dilation, clothing, persona, etc' (Karr 2005). Understanding these non-verbal expressions can assist clients in improving their own interpersonal communication.

A report entitled 'Film therapy turns troubled kid's around' was broadcast on ABC radio on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2002 in Austria. In her self-scripted film, a twenty-two year old girl, Bek, played out her struggle with drugs after being released from prison and also composed music about her own life. Bek's mother, Annette Smith, agreed to act out with Bek, the most painful episodes of her life. It was a therapeutic activity for Annette and Bek, Annette had a chance to tell her daughter what had happened to her during Bek's stays in prison. Annette also stated that 'if I tell everyone and I help one person, I help one parent or I help one kid from not going through what we've been through, to me that's everything' (The 7.30 Report 2002). Their participation in the movie involves not only understanding each other's feelings and thoughts about personal events but also reflection on the family experience that motivates Annette to inform other youths' life. Kerry Armstrong, an experienced mentor, who knows Bek, commented that the expressive and creative process of the biographical movie provides young people with an opportunity to voice their thoughts on their way of life, experiences of emotion, and to bring this knowledge to a wider audience. The product may also help to raise the public's awareness of issues that it might not have experienced or understood (The 7.30 Report 2002).

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In this context, the making of movies may promote the self-awareness of;

- (1) the filmmakers whose own expressions and reflections on emotional aspects of their own life, are presented in or through their movie.
- (2) the viewer whose thoughts and feelings are expressed through and projected onto the characters, and who are encouraged to reflect on their own life situations.

Using multi-modal approaches to expressive art to share feelings and thoughts with other people is about presenting a story of a person. Emotional experiences can be told through different forms of storytelling- verbalising, writing, auditory presenting or visualising. The film is an integration of many other forms of storytelling.

## 2.5 Storytelling

Human beings have a great propensity to tell and listen to stories. Storytelling is conducted frequently in families, classes, offices and social events to convey knowledge about nature, science, social morality and to inform the construction of culture and history. Narrative can be in the form of folklore such as anecdotes, fantasy as in fairy tales, or mysteries as in legends and fables. They are used as templates for life events, on which one projects experience to make meaning from them. Storytelling can happen almost anytime, anywhere in various forms; talking (speech), reading (text), writing (journals) and watching (movie). Engaging in the creation encourages a person blending of the story with an emotional appraisal of the character and the self. By empathising with the protagonist in the story and elaborating what the character does or does not do, one is emotionally engaged in identifying with the events that are portrayed. In such ways, personal emotional conflicts or confusion can be represented and inspected (Bhattacharyya 1997).

The potential of storytelling has been long been understood in therapeutic settings. The concept of narrative (storytelling) therapy was introduced with the aim of changing a person's way of thinking and acting by assisting him/her to externalise problems (Freedman and Combs 1996). A story is often

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told based on a person's own interpretation of a situation, which is framed by their own experience. The structure of the interpretation influences the way a person represents the stories. This may alter the meaning and perception of the self. For instance, if a little girl is told to buy a particular item in the supermarket and she cannot find the specific brand, she may return without fulfilling task. Her mother may be upset by her inability to complete a simple task and shout at her. The little girl may later perceive herself as being stupid or incapable of completing tasks. If this is frequently repeated, these negative forces may affect the girl, so that she grows up with low self-motivation or depression. The goal of the therapist is to understand the person's emotional barriers and to map out the pattern of the thinking process in order to advance the person's awareness of particular events (promoting self-awareness). This process involves a reciprocal mode of storytelling and listening; the therapist listens to the story and then responds to it. After clarification of emotional conflicts, the therapist is in a position to help the person to re-author his or her stories. Life experience is often a reconstructive journey. Meanings in life are constantly reframed, revised, rehearsed, or reshaped by the process of one's own awareness and reflection. When the person's story is represented in a pessimistic mode, this may indicate obstructions to personal growth and life outcomes. In such cases, the story needs to be transformed into a more positive one. This may lead to new ways of thinking and behaviour that the person may wish to adopt. The mutual goal of the client and therapist is to work out an achievable preferred view of the future. This involves retelling and listening and sequentially moving on to discuss how the preferred future of the story can be achieved. Storytelling has been promoted as an important experiential-oriented expressive language that enables increased self-awareness. Examples of storytelling in the form of film are provided in the following section.

These movies are described from:

- (1) the filmmaker's perspective. Personal feelings and thoughts about an event/subject are expressed in the movie and depending on the type of movie, may be accompanied by reflection-on-events presented in the movie, and reflection-in-action in which changes are made during the production (e.g. the movie '20 30 40'), and

(2) the audience perspective. Personal feelings and thoughts related to the event are expressed through or projected onto the characters. This may facilitate the viewers in reflection on their own emotional experiences.

#### 2.5-1 A biographical approach to self-awareness; the films '20 30 40' and 'Nobody Knows'

The movie '20 30 40' (Chang 2004) tells the story of three women's dreams, goals and aspirations in a postmodern society at three different ages. The idea for this movie was originally proposed over coffee between the director Chang Sylvia (who plays the 40 year-old Lily in the movie), Liu Lou Iang (who plays the 30 year-old, Hsian-Hsian) and Lee Shin Jieg (who plays the 20 year-old Jieg). During their chat, Liu mischievously proposed that since the three of them were almost ten years apart in age, they could produce a collaborative album to celebrate the three significant stages of a woman's life.

Chang agreed and felt enthusiastic about their first collaborative music album. Subsequently, she felt that this could be more fully presented in a movie. The script was co-authored by all three who blended stories from their own backgrounds, thoughts about what they anticipated from life and their 'age related' personal goals. The three women live in the same space and time, leading parallel lives, pursuing dissimilar dreams whilst confronting significant life events.

Through the character of Jieg, Lee represents a 20 year-old Malay girl's passion for music of wanting to be a singer, and her courage in moving to Taipei to achieve this. This reflects Lee's own musical career. She left Malaysia to go to Taipei at a very young age. Lee (2004) states that young people are full of courage as they try to achieve their dreams. Being 20 is a big event for most young people in deciding what they want to be and how they want to lead their lives. Reflecting on her own experience of coming alone from Malaysia and fighting for her dream in Taiwan, she recalls her closest friend from USA who supported her when she did not know anyone in an unfamiliar country. Lee wants her character to work through these particular scenarios and connect with the audience.

Liu sees the character of 30 year-old Hsian Hsian as being of her most embarrassing age; she is less risk-taking than a 20 year old and is less settled than a 40 year old. A 30 year-old woman is still under pressure of traditional culture, but at the same time is challenged by the openness of her 20 year old friends. Enduring the pressures of being a 30 year-old woman herself, Liu (2004) describes that she is really experiencing embarrassment. Liu wanted to project what it felt like to be giving up on one's dreams, of not taking risks and just waiting for something to turn up.

Inspired by Chang in the re-edits, who told her that 30 year-old women can actually be quite nasty, Liu was prompted to contemplate a new approach for Hsian Hsian. Liu wrote the second version of Hsian Hsian's story to show her as a woman who desires love, is surrounded by many men but is constantly buried by feelings of loneliness and fear. However, Liu (2004) felt that the second part of Hsian Hsian character was different from how she felt. She produced a third version of Hsian Hsian's story in which Hsian Hsian is aware of the sort of love she desires and this her to settle down after the period of the emotional chaos. During the script writing, Liu tried to express how she felt but was also encouraged to explore the different sides of a 30 year-old woman's personality. The reflection on her own life (showing little courage and objectivity) and the second version of Hsian Hsian's story (trapped, alone and tearful) leads to the final script that projects a preferred future for Hsian Hsian. Through the development of the narrative Liu expresses and reflects on Hsian Hsian's problems and in doing so reaches new levels of self-awareness.

Lily (Chang) is a woman who is passionately devoted to life, ever striving, not wanting to be defeated, and having a positive way of thinking. Yet these characteristics are the outcome of the 40 year old woman's inner turmoil. Chang (2004) writes that it is very tiring to be a woman of this age who still strives for everything. Chang suggests that at this age in her life a woman is responsible for her children and enjoys the ordinary aspects of life.

The stories of the women are also connected to their family life; Jieg's close friend tries to find her biological father in Taiwan; Hsian Hsian asks the spirit of her mother for guidance in finding the right

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man with whom to raise a family; Lily fights to maintain her family after she discovers her husband's affair.

Chang (2004) states that the movie works for both males and females as the female characters cannot survive without the male ones. When looking at the lives of the male characters in the movie, the film can also be read as a movie about the life experiences of men of different ages- their struggles, failure, conflicts at work and in relationships. The stories extend from the lives of the three women to relationships in the family and the lives of men. This serves as an open discussion that helps the audience to project and reflect on these aspects of their own life. Additionally, the making of the movie involved collective reflection between the actresses and the director, including their responses to the making of the movie.

'Nobody Knows' (Koreeda 2004) was directed and written by Hirokazu Koreeda based on a Japanese news story of 1988, about four abandoned children's survival in a Tokyo apartment. Each child was born of a different father (Kauffmann 2005). The mother did not plan to abandon her children and kept sending money to her oldest child, who took care of his younger siblings, during her absence. Fascinated by the subject of humanity and its fragility, Koreeda wanted to understand more about the children; what they thought about their mother's care and affection, how they interacted with each other under isolated living conditions, what they did to pass their time since they were not enrolled in school; what their social life was, how Akira (the eldest child) felt when he spent the money on video games with his friends; what were their dreams; who they wanted to be in the future and how they felt when the youngest child died without his mother present. These questions are partly presented in the movie as Koreeda interprets how the children felt. Koreeda avoided showing the children as weak victims and passing judgements on the mother for abandoning her children. Reflecting on the news story, Koreeda intended to express his identification with the children, his understanding of the children's emotions and how these affected them in a way that may raise the audience's empathetic response to this particular subject. Isolation, fear, illness, vulnerability and death all present great

problems for a family of children struggling to survive in a world separated from normal society. The viewers are invited to reconsider the relationships in the family.

### 2.5-2 Autobiographical storytelling

Autobiography is a form of storytelling that has been used for many purposes; educational psychology (Mayo 2003), academic study of lived experience (Clandinin 2006), personal development planning (James 2004), self-reflection (Balas 2005), emotional release (Abercrombie 2002) and the creation of balance in one's inner world (Bohlmeijer *et al.* 2005).

Balas (2005) explains that the scripting of one's reflection of a particular experience involves a deep level of active engagement with the affective recollection and the reconstruction of identification. Mayo's (2003) own reflection and the participants' feedback on such 'Life-Adjustment Narrative' signifies that recounting one's experience in autobiographical form is an academic approach to self-discovery, requiring critical thinking, creative self-expression and the challenge of comprehending thoughts and internal motivation.

The aforementioned studies may suggest that the autobiographical approach is a way to achieve various aspects of personal development that involve self-awareness. It may be further proposed that the process of self-awareness can be promoted through creating autobiographical stories in a form of new media.

Drawing upon these propositions, there are a number of filmmakers who adopt an auto/biographical digital storytelling approach to movie production. I am going to refer to the autobiographical movies of 'A Time To Live, A Time To Die' (Hou 1985), 'A One and a Two; Yi Yi' (Yang 2000), 'Tarnation' (Caouette 2005) and the biographical movies of '20 30 40' (Chang 2004) and 'Nobody Knows' (Koreeda 2004). As mentioned earlier, I propose that self-awareness may occur through the process of making-your-own movies.

2.5-3 An autobiographical approach to self-awareness; the films 'A Time To Live, A Time To Die' (Hou 1985), 'A One and a Two; Yi-Yi' (Yang 2000), 'Tarnation' (Caouette 2002)

An important figure in the New Taiwan Cinema Movement, Hou Hsiao Hsien's film 'A Time To Live, A Time To Die' (Hou 1985) reflects on his childhood memories of the lives of his family and peers. Hou was born in China in 1947 and his family migrated to Taiwan in 1949 (Berry 2003). In this movie, Hou revisits his own childhood, showing how the family tried to adjust to the new life. This autobiography depicts, in a simple manner, domestic events in the family and violence in the village. The story tells how family members become ill and die including his grandmother who died in the house but laid unnoticed for several days. These may be interpreted as Hou's personal memories of painful experiences in his childhood. The movie also serves as an opportunity for Hou to visually depict his loss and its emotional impact, which are repressed and unexpressed for so long. Silent cinema is Hou's chosen filmic technique, which powerfully captures the unexpected depths of feeling (Maslin 1986). By watching the movie, the audience may be stimulated into the process of re-thinking and reliving their experiences and those of others. This establishes a space in which emotion may be uncovered, expressed, received through the act of the characters in the movie, and exchanged against the audience.

A related evocative level of emotional awareness may be aroused by Edward Yang's 'A One and a Two: (Yi Yi)' (Yang 2000). This movie illustrates a Taipei family's daily struggle with multidimensional emotional conflicts in a series of confessions (Bowman 2000). It details the realisations of emptiness in the family, contradictions of love amongst parents, friends and partners and siblings and of the gap between self-attainment and external expectation. I suggest the script can be seen as a mirror to Yang's own personal resistance and frustration with human values and the meaning of life. He gave up a well-paid computer engineering job to return to the subject he studied at USC's film school. 'Yang still sees Taiwan's insistence on drilling its youth to study science and engineering rather than the humanities as an imposition and a weakness' (James 2001:16). 'A One and a Two' is the final outcome of introspection and expressive self-awareness of Yang's life path.

The catalyst that drove Yang to become a retrospective filmmaker might have been self-generated. There are four types of motivations that prompt people to personal striving (Spence, Oades and Caputi 2004);

- (1) external motivation; a person strives to achieve a goal because of other people's expectations on him/her, or the pressure from the society (e.g. a girl wants to be the top in the class because it is how she can receive attentions of others),
- (2) introjected motivation; when a person feels guilty, anxious or shamed, he/she may be prompted to do something to compensate for those emotions (e.g. I want my house to be neat and tidy at all the time because I feel anxious about seeing 'chaos'),
- (3) identified motivation; a person becomes motivated because he recognises his own appreciation of the value of goal achievement (e.g. I want to make animations in a way to explore myself, and help others to understand emotional issues, because I think it can help me to become a better person and improve our life experience), and
- (4) intrinsic motivation; a person set a goal because of the enjoyment derived from the outcome or from the process (e.g. I want to become a good piano player because I enjoy playing the instrument, when people enjoy the music I play).

Spence, Oades and Caputi (2004) explain that emotional well-being and self goal-integration develop only when personal striving is determined by one of the latter two motivations, which may subsequently suggest the driving force of the development of Yang's emotional awareness.

'Tarnation' (2002) is an ongoing home movie/documentary footage that Jonathan Caouette started when he was eleven. It was shown at the Sundance Festival where the movie caught the attention of executive producers at Cannes. The autobiographical film describes the story of his mother, Renee, and his own life. Renee was a beautiful child who had a career as a child model, but had an accident at the age of twelve that temporarily resulted in her not being able to walk. Following the advice of a doctor, Renee's parents sent her to receive electric shock treatments to encourage her to walk. This

led to a series of stays in psychiatric hospitals to alleviate Renee's depression and psychosis caused by the shock treatments. Renee married a travelling salesman when she was eighteen. However, the marriage did not last and when her husband left Texas, Renee discovered she was pregnant with Caouette. She gave birth to Caouette whilst still undergoing treatment for psychosis. Her problems continued- she was raped in front of Caouette, thrown off a bus for disruptive behaviour, and jailed for six weeks during which time Caouette was placed in foster care.

The cycle continued; with Caouette being placed in abusive foster homes whenever Renee was hospitalised. At the age of nine he was finally adopted by his grandparents, who recognised his love of films, and bought him a second hand camera. He made home videos, in which Renee and his grandparents also performed, and which include the young Caouette acting out a play about an abused woman's confession. In his early teens he discovered he was gay, experimented with drugs and was diagnosed as having a depersonalisation disorder, which made him feel disassociated from life as if he was living in a dream world. However, as far as possible, Caouette lived a fairly productive life throughout his teen years.

Caouette moved to New York in his early twenties, took a job as an actor and continued making his own films. Renee remained in Texas alternating between hospitalisation and living with her parents. This prompted her to phone Caouette to request he return to Texas. Caouette tried to sort out the chaotic state of the house. With his help, Renee began to confront the experience of the shock treatments, her mental illness and her own childhood. The movie ends with the reunion with Caouette's biological father, and an argument in which Caouette asks Renee to open up herself to reveal the past thereby helping him to explore and understand of himself.

With a limited budget of \$218 and a gift of a computer and iMovie software, Caouette produced *Tarnation*, editing home footage, family snapshots, songs, television clips and cutting them into films. Caouette used the collage technique that 'relies on evoking strong emotional responses through the juxtaposition of immediately recognisable images and sounds' (Bronski 2004). Caouette states that he

often manipulates each frame to create the dreamlike world that he experiences; “I went along with the music, but I also let the brightness and contrast evoke an atmosphere, a feeling of what it’s like to see things with depersonalisation disorder” (Caouette 2004). He continues by explaining that making films has saved his life, especially the narration of *Tarnation*. It serves as a therapeutic journey for him in which he can share the experience of survival with the audience. The movie has produced a strong connection with people, who have seen it, without saying a word, often embrace him tightly.

Caouette states that ‘I had what I know was an important story to tell and I am grateful it’s getting out there. I also want people to understand and empathise with mentally ill people’ (Caouette 2005). Through the movie, Caouette reminds the audience of how it feels when one is struggling in a dysfunctional family; what it may lead to when a person is physically and emotionally abused and even of the consequences of inadequate professional support (the doctor’s advice of shock treatment to Renee). He provides the audience with the strength to deal with difficult circumstances and, in turn, has received supportive feedback from the audience. The process of making the movie not only helped Caouette to express (or act out) his feelings and thoughts but also to reflect on his awareness of how those emotional realities changed his life. The audience come to share with this and are encouraged to reflect on all the aspects raised in the movie.

Autobiographical movies can be an expressive media for developing self-awareness in the director, actors/actresses, audience and in the filmmaker. The documentary filmmaker Barry Morrow (2006) in the “ITV Extraordinary People” programme states that ‘if we make a movie about someone, we can get them out from the shell’ (Morrow 2006). The movie then becomes a therapeutic experience for the real protagonist of the story. Kim Peek is the real “Rain Man”; Morrow based the film on Peek’s experiences of coping with his mental condition (1988). Since the Oscar-winning film was produced, Peek’s life has been changed for the better as he has become more sociable and able to show his fans what he knows and what he can do (Peek 2006).

It is relatively common for filmmakers to recognise that digital storytelling can assist the audience to express emotional reality, and to evoke awareness of the audience. The elements that trigger the process can be explained through the understanding of emotional engagement in the narrative of the moving image.

#### 2.5-4 Emotional engagement and immersion in the virtual reality

The cinematic world is no longer just concerned with ‘something moving inside its frame. Rather, it stems from the alignment of the spectator’s eye with the camera itself’ (McQuire 2007:147). The story can evoke high levels of emotional engagement that may help to develop self-awareness. ‘Emotions are part of the narrative experience,’ (Komeda and Kusumi 2006). Two dimensions are expected; that of the protagonist and that of the viewer. Komeda and Kusumi state that viewers have the ability to empathise with the protagonists’ emotional changes by understanding their motivations, goals, thoughts, actions and interactions with other characters in the story. This may depend on their evaluation of the characters’ thinking and performance, which in turn may rely on similarities and in shared experiences. Emotional engagement may also occur when the viewer is able to empathise with the characters whose experiences are not similar.

Komeda and Kusumi (2006) suggest that when viewers are able to elaborate or construct a representation of the narrative, they are more likely to be emotionally engaged. This may be illustrated by Yeh Yiaway’s (2005) reviews of ‘Nobody Knows’. By gaining an understanding of how hard growing up would be with the absence of parental support, Yeh says that the movie offers him an opportunity to reflect on the pressures faced by Asian Americans and other minorities, even though most Asian families would be unlikely to experience such issues. Learning about different aspects of parenting helped Yeh to appreciate the need to set goals, to work hard, to stay positive, and of which he performed in the careful guidance and care of his own family. The movie makes Yeh believe that there would be someone, as in the movie, who would offer help and show empathic concern. He would like to believe that he could maintain the spirits of his younger brother and sisters.

In seeing the story of how children coped without parental affection, Yeh admires director Kore-eda's balanced presentation of those moments that show the children's strength whilst also portraying their naïveté. 'Nobody Knows' is not a film with spectacular visuals. Instead its force lies in making the viewer contemplate the children's ingenuity and frailty through a family story" (Yeh 2005). Through watching the movie, Yeh examines his feelings and thoughts on parenting. He also reflects on his own supportive family environment, where he could achieve his goals. He questions political issues, such as the care of abandoned children and the experiences of the minority groups. Yeh carefully examined a digital narrative, which recognises that many personal and interpersonal issues have to be rethought. This suggests that Yeh was strongly, emotionally engaged in the movie and that this also prompted him to increased self-awareness.

The immersive phenomenon can occur in various forms including paintings, photographs, novels, music, theatre, movies, television and technologically-advanced cybernetic media in which the visitor is induced to imagine the propositions indicated by the narrator as true events (Ryan 2001). Ryan emphasises that emotional immersion is a process of ephemeral engagement that comes from the viewer's own interest in the hero and desire to know the final ending. For instance, if the viewer believes that aspects of the story have not been yet discovered (particularly in a non-linear story), they may rewind the movie to find out what has been missed in the movie in order to understand its relation to the story. This reactive gesture (rewinding) is determined by the intensity of curiosity and emotional immersion.

Emotional immersion is correlated with accounts of suspended disbelief of living in a space and time of the past, present, future or an imaginary environment. Emotional engagement is accumulated by 'the construction of virtual scripts and events' (2001:142) such that it denotes a diminishment of one's ability to relate to the immediate surroundings, an increasing belief of living in the created or reconstructed audio-visual world (2001:140-162).

Building on the fact that making-your-own movie can develop the filmmaker's understanding of emotional aspects of life, it is reasonable to support that animation practice could also be a creative technique that could have educational benefits, such as training for reflective thinking and developing emotional skills. Inevitably it may also share the similar limitations experienced in other expressive arts settings; for instance, some young people may not be interested in using drawing to voice emotions, while some may find it difficult to work on a computer screen (The latter was found with one of my students in the experimental animation class (See Appendix 8 for further details).

Animation has been recently employed in attempt to improve the understanding of science (Dijck 2007), biology (Bourzac 2007), manufacturing engineering (Ong and Mannan 2004), to facilitate industrial training, learning and communication (Wenel and Jessen 2007), to assist students in computing learning (Taylor, Duffy and Hughes 2007) or to assist lawyers and juries visualise cases (Dunn and Salovey and Feigenson 2006). However, most of these studies largely focus on benefits derived from viewing the animations. Few studies address the benefits attained from engaging in the process of animation.

## 2.6 Animation in therapy practice

The artist Pedley, psychologist Foreman and anthropologist Camfield (2003) describe how students were asked to reflect on their life experiences by using visual techniques to learn about chronological and historical events, or to illustrate the emotional facets of life events that are “essential to many life skills, (in the belief that) improvement in this aspect of cognition would stimulate intellectual development and therefore, might also improve employment opportunities” (2003:180).

The 3D animation project ‘Navigating Memories’ conducted by Pedley, Foreman and Camfield (2003) presented the potential of teaching animation to encourage a group of people with physical disabilities to create drawings that narrate their struggles, social interactions in schools, relationships with family members and their hopes in the future. The ‘Navigating Memories’ project involved six participants with various forms of brain damage who suffered from difficulties in understanding time, the

sequences of historical events and had a limited ability to plan that interfered with the performances of daily activities (2003).

A virtual 3D animation environment provides the opportunity to extend the mobility of the disabled participants, by the use of mouse, keyboard or joystick. In terms of assessing and assisting in chronological understanding and spatial thinking, Pedley (2003) asked the participants to draw their own life events and place these in chronological order, to think back by writing and drawing about their lives in schools and hospitals and their feelings about discrimination and their medical prognosis. The research indicates that it is possible to use animation to help people explore their own life experience, to increase self-awareness of not only the people with the disadvantages, but also of others who may find the method useful for emotional self-expression (Pedley, Foreman and Camfield 2003).

#### 2.6-1 Animation (motion pictures) in education

Early childhood educators are increasingly advised to consider the effects of the computerised society. Children start to use digital products at such a very early age that their digital literacy forms a significant part of out-of-school social practices (Marsh 2006). Marsh proposes an urgent need to expand the categories of children's literacy, to include new media literacy, in order to understand or support this in early year education. Digital literacy may equip children with a broad range of skills and knowledge useful for preparing for employment in technologically driven environments (Marsh 2006).

Citing Reid *et al.*'s 'BECTA Pilot Project', Marsh (2006) describes how digital practices such as film and video editing may facilitate the development of a number of transferable skills such as observation, problem-solving, interactive communication, risk-taking, comprehension and analysis. The practice of animation is specifically commented on as having a powerful input to the development of personal and interpersonal abilities 'because of the way in which children could combine voice, gesture, music, image and language' (Marsh 2006). Marsh's study of three and four

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year-old nursery children in an animation class, held over an academic year, indicates that engagement in animation may bring learning opportunities for conceptual development (such as the perception of space-time dimensions), stimulated by the understanding of the principles of motion pictures. The construction of an animation requires a series of decisions to be made about the choices of the characters, setting, soundtrack and the design for each still frame. These choices are based on knowledge of TV, computers and film screens as a media of communication (Marsh 2006). Animation practice therefore demonstrates an opportunity for dynamic learning.

In this study of Year 6 pupils (11 years old), who re-created the animated film 'Little Red Riding Hood' in collaboration, Burn and Parker (2001) state that the process of animation can offer a great freedom of expression to students and that they can employ new digital technologies to move between acts of spectatorship and authorship that may help to simulate reflections. They intended to construct a general grammar of the moving image, not only by investigating the tools and materials of the technology, but also the social actions associated with them. Seeing the moving image as a multimodal form, which subsumes other grammars of speech, music and gesture, Burn and Parker's (2001) research specifically focused on the production of texts (i.e. how digital image as texts are inscribed).

Burn and Parker (2001) state that there are three classes of inscription technologies that have been developed to produce expression and communication:

- (1) Technologies of the hand- the inscription process is crafted by hand and tools such as brushes and pencils,
  - (2) Technologies of the eye and ear such as audiotape, photography and film, which represent the analogical facets of the world
  - (3) Synthesising technologies, which help to create digital, synthesised representation using principles related to the technologies of the ear and eye- digital cameras, audio recorder, software packages-, and the extension of physical functions such as mouse, keyboard, microphone and computer (space).
-

However, these three classes are associated with an assortment of expression and communication technologies. Burn and Parker (2001) aimed to further develop the account of the process of digital texts (digital semiotic language) by discussing three categories. The inscriptions of:

- (1) the synchronic (creating individual images which can be combined to make a moving image sequence). Here children produce images, music, and drama with old technologies of paint and acoustic instruments accompanied by digital image manipulation, visual sound studios and video editing.
- (2) the diachronic (creating the temporal aspects of the moving image by combining individual images: making duration, speed, movement).
- (3) display (realising the finished text on different surfaces: e.g. monitor, television screen, cinema screen).

Each category is depicted in four subordinate stages; they are transformation, (re)combination, (un)fixing and interactivity. The research reported that at each step, move or act taken in the making of animation, semiotic choices were made that contained visual messages associated with feelings about designs (characters). This is never fixed as the digital texts can always be re-written depending on the animator's choices. This flexibility allows the animators to make changes and re-author according to their collective reflection on the symbolic narrative during the process.

The authors go on to state that young people learn to use the tools and materials to express their thoughts and design collaborative digital inscriptions to make their own animation that can even be screened on local cable television and in the cinema. The display can trigger the dialectic acts of speaking, response and reflection amongst the animators, and between the animators and audience. Children are able to participate in the history of literacy and communication through the semiotic process of animation. Thus, animation practice may trigger reflection in two ways: reflection-in-making and reflection-on-display in social context. The concept is reflected in the research described

here in the collection of narratives, the animation 'Are You Terry', and the installation 'A residual cleft in my beautiful life; childhood' (see chapters 4 and 6 further details).

## 2.6-2 Animation practice and Learning Styles and Multiple Intelligences

There are two main approaches to learning in school education:

### (1) Learning style

Dunn *et al.* (1995) stated that a learning style is the process in which students begin to concentrate on, internalise and gain new and difficult knowledge. Students who are taught with strategies that complement their learning style preferences are more likely to obtain higher academic achievement. Dunn *et al.* (1995) claim that learning styles involve five main modes each of which each contains subordinate elements. Figure 4 shows the Learning Style Model designed by Dunn and Dunn, which illustrates the 21 elements of learning preference;

- environmental preferences: sound, light, temperature and class design
- emotional preferences: motivation, persistence, responsibility and structure
- sociological preferences for private, pair, peer, team, adult or varied learning relations
- physical preference related to perception, intake, time and mobility
- psychological preferences based on analytic mode, hemisphericity, action and reflective thinking.

This figure has been removed for copyright reasons. The unabridged thesis can be consulted in the Lanchester library, Coventry University.

**Figure 4 The Dunn and Dunn Learning Styles Model (Dunn *et al.* 1995)**

These are the instructional preferences and the impact of accommodating these different learning styles can help students attain higher academic achievement (Dunn *et al.* 2005).

(2) Multiple intelligence (MI)

Some other educators (Cuban 2004) report that students' learning quality can be improved by providing educational materials that engage a number of sensory (e.g. visual, audio, and kinaesthetic) and intelligences (Gardner 1999). Gardner states that humans possess a different combination of intelligences, including

- Linguistic (word): individuals who learn best through reading, writing, telling stories, memorising dates, and thinking in words, using language to express, tell and explain what they are thinking and to understand (or convince) other people. They are capable of using verbal expression or writing to produce communication.

- Logical-mathematical (number/reasoning): individuals who learn best through understanding cause and effect by manipulating numbers (mathematics), reasoning, logic thinking, problem solving, recognising patterns, creating a process for analysis- or measure- purposes, interpreting mental pictures from different perspectives and devising a strategy to achieve an aim. They are best at measuring, calculating and organising data making an analogue and debating an issue.
- Spatial-Visual (picture): individuals (e.g. pilot, sailor, artist) who are best at representing the spatial-visual world internally in one's mind. These students learn best virtually and intend to think through and create images. They have pictorial imagination and expression- understanding the relationship between meaning and visual presentations.
- Kinaesthetic (body): individuals (including designer) who prefer to use their body or parts of the body to achieve goals, as used in athletics, dancing, acting, manipulating objects and they also use movement as a way of expression.
- Musical: individuals are triggered to learn through hearing, recognising, and remember patterns of melodies and rhythms. They are capable of interpreting the relationship between sound and feelings.
- Interpersonal (social skill): individuals (e.g. therapists) who have the ability to take perspectives and understand different viewpoints of other people. They can relate to others' feelings and thought; are able to register with the knowledge between emotional behaviour and communication by interpreting moods from facial expressions, body language; can affect the feelings of others in a planned way.
- Intrapersonal (self-awareness): Our own ability to understand ourselves, recognise our own strengths and weaknesses, set to strive for personal goals. The process of self-awareness (self-reflection and self-exploration) involves discovering (or changing) personal thoughts, beliefs and behaviour in relation to their situation, other people, their purpose and aims.
- Naturalistic: individuals (e.g. biologist, ornithologist, ecologist) with the potential for understanding nature, making distinctions, identifying their relationship with the natural

world. Thus, they have strong sensitivity to learn through the interaction with plants and animals, and involvement with the environment such as camping and other outdoor activities.

- Spiritual intelligence: This is associated with the ability to attain ultimate truth, the meaning of the self by asking questions such as who I am, why do I exist, what do I expect from life etc.
- Existentialist intelligence: This refers to the learning of individuals who question ultimate issues such as the meaning of death, love of other people and the fate of human beings.
- Moral intelligence: this includes one's ethics, humanity, and conscience relating to the value of life.

However, Gardner (2006) argues that the latter three are affected by various external forces (e.g. religions or culture) so that one cannot yet claim it as human intelligence. For example, to say humans are capable of moral judgement is hyperbole because one person's terrorist may be another's freedom fighter (Gardner 2006).

The debate on learning styles focuses on the need to teach students according to their preferred learning setting, and MI promotes the need to provide more opportunities for students to learn and experience (perhaps in non-preferred learning style). From the viewpoint of my own creative practice, I am inclined to a digital form of learning. I prefer using the computer to create or manipulate images in a private (safe and free) and small space in which everything can be organised easily (environmental preferences, sociological preferences). It is more flexible in terms of mobility (e.g. I can continue my work in any place in which computers are placed and provided the software is available) and less time-consuming compared to the time and cost of purchasing brushes and pigments whilst trying to organise places to store materials and artwork (physical preferences).

As mentioned earlier, making animation contains various expressive activities including script writing (linguistic intelligence), auditory (music intelligence), creating images (visual intelligence), producing movements of characters (kinaesthetic intelligence), creating duration in time and space (spatial

intelligence) based on certain subjects and themes with which the creator has significant feelings and thoughts (intrapersonal intelligence). The processes and the display of animation also often involve social communication (interpersonal intelligence). Thus, it can be taken that the actual practice of animation also sits in MI theory. However, a one to one relationship is not implied between a specific intelligence and a component of the animation. Each process may involve several elements of stimulation or intelligences- animation characters in space and time could be associated with the intelligence of kinaesthetic, spatial, visual, logical-mathematic and perhaps also others.

## 2.8 Summary

The potential benefits of engagement in the process of expressive art, including imagery, writing, music, photography, role-play/drama, making-your-own movie, have been demonstrated in therapeutic and educational settings. The value can be seen in the aforementioned fictional, biographical and autobiographical products of the artists, the professional and non-professional filmmakers. These may additionally promise that the animation practice (an integrated approach to expressive art) can assist a person in self-expression and emotional awareness. However, few studies have closely examined how engaging in ‘the subordinate processes’ of animation may engender therapeutic experiences thereby facilitating self-awareness in the artist, or have used an autobiographical approach to demonstrate the potential of the integrated approach to expressive art therapy. A few studies emphasise how making animation can assist children in developing life skills (e.g. decision making, problem-solving), but these have overlooked the fundamental facet of personal development (i.e. one’s own ability to reflect on emotional experiences). Animation practice deserves to be seen and reported as an individual expressive medium.

Additionally, in the similar manner to the artists’ intention of using art, I intend to expand my practice from personal to social level i.e. I aim to approach better self-knowledge through investigating the past- to reveal my own childhood- in order to provide a starting point for others to reconsider this particular subject and its effects.

Hence, the present research aims to examine how the expressive processes of animation may stimulate the animator- in this case, myself to create self-expression that provokes reflection on the emotional aspects of childhood experience, and to articulate the values of the autobiographical interactive animation installation to invigorate the viewers' understanding of the animator's emotional experiences, and reflection on their own experience. This thesis provides a first hand account of animation practice accompanied by a depiction of the intimate relationship between the development of emotional self-awareness leading to personal growth and media art practice (see chapter 6 for more details).

## Research Approach

As explained earlier, this research aims to show the value of multimedia expressive art (animation) to facilitate personal expression of and reflection on childhood experience. It will be argued firstly that the process of creating an autobiographical animation may lead to enhanced emotional awareness, with a consequential increase in the emotional intelligence of the creator, and secondly that viewing such animations may trigger new levels of understanding and awareness in the viewers and be stimulated to reflect on their own childhood. Given that these claims can be supported, the final part of this research will consider how this knowledge can be applied to therapeutic and educational environments.

The previous chapter described how some experts have evidenced the benefits of viewing or making films (Solomon 1995:2001, Wolz 2002, Wooder 2003, Ulus 2003, Karr 1987:2005:2006). Some studies have also shown how animation can assist students and disadvantaged people in learning about time and space (Pedley, Foreman and Camfield 2003), problem-solving and decision-making (Marsh 2006) or how the production of digital texts in the form of moving images, can promote interpersonal interactivity in a social context (Burn and Parker 2001). However, the experience of self-awareness and emotional development during the creation of an animation has not received much attention- either in terms of the creation or the effects on the viewers' or animators' selfsameness.

Two biographical approaches were undertaken at the beginning of the research in order to produce animations designed to encourage viewers to reflect on emotional aspects of their own childhood experiences. This thesis documents how reflection on these approaches and the outcomes produced stimulated the on-going reframing of the study i.e. led to the creation of the final interactive animation installation 'A Residual Cleft In My Beautiful Life: Childhood'. This was created in order to examine the relationship between animation practice and the animator's expression of and reflection on her own childhood experiences. Gathering the reactions of the visitors to this installation enabled the

animator to understand the effects the installation had on increasing the visitors' knowledge of the animator's emotions, and on stimulating reflection on their own childhoods.

Therefore this research concerns the relationship between personal reflection and practice in association with the development of personal growth. It also involves the broader concept of the relationship between creative production and reflective practice. In this chapter, the relation between these two subjects is described to cast light on the importance of reflection in creative production and how it can inform practice-led research.

### 3.1 Reflective Practice-led research

Bird (2000) states that practice-led or practice-based research has been a relatively recent development and as such has not yet developed its own academic language or formal discipline. Bird also claims that it has not yet received full support due to the limited understanding of more academic disciplines of practice-led research in Art and Design. Therefore, more research is required to provide content to prove the legitimacy of this creative domain (Bird 2000).

Many artists and designers hope to offer a different view of humanity by transforming through their practice what is experienced into something valuable for learning i.e. filmmakers use digital storytelling to reflect on interpersonal, social and political issues that may prompt the viewers to become aware of or reconsider these matters. Especially when learning from personal painful events, the process may require the artist to undergo personal struggles and dilemmas that may impact on creative acts. Scrivener (2000) states that such creative projects do not aim to provide solutions to a known problem, or to modify an existing artefact, or to provide know-how. It is rather the marriage of experiential and experimental research that may lead to a new understanding for a change in personal, interpersonal, cultural, social or educational contexts (Chandler and Gorbett 2006). The originality of practice-led research often lies in the subjectivity of responses to 'a set of ongoing issues, concerns and interests expressed through one or more artefacts' (Scrivener 2000:6). It is often undertaken to provide artefacts from which the knowledge or new understanding are acquired through an active

process of viewer's engagement. Scrivener (2000) describes this an ongoing process as one of framing and reframing the aim and methods of such practice-led research. Thus, the process of creation requires documentation, (though others consider that the artefact may stand for itself), and the researchers' ability to reflect on their own practice (Scrivener 2002).

'Reflectivity is the act of becoming aware of a specific perception, meaning or behaviour of our own, or of the habits we have of seeing, thinking or acting; affective reflectivity is becoming aware of how we feel about the way we are perceiving, thinking or acting or about our habit of doing so' (Bound, Keogh and Walker 1985:29).

When witnessing one's own experience in the hope of understanding the antecedences and consequences of it, the exploratory process itself may constitute an active form of reflection. 'The key to reflection is learning how to take perspective on one's own actions and experiences-in other words, to examine that experience rather than just living it' (Amulya 2006). The statement has the echo of the words of Scrivener (2000) - 'a creative-product project will be grounded in a practitioner's current practice and realised in future projects. Consequently, it should begin with reflection on past practice and appreciative system' (2000:11). Thus, a creative project begins with the practitioner's personal ideas, beliefs and appreciations driven from prior learning and experience. Scrivener (2000) describes this stage of reflective thinking as 'pre-project reflection on practice' that includes identification of issues, concerns and interests, including the related theory, knowledge and information, which is reviewed to frame the potential aim. In this stage, as the issues and goals may be multiple and changeable especially as the project progresses, the review of relevant knowledge is likely to be broad in scope and depth.

Leitch and Day (2000) explain that the process of reflection originates from a state of mental difficulty that provokes thinking i.e. doubt, confusion or hesitation, followed by a series of acts to seek materials that will bring insight into actions. This is a process complemented by critical thinking

and careful self-examination. Drawing on Schön's terms, Leitch and Day (2000) argue that there are two dimensions of reflective thinking relating to actions that form reflective practice:

(1) reflection-in-action,

This is associated with the capacity of practitioners to think about what they are doing while they are doing it, and the tacit knowledge included in carrying out tasks. This mode of reflective thinking 'involves looking to our experiences, connecting with our feelings, and attending to our theories in use. It entails building new understanding to inform our actions in the situation that is unfolding' (Smith 2007).

For example, it was my intention to base my animation on other people's memories, gained from one to one interviews. However, having completed several of these, I found that the stories lacked the depth I needed, and that the interviewees were unable or unwilling to share insights into their family relationships with me – in much the same way that I was unwilling to share my childhood experiences with others. I had to adopt other narrative approaches to achieve my original, but actually misconceived aim. My reflection on the outcomes (the transcripts) and my performance (as in interviews) caused a reformulation in the aim and my approach to its attainment.

When creative practitioners encounter unexpected results or problems, they need to reflect on the implicit knowledge. For example, I did not realise (until then) that I was looking for a mechanism that would enable me to avoid using my own stories. This implicit or tacit knowledge was not visible until I had reflected on the first two stages of the research (the interviews and first animation- Are You Terry). The insight brought about by examining performance and challenging assumptions is often not explicit, conscious, provisioned or verbalised by practitioners unless manifest as the unexpected.

Regarding creative production projects (practice-led research), the knowledge employed by the practitioners is usually tacit - 'the importance of such events or how they have changed

the practitioner may not be consciously registered' (Scrivener 2000:10). By taking Schön's view that reflection is the primary cognitive style for learning, Scrivener suggests that the practitioner may benefit if the reflection and responses are appropriately externalised i.e. recorded, reported or documented. Such activities need to be produced during suspensions in the work, for example- at the end of the day or at weekends. The opportunity also exists to reflect on past projects.

Each work episode or action needs to be summarised for example, in terms of where, when and how it occurred, what the objectives were, who was involved, how long it lasted and what the outcomes were. The practitioner needs to record the moments of reflection-in-action including expected or unexpected consequences and responses to them. Drawing upon this idea, I also would like to add that the practical researcher may need to reflect on the connection of the implicit knowledge which occurs between each work episode. While the creative practitioner is often unconscious about the implicit message in one completed task, she or he may be more likely to register with a message by looking at the similarity of knowledge acquired from a set of work (e.g. The unregistered message appeared in the interviews and the animation 'Are you Terry' was that I was avoiding using my own experiences).

## (2) reflection-on-action

This reflective process is associated with documenting the collective responses of the practitioners and the retrospective analysis of their performances. It is undertaken on the conscious level after the whole research project is completed i.e. the implicit knowledge registered through the process of reflection-in-action becomes the visible materials on which the reflections can be verbalised. This mode of reflective thinking is viewed as a discipline rather than a necessity. The crucial materials are derived from the recording and documentation of reflection-in-action and in-practice (Scrivener 2000).

Scrivener (2000) proposed that there are two ways of producing reflection-on-action in practice-led research;

- post-project reflection-on-practice

Here the focus is on reporting the learning acquired through the project as a whole accompanied by the description of one's current position as an artist or designer,

- reflection on reflection-on-practice

This relates to critical reflection on one's own reflections on pre, within- and post-project (Scrivener and Chapman 2004). It concerns how one approached the project.

This provides peers with primary materials for sharing experience and discourse.

Leitch and Day (2000) also consider another form of reflective thinking.

(3) reflection-about-action

This is viewed as ensuring practitioners reflect on the social, economic and political purposes and conditions under which their practice takes place e.g. teachers are required to think about the conditions of classroom that have an affect on the quality of teaching and learning whilst they are teaching.

As mention previously, Scrivener (2000) described that the aim of practice-led research project is often shaped by the practitioner's own personal, social, and political concerns and the practitioners need to be able to visualise these concepts in order to commence their research more effectively. Thus, the term reflection-about-action is included in the process of pre-project reflection-on-practice. I would also like to suggest that this particular mode of reflective thinking is usually an essential characteristic of the artist. Their works are not necessarily about improving the 'technical' facet of practice i.e. it is not about making remarkable visuals or improving the tools they use, rather it focuses on the issues tackled through creative production. Concerns about social and political issues are often the central force of the practice although this may not be visible. Practice-led research may require that

these concerns become explicit, if not through the artefacts themselves then the writing that accompanies it.

Hence, 'reflective practice in these terms entails making conscious and explicit the dynamic interplay between thinking and action' (Leitch and Day 2000:181). When professionals engage in reflective thinking, they gain an understanding of their beliefs, values and attitude toward their own practice and also those of their peers. Leitch and Day (2000) indicated that effective reflective practitioners do not search simply to increase efficiency i.e. not merely providing better teaching and learning techniques, rather it is 'more a set of attitudes towards practice based upon broader understandings of self, society and moral purposes' (2000:181). The term "moral purposes" refers to the idea that professional actions are seen as examples through which the individual may reflect both on their actions and the consequences of those actions.

Leitch and Day (2000) also suggest that we need to give more attention to the role of emotion in acknowledging the values of and developing the abilities of reflection that facilitate personal, professional and system change i.e. to examine the self as a way of thinking. Accessing to emotions provides a feeling of release, and without it there is little room for self-evaluation (Leitch and Day 2000). Scrivener and Chapman (2004) also postulated that PhD candidates should present how they arrived at, explored and expressed identified issues, concerns and interests in a self-conscious, reasoned, and reflective way which is manifest in both the artefacts and processes. This means that the practitioners need to be able to 'express' and 'reflect'. These statements may suggest that self-awareness is a keystone in practice-led research which is also a key component of emotional intelligence.

### 3.2 Methodology

This practice-led research adopted a reflective practice approach including:

- (1) pre-project reflection-on-practice; reviewing my MA animations (see chapter 1 for more details). This shaped the original research aim – to produce a digital artefact to help viewers

understand the impact of childhood events on later life- that also led to a review of non-digital and digital expressive arts therapies (see chapter 1).

- (2) reflection-in-practice; this is most notably illustrated through the way in which the aim and research approaches were altered as I became conscious of and started to reflect on the tacit knowledge acquired after the first two tasks in the early stages of the research. This led to a reframing of the initial aim - to examine the potential of animation to facilitate personal expression and reflection through the making and viewing of such artefacts (see chapter 4).
- (3) post-project reflection-on-practice; the acquired insights through the entire research is discussed including the visitors' responses to the final creative product, and the feedback on the benefits of making animation to encourage individuals emotional aspect of learning from interviews with expressive art-relate professionals and school educators (see chapter6 & 7).
- (4) reflection on reflection-on-practice; the context of the former three stages of reflection practice explains how I approached the research from the beginning to the end (see chapter 1,4, 6 & 7). Therefore, at this final stage of reflective activity I would like to invite further consideration, discussion and research by sharing the acquired knowledge, research findings, feedback from the experts and also the difficulties occurred during the research process (see chapter 8).

A narrative approach was adopted in this research. This approach is often used in qualitative research to improve function, develop insight and foster growth through biographical writing (Pllico and Chinn 2007), to discuss issues such as self-improvement, emotional engagement and control (Lupton and Tulloch 2002). Narratives were collected through

- semi-structured interviews (biographical conversations),
- questionnaires,
- observations,
- an art therapy case study which was used to produce 'Are You Terry'.
- autobiographical narrative.

The research took its shape not just from the content of the narrative, but from my own reactions to the material, its gathering and its reception by the audience.

The following show how reflections on each task in which tacit knowledge, (i.e. the important but unrealised information during creative production), led the researcher to adopt another narrative approach and reframe the aim of the research.

- (1) A biographical approach was used to collect and study memories of childhood experiences in Taiwan through semi-structured interviews. Reflection on the materials collected and the conduct of the interviews (data gathering process) promoted a more autobiographical approach (see chapter 4 for more details).
  
- (2) A semi-biographical narrative approach was taken to produce the animation 'Are You Terry'. This was based on a case study of experiences in art therapy. The animation was initially intended to examine increasing self-awareness of emotional issues. A questionnaire was used to gather feedback after the animation was screened in the 3D modelling class and in postgraduate DDM & MA course at Coventry University, at the 7'inch cinema's opening in Birmingham, and through an online survey (See chapter 4).

The reflection on the viewers' feedback provoked two changes; (1) in addition to the viewing, the process of animation may facilitate the animator in increasing personal expression and emotional self-awareness and, (2) an autobiographical approach (using my own childhood stories) was adopted to form the narrative of the animation installation 'A Residual Cleft In My Beautiful Life; Childhood.

- (3) A three-month experimental animation class was held in a rural junior high school in Taiwan. This task was driven from the understanding, acquired from the previous task 'Are You Terry', that the process of animation might help practitioners to improve self-awareness. This class was used to observe the process of students' animation and to explore whether there

would be value in teaching animation as part of the formal curriculum to promote students' emotional awareness and reflective thinking through the making of animation. This trial was evaluated by questionnaire, observation and group interviews with the students and staff involved (see appendix 8).

(4) The autobiographic animation installation 'A residual cleft in my beautiful life; Childhood' was the final outcome of my own personal journey in this research. The context of the artefact included (a) expressing thoughts about my own childhood through the subordinate processes of script writing, character and set design and animation, (b) my reflection on these processes. Additionally, I also reflected on the collaborations with the voice-over artists and the interactive applications of the animation installation (See Chapter 7 for more details). The benefits of the interactive animation installation were evaluated using three modes of reflection-in-practice:

1. a personal reflection on the extent to which its making increased my own emotional awareness.
2. an open ended questionnaire completed by visitors, to gather their thoughts about the content and its representation in the installation, and whether they connected this to their own childhood experiences.
3. semi-structured interviews with art related therapists to discuss the potential usefulness of animation in therapeutic settings.
4. an online survey with primary and secondary school teachers to determine whether animation could be added to the curriculum to facilitate the development of emotional awareness.
5. a post-project reflection on the animation installation to determine the value of the viewing of the work in emotional awareness (i.e. in contrast to traditional art objects, digital art productions may contain more shared knowledge that stimulates the viewers to extract the meanings of the artefact and by doing so, encouraged them to express and reflect on the emotional aspects of childhood experiences).

### 3.3 Conclusions

The aim of this research and the approaches used to addressing the aim were framed and reframed during the research process i.e. the original aim was to determine whether viewing animations might help to facilitate the viewers in awareness of their own feelings from different perspectives and this was reframed to investigate whether the process and the outcome of the animation installation could facilitate the animator's (in this case, myself) and the visitors self-expression of and reflection on childhood experiences; and the narrative approach was changed from biographical to autobiographical. These changes were made in response to what was learnt from the reflection on the knowledge collected at each stage.

Although the research journey clearly shows the relationship between reflection, practice and personal growth, and how the externalisation and discussion of this may benefit wider communities of practice (e.g. animators, artists, educators and therapists), this research does not aim specifically to provide a model of practice led research. Rather, the intention of the present research was to invite further discussion about the potential of animation to increase awareness. The next chapter explains the reason for the change of the research aim and how the reflections on the stages led to the autobiographical animation installation.

## Gathering Narratives

To achieve the research aim, (i.e. to explore the potential of making and viewing animation to facilitate personal expression and reflection on childhood experience), it was necessary to produce an animation which could be used to understand the contributions this form of media could make to the self-awareness of the artist and the audience, and which could then be used in discussions with practitioners (i.e. expressive art therapist and teachers).

This chapter describes

- the approaches used to uncover childhood memories that would provide the narrative content for the animation,
- examples of the material gathered,
- my reflections on the process.

Taking the perspective of a reflective practitioner, it is the latter element which is of importance, and which shaped the nature of the subsequent research, requiring me to confront personal issues which had originally motivated me as an artist and to move from a biographical to an autobiographical approach. By adopting an autobiographical approach, I am able to explore how the creation of an animation may lead to greater self-awareness in the practitioner.

Returning to the start of the research, I was resistant to using my own story in a direct way. I believed that other people in Taiwan had similar childhood experiences to my own, and would be willing to share these with me, to help produce an animation that would show the tensions within families and the problems which resulted from lack of family communication. Therefore, I collected narratives with the aim of using these to produce a generic parenting-related family story that viewers would be able to identify with and learn from. The narratives were collected through a series of semi-structured interviews in Taiwan.

#### 4.1 Semi-structured interviews in Taiwan

The aim of the semi-structured interviews was to gather stories on childhood experiences in Taiwan which would provide information that could be translated into content for the animation installation. The animation would enable the audience to further understand the relationship between childhood experiences and personal growth.

Twenty-eight interviewees participated in the study representing two age groups. At this stage, I was interested in the changes in styles of parenting, and also in capturing the views of both parents and teenagers. The first group grew up in the 1950s-1970s and had a high to average income. 3 males and 1 female were interviewed from this group. The second group grew up in the 1970s-1980s, and had a variety of incomes; 14 males and 10 females were interviewed from this group coming from various family backgrounds (six military, four single parent, two physically abused and twelve other families).

The interviews were conducted in private and anonymity was preserved, all materials were kept confidential. The interviewees were required to read a participant information letter in advance and sign a consent form agreeing to an audio recording being made of the interview. Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The audio material was kept in a secure location and later transcribed as necessary.

##### 4.1-1 Interview questions

The interviews were fairly informal with the interviewees being asked to describe themselves, recall significant childhood memories and reflect on their relationship with their parents. Finally, the interviewees were asked to describe whether they had confronted major family problems such as a breakdown in relationships within the family. The names of the interviewees mentioned in the following section are fictional.

#### 4.1-2 The narratives

In this section, the stories that emerged from the interviews are described. On the whole, the majority of the interviewees seemed to recognise the importance of family communication and the need to improve or establish greater communication about their emotions with their parents. However, they did not wish to discuss how such emotional understanding could be achieved. In general, the older age group had not attained a high quality of communication with their parents. When they in turn became parents they adopted the same parenting style with their own children. The younger interviewees felt that family communication was subtle and somewhat difficult. Examples from the interviews are given below.

Most of the younger interviewees' parents seemed to be concerned primarily about their children's academic success. This seemed to generate fear in the children who could not communicate with their parents if they had academic problems. For example, 24 year old Pete remembered the problems he faced with former friends who humiliated him when he decided to focus on his studies. He was not able to share this with his parents, as they did not have a history of discussing interpersonal relationships. Pete simply kept quiet about it. Other interviewees gave similar accounts of a lack of family communication and an inability to deal with social interactions.

For the older group of interviewees, education was not such an issue as life styles before the 1970s were based in farming and agriculture. These families struggled financially to survive under a weak national economy. The children could not expect much attention from their parents, they were expected to help out on the farm as soon as they were able to walk and most would have to cook for the entire family when they were not yet tall enough to reach the kitchen-counter. The value attached to education was not recognised as highly than as it is today. The older interviewees' childhood was filled with memories of working with their parents after school and at weekends.

Although Jack (39 year old) was from a richer family that provided everything he needed for school, his parents did not spend quality time with him. Jack's father was very busy earning a living and his

mother with the housework chores and caring for her parents in law. Living in a big family meant that three generations shared the same house with the daughters-in-law usually taking turns to do the housework for the whole family. This was the tradition.

The older interviewees considered that education was essential for children to gain better employment or for the child's own interest. They were also aware of the need to provide better emotional support for their children than they had received. They felt they had been brought up without being able to discover their own needs and dreams, and in an environment where they were not allowed to reveal emotions and affection. However, although they intended to make efforts to establish a better relationship with their own children, in most cases they had not succeeded.

Corporal punishment was a normal part of family life in both interviewee groups, though less so in the younger group. The children might be punished for fighting with siblings and cousins, telling lies, uncompleted homework, unfinished meals, bad school reports of study or behaviour inside and outside the schools, and inappropriate attitudes towards the parents. As this could happen fairly often, the interviewees assumed that it was common to most families and only realised later that it might not be the case.

The older interviewees did not appreciate that the lack of family communication might have effected their development, though they did acknowledge there was a gap of emotional understanding with the parents. They compensated for the lack of parental affection by playing with neighbourhood friends, playing on the farm and in the playground at the school, making paper-kits and bamboo-dragonfly toys, pouring water into the burrows of crickets' and earthworms. There were quite a few moments where they experienced a joyful scene of freedom, created by the emotional distance between themselves and their parents. The interviewees thought that it was actually better that their parents were not too involved with the trials and tribulations of their teenage years.

The younger group came from more diverse family backgrounds and as a result had a wider set of childhood experiences. For example:

- One person grew up with her mother to escape her father's abuse. Later she had to cope with living with her mother, who was physically and mentally ill.
- One person grew up in a hard disciplined military family in which the use of violence was associated with power. So the children were taught to fight for their needs, and the children's communication with their father was military in character.
- One person grew up in a big family. The mother was physically and emotionally abused by the father his family. The son chose to stay with his mother when she decided to leave.
- One person's parents divorced when he was little. His mother moved and remarried in Japan. He lived with his father and was sent to study in Japan when he was a teenager. A couple of years later, he decided to come back to Taiwan due to the unfamiliar culture and language, living with his grandparents and father, who has since remarried.
- In another case, the person was raised by her grandmother. Later, she went to live with her single mother.
- One person grew up in a family where there was no emotional communication between the parents themselves and high parental expectations of their child. In this case the daughter eventually left home after her father insulted her in the family restaurant.
- One person grew up without a father who had an accident when she was young. She was a single mother living separately from her son due to the location of her work.

From these, and other stories, a recurrent theme that emerged was that emotional expression seemed to be absent and constrained in these families; the young people felt uncomfortable about talking to their parents, who were brought up in an era where there was little time to talk about emotional issues. The young interviewee Yogo (21 year old) stated that 'I always lock myself in my room, because whenever my Mum sees me around the house she nags me to the pain of death and we end up fighting. Once I did try to calm myself down, to have a good talk with her, but she just didn't want to listen'. In

contrast, the older interviewees thought that it was unnecessary to improve their emotional relationship with their parents as ‘they are getting really old, what matters is to see them stay healthy’.

The statements suggest that emotional interaction and communication seem to underdeveloped in Taiwanese families. The older interviewees did not practice this kind of exchange, did not engage in the practice, and continued this trend in their own families, which distanced them from their children, who in turn may learn to behave in the same way with their children, and so the cycle is repeated.

As mentioned previously, the narratives were collected with a view to producing a national Taiwanese family story that could be animated to encourage the audience to understand their own feelings and thoughts to become more emotionally aware. Thus, it was important to explore whether the interviewees had been prompted to consider their childhood experience when looking at books, films or hearing music, etc. Therefore, all the interviewees were asked whether this had occurred.

For the older generation, entertainment such as reading, watching television and movies were not popular modes of entertainment. Time was largely devoted to work in order to improve the financial status of the family. The way to deal with family issues was to ignore them. Later when television became popular, a few started to learn from other people’s lives through watching TV programmes. One interviewee reported that watching the stories about how others overcome difficulties and the help they received to confront similar problems to hers gave her emotional support, and the confidence, encouragement and optimism to cope with her own issues.

Born into a more technology-advanced era and a better economic environment, the young interviewees had more exposure to various media. As a group they were able to list books that related to emotional aspects of the family. They felt that their emotional immersion in the virtual narrative (mainly in movies) was significant even though this did not detail family events. For example, Jim (25 year old), who came from a single parent family, recalled his relationship with his father, whilst watching the father in ‘I Am Sam’ (Nelson 2001), who fights for the custody of his daughter. Jim

empathised with the emotional conflicts depicted between the father and daughter in a single parent family, which reminded him of his need for paternal love. He also noticed that he had never thought much about his own childhood and the interview had provided him with a chance to contemplate his relationship with his parents.

One other young interviewee described how the movie 'Once upon a time in America' (Leone 1984) stimulated him to re-experience the emotional aspects of childhood including friendships and the relationship with siblings and parents. However, they stated that this did not appear to lead them to intend to communicate their emotions to their parents.

#### 4.1-3 Summary of the semi-structured interviews

Both groups of interviewees grew up in different socio-economic contexts, but they all confronted similar difficulties in communicating their emotions to their parents. The older group, having not experienced effective family communication, continued this pattern of behaviour with their children. This was reflected in the next generation's difficulties in talking about personal issues with their parents.

It was found that media, such as movies and television, stimulated the interviewees to empathise with the movie characters and also to reflect on the parallels between these fictional lives and their own. Despite the different histories, they were able to engage in emotional aspects of the narrative. Although the interviewees were stimulated to reflect on their own experience, they had not thought about applying their insights to improving the quality of communication in their families. In addition, whilst the interviews had provided a range of childhood experiences, these were too varied to produce a generic family story on which to base the animation. These emergent problems were important in shaping the research and the examination of the tacit knowledge is reported in the following section.

#### 4.1-4 The dilemmas

As the listener, I tried to understand how the interviewees felt about the need to understand the emotional complexities of their childhood. I expected that they would share my concern- that poor family communication does have an impact on personal growth and emotional development. However, the interviewees did not share this view. I was therefore surprised by statements such as ‘there is no need to say how our parents have affected us since we are adults now’, ‘we must know what is right and wrong’, ‘we are old enough to take responsibility for what we do, we can’t blame anyone for our own life’ - which ran contrary to my own beliefs.

I was also aware of the interviewees’ resistance to discussing the effects of parenting on them and did not feel able to push the discussion further, when clearly the interviewees did not want to, could not, or would not talk about it. I found little evidence in the interviews to support my belief in the relationship between poor parenting and inadequate personal development. This might be explained by the fact that the interviewees were not comfortable in exposing their own inner stories to a stranger. Whatever the reasons for this reluctance, the narrative did not allow the composition of a common family story. I had expected to gather narratives concerning emotional aspects of childhood, and reflections on the impact parenting had on personal development. However, the latter was not commented on in sufficient depth.

#### 4.2 An emerging change during the research process

Here arose the other contradiction. Since I found it difficult to talk about my own feelings, how could I expect the interviewees to overcome such resistance? According to narrative therapy (Freeman & Combs 1996), when a person is told stories in order to understand the situation he/she is in, it is crucial that they distinguish the problem from the person; the problem is the problem, the person is not the problem. This separation may provide an accessible journey in which to talk about emotional issues.

In other words, what I experienced in the interview (and it might have also happened to the interviewees) was the difficulty in separating myself from the problem itself due to the conventions I lived by; if there was a problem in the family, one should not talk about it. As I came to understand the reticence of my family culture, I have become aware that I needed to be able to ‘talk about’, ‘express’ and ‘reflect’ on early human experience, presenting myself as an example in order to produce a deep study reflecting the culture of parenting and childhood in contemporary societies.

I also realised that creating a generic Taiwanese family story from the interviews was not necessary if I could overcome my own resistance to revealing my deepest emotions. ‘What an individual experienced can be experienced by others if externalized appropriately’ (Scrivener & Chapman 2004:3).

Reflecting upon the three points;

- (1) the interviewees gave various accounts of childhood events. However, these did not allow me to compose a generic Taiwanese story on which to base the animations due to the lack of comments about the impact of parenting on personal growth in later life,
- (2) the interviewees’ experiences in watching a film showed that although the movie story may be different from a viewer’s personal history, he or she is able to empathise with the movie characters and become emotionally engaged in the story, and that
- (3) one’s own experience may be made accessible to others, I decided to dismantle my self-guard and use my own childhood memories to create the experimental animation installation ‘A Residual Cleft In My Beautiful Life: Childhood’. In this, I intended to challenge my resistance and unfold the past, which would help me to express and relive the family events, leading to a greater awareness of the emotional aspects of my own childhood and an understanding of how these affected my behaviour.

I also reframed the scope of the research with regard to the audience; i.e. animation installation may stimulate the visitors’ personal expression of and reflection on their own experiences of childhood.

#### 4.2-1 The period of struggle to commence autobiography

From the above discussion it is obvious that the need to use my own childhood stories did not come effortlessly to me. Doubtless, others could have scripted their own fictional narratives from the stories I had acquired, and which would have enabled the level of audience emotional responses I desired, as suggested by the literature review (e.g. Soloman, 1995:2001, Wolz, 2002, Wooder, 2003 and Ulus, 2003). However, a story usually embraces not only the element of personal expression of events but also of reflection on those, which was what was missed in the stories provided by the interviewees. Although one could adopt a fictional approach to fill the missing part of the story e.g. by blending my own assumptions of what the interviewees might learn from their own history, I was inclined to use biographical narrative approach to create the animations.

As the interview narratives were not satisfactory, I decided to use another form of biographical approach and I created the short animation 'Are You Terry'. The content of the animation was taken from an art therapy case study. Such case studies often include rich description of conversation, reflection on and observation of a person's emotional journey, facilitated by the experts. Thus, I felt I might be able to use the case studies of professional practice to produce an animation that might assist viewers in understanding the emotional aspects of childhood that I was not able to discover via the semi-structured interviews.

#### 4.3 'Are You Terry' <sup>1</sup> (Figure 5-1 to 5-3)

The animation 'Are You Terry' (6 minutes long) tells the story of a five year old girl's emotional journey to discover her inner conflicts with the help of a therapist –Maggie, although, the relationship between Terry and Maggie is not explained in the story. The narrative depicts the girl's inability to express herself and illustrates how visual techniques can help the girl overcome her emotional difficulties.

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<sup>1</sup> A DVD of the animation accompanies the thesis. You may wish to watch the animation before you continue reading.

The five-year-old girl, Terry is considered to be emotionally disturbed. She comes from a rich family and is provided with everything that other children wish to have. However, she is unable to express her needs and thoughts such as her difficulty in having physical contact with others. The animation depicts the child's journey to overcome her emotional conflicts as seen through the eyes of the therapist.

A 27-year-old adult and 9-year-old girl contributed to the voices of the characters in the animation. The participants were invited to come to my studio (the young participant came with her father) to complete the recordings. The audio recording was produced by using the computer software Sound Forge. The other recording equipment such as the microphone was home-use level. The level of soundproofing was considered adequate for the purpose.

The visual style of the animation was inspired by a visual technique "image collection" (collage) which is frequently used in therapy practice. Collage is often adopted by art therapists to help persons tackle questions such as how they feel about themselves, how they see themselves or their response to social and political issues. It is about manipulating found materials (that have their own original texts) into a new image that presents the practitioner's own thoughts and feelings.

I used this visual style to represent Terry's story, collecting the history of her emotional difficulties and transforming them into motion images - the meanings of which can be interpreted by the viewers. Being a 2D animation, the images of each frame are created by manipulating web found visual materials, personal photos and video clips in Photoshop and After Effects. These images are animated in After Effects and completed with audio inputs using Premiere.

'Are You Terry' won the Sponsorship Award of the 4C digital competition in Taiwan and was screened at the ArtsFest, Coventry BBC opening day, Flatpack Festival, Godiva Festival, Mac Cinema Screening, Birmingham BBC Big Screen and Taiwan Digital Content Institution. It was also

short-listed in the Taiwan International Animation Festival and selected in the Festival Focus Film database<sup>2</sup>.

In terms of this research its purpose was to examine whether the viewers were:

- aware of the emotional events of Terry.
- aware of the process of self-expression presented in the animation.
- stimulated to reflect on their own emotional aspects of childhood.

Questionnaires were used to gather information on these issues.

#### 4.3-1 Evaluation of 'Are You Terry'

The animation was shown to students in a 3D modelling class and in the postgraduate DDM & MA courses at Coventry School of Art and Design. It was also screened at the 7-inch cinema launch party in Birmingham and presented online. All viewers were invited to complete the questionnaire. In total 77 questionnaires were returned, of which 74 were unspoiled and used in the evaluation.

The feedback showed that the viewers understood Terry's emotional needs and that she felt unhappy, lacked attention, was repressed and had difficulty in expressing her feelings and confronting the truth. The audience understood she needed to open up to someone. The viewers were able to provide various stories that could account for Terry complaining that her back hurt. This suggests that even though the animation does not illustrate a clear reason for Terry's physical pain, the viewers are able to project a story on to it. Four viewers recognised that emotional conflict was a reason for Terry's unusual behaviour.

Although the animation did not state explicitly that the story is based on an art therapy case study or the relationship between Terry and Maggie, the majority of the viewers recognised that the story between the characters was about the relationship between a caregiver and receiver. Maggie was

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<sup>2</sup> It is available[online] from <[http://www.festivalfocus.org/user\\_view.php](http://www.festivalfocus.org/user_view.php)> [24<sup>th</sup> June 2007]

interpreted as an art therapist, child psychologist, helper, social worker, friend, mother, family member or teacher. Others interpreted Maggie as representing the different voice of, or the conscience of Terry or Terry at an older age. One viewer indicates that ‘I don’t think this is important to the viewer. It could be all of these. The important point is that she represents unconditional support and understanding’.

Regarding the viewers’ reflection on their own childhood events, the feedback showed that 33 of the viewers were reminded of their own childhood experiences such as pleasant moments playing with friends, playing in the park on swings, playing in the garden and climbing trees and also with more difficult moments associated with not being understood, so becoming silent, being confused, isolated, suffering from the side effects of medical treatment but never complaining, telling lies to please people, having poor communication skill, living in an orphanage in northern Ireland or children making trouble for someone. Three viewers found it hard to describe the recalled event in a written form, one viewer recalled the childhood experience of another family member. In contrast, 41 viewers did not recollect any childhood memories whilst, of after, watching the animation.

Overall, the feedback suggest that the viewers were receptive to this form of storytelling, just under 50% were triggered to describe/express/project their own thoughts and feelings about the story and characters, reflecting on their own childhood memories.

#### 4.4 Reflection on ‘Are You Terry’; the change to use autobiography was commenced

I also showed the animation to close friends who told me that I was projecting my own problems, e.g. relating to physical contact, through the character of Terry. Although I was aware of the truth of this, I tended to ignore it. However, when I read in the questionnaire that one of the viewers described the animation ‘Are You Terry’ as being about a little girl in therapy and the filmmaker’s identification with her, I began to carefully examine the relationship between myself and Terry’s story.

When selecting the story, I tried to find one that I could strongly identify with as I believe a story can be created to touch often peoples' heart if it touches the creator's first. When reading Terry's story, I was aware of my own sympathy with her difficulties in understanding her emotional conflicts, frustrations, fears and with her struggle to have someone to understand what she felt. I began to recall an unpleasant event that happened when I was in primary school, an incident that I had to consciously submerge for many years. I was trapped by the fear that someone might find out about this and that when this happened I would be made to feel negative about myself. This feeling had become so unbearable that I had attempted to talk about it when I was having dinner alone with my father I asked him 'Dad, do you think that a child in the fourth grade is small enough to be forgiven for mistakes?' My father looked at me in confusion and replied simply; 'Yes' he said and turned silent. Although I wanted to tell my father the real intention behind the question, i.e., to discuss what had happened to me many years ago, I did not have the courage to speak in the silence he had created. I lived with this secret long in to adulthood.

Additionally, although I did not realise that I had been projecting my own feelings onto characters by creating animations based on other people's stories, I could have projected my own experience to explain the reason for Terry's difficulty in physical contact. This was also reflected in the animation. The work 'talked back' to me, saying that I was afraid of revealing my own stories as I tended to veil the truth of my own similar experience, in the same way as I had not described Terry's, but left it to the imagination of the viewers.

I had made an empathic link with Terry's story when I read it. Knowing that someone experienced the same emotional affliction gave me the feeling of being understood and allowed me to see that I am not the only one. When animating the sad expression of Terry in the park, I began to share tears with Terry ever time I animated her saying 'Don't come back. Leave me alone'.

I had not had the chance to express my fears about the childhood event, even though I could have told someone about it or cried. It was only animating the character that helped me to express the emotion

that I never wanted to confront. From the selection of the case study to the completion of the animation, I was given the space to recollect the possible cause (the childhood event) of my own emotional problem (i.e. with physical contact). I was able to release the emotional burden by expressing the feeling in the animation and became aware of the causality of the problem.

In creating 'Are You Terry' I began to understand that it is not merely the animation, the artefact that can assist people in reflecting emotional realities, it is also the process of animation practice that may help the animator to develop skills to express and reflect on his/her own emotional issues.

Drawing on the reflection on the semi-structured interview, animation practice and animation feedback questionnaire led to the following conscious stages of the research:

- (1) the interviewees' responses helped me to dismantle my self-guard to contemplate my own childhood,
- (2) the viewers' feedback on 'Are You Terry' helped me to understand that emotions can be expressed through the process of animation practice where reflection may also occur,
- (3) the feedback supported the proposition that animation can encourage viewers to reflect on childhood experiences.

Therefore, I decided to construct an animation installation based on my own childhood memories to increase my own self-awareness and also to use the artefact to stimulate viewers to make contact with their own emotional realities. To understand the final installation, and what I was hoping to achieve from it – both personally, and for the benefit of others – it is important to provide an account of my childhood. This is presented in the next chapter.



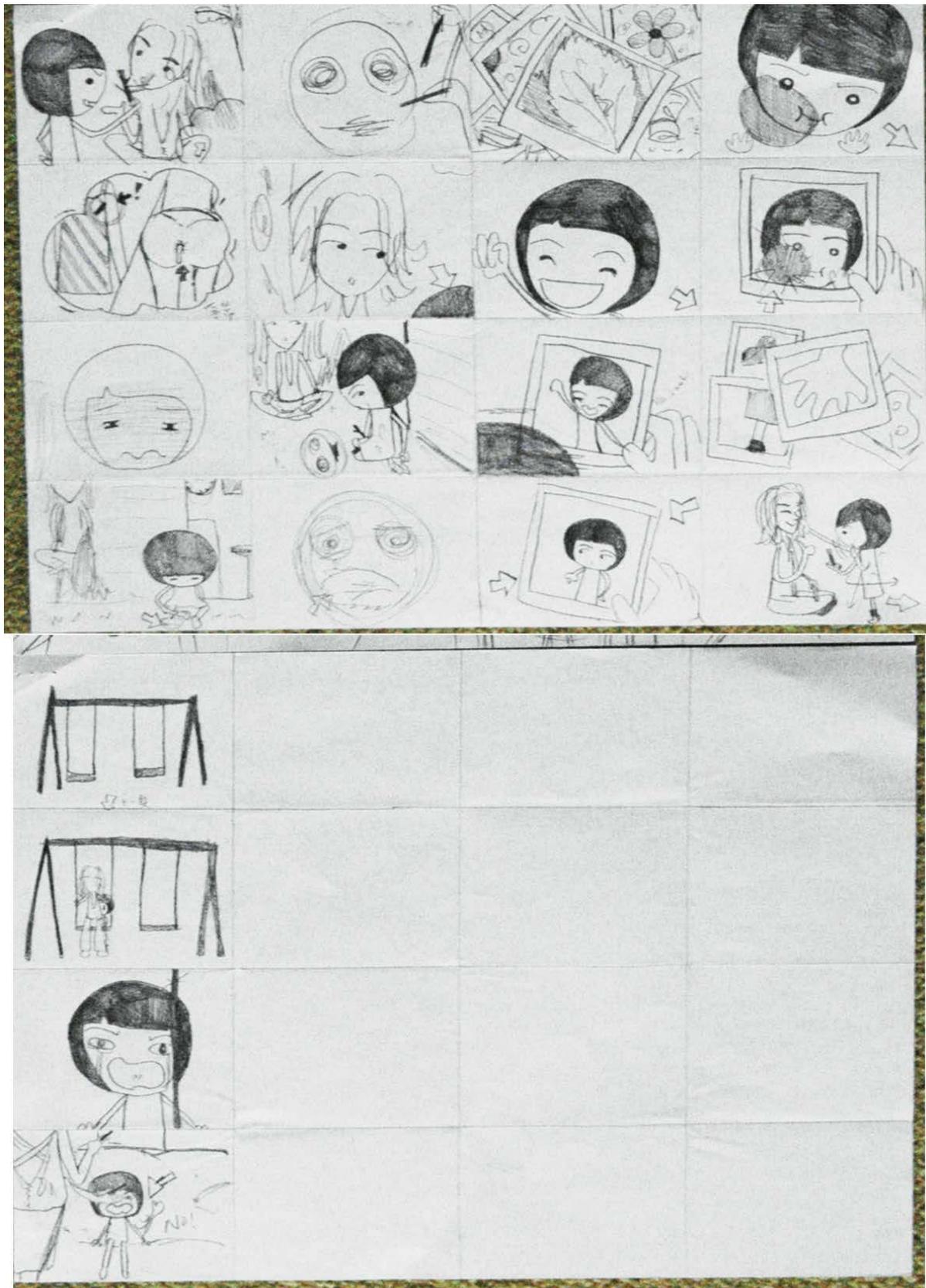


Figure 5-2 The storyboard of the animation 'Are you Terry' continued



Figure 5-3 Still images from the animation 'Are you Terry'

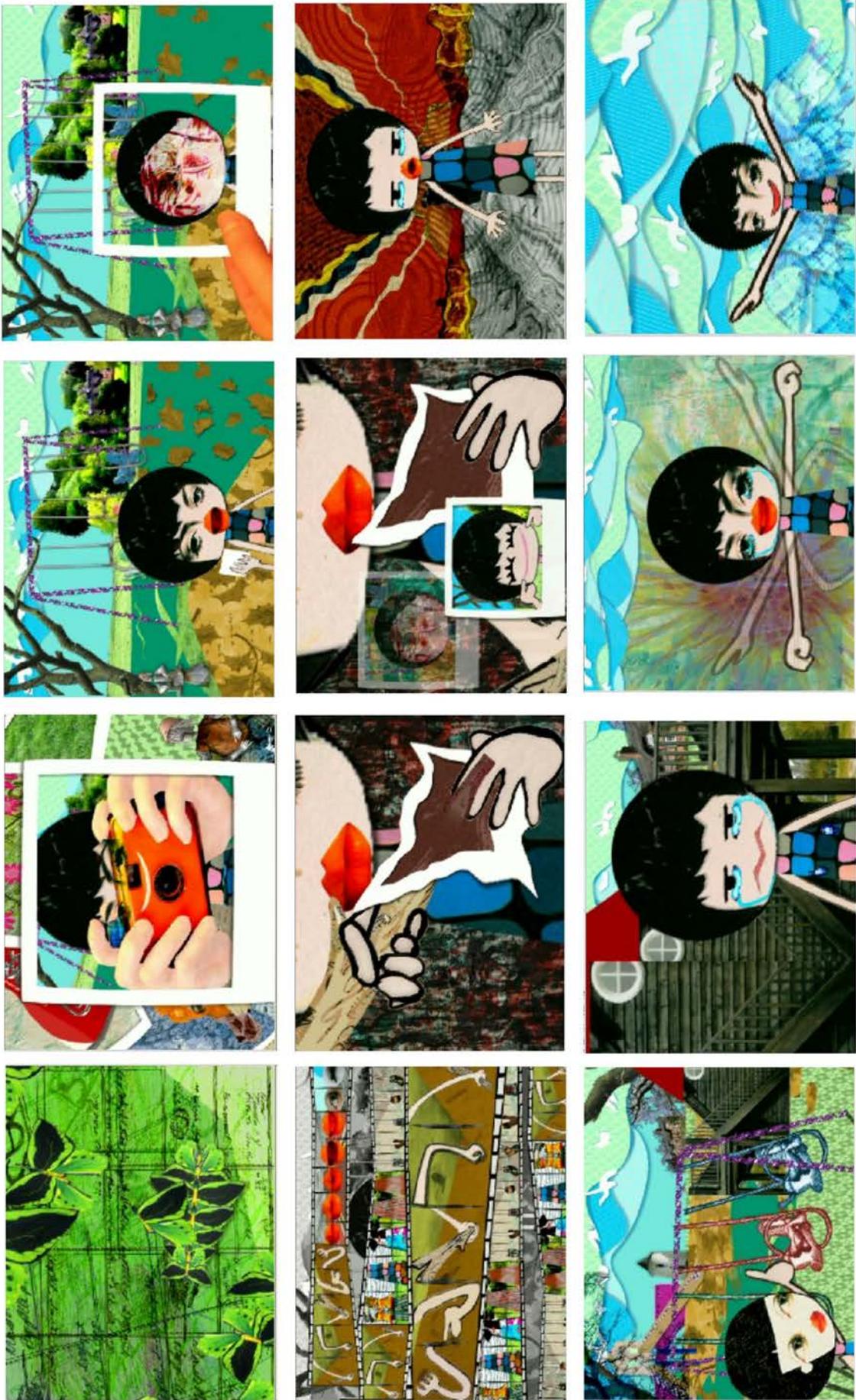


Figure 5-4 More still images from 'Are you Terry'

## Autobiography

This chapter contains a brief account of events in my childhood which I consider important, and which have been used as the basis for the final installation. It has been included to show why I was especially interested in exploring the impact of childhood experiences and self-awareness of emotions.

I was born in Kaohsiung, Taiwan and have two younger sisters whose ages are one and two years different from mine. We moved from Kaohsiung to the capital city, Taipei, due to my father's job, and then to Taichung where my family now live. However, I can barely recall any memories about my birthplace or our lives in Taipei. In fact, I did not know we had lived in these two cities until I was a teenager.

When we first moved to Taichung, my parents rented a flat next to my nursery school and a traditional market. Some years after, we moved again to our second home when I was in the first year of the primary school. This was a big day. I remember vividly that one day after school I was waiting for a long time for my mother to pick me up to go to our new home. When I got there, I saw my sisters sitting with my maternal grandmother chatting with my father. This was the time I started to remember things more clearly.

My mother was born in the south of Taiwan, Pin Dong, a countryside place which is famous for its seafood products and fishing industry. My sisters and I used to spend most of our primary school summer vacations there at my grandmother's. The village where my grandmother, uncles, aunties in law and cousins lived did not resemble the big cities- it still does not- though when Taichung was developing, the surroundings of our house were farms and dusty paths not much different from Pin Dong.

I loved spending time in the village much more than in Taichung as I seemed to feel more ‘natural’ and more like ‘myself’ away from the tensions in Taichung. The life at my grandmother’s place was an amazing experience. We got up very early in the morning and saw some nice flavoured buns laid on an old wooden table in the kitchen accompanied by hot soy milk, brown rice milk, fruit flavoured milk and juice. The childhood games we played were simple but engaging. We would burn some coals and put them aside for later use and find a place where the soil was soft enough for us to dig out a hole where we stuffed sweet potatoes along with the hot coals and put the soil back in to fill the ground. After two hours, the nice baked sweet potatoes were ready to share. We played hide and seek, running around and finding places to hide in the houses of the neighbours. The front and back doors of the neighbours’ houses were never closed during the day and we were free to drop in at any time. It was a strange feeling to surprise the families with our visits but it was also a friendly moment as the adults would often offer us cookies or candies. At other times we would put on a leaf-hat and take some change given to us by our grandmother or auntie and go for a long walk to explore the village. Although it was a place that did not seem to have anything major to discover, my excitement in these adventures was more memorable than anything I experienced in Taichung. I would spend the whole afternoon in the only junior high school in the village, riding on the concrete animals, feeding the fish with bread or sitting under a little pavilion listening to conversations. On one occasion, I discovered some unfamiliar small houses in a community on the other side of the village; the sorts of houses that did not resemble architecture from anywhere I have ever seen. I felt astonished as I was walking down the street and no one appeared, no activities were taking place. I would dream about living here, imagining what the people would normally do in such a quiet place.

All the children were expected to shower before sunset and get ready for dinner. The people who lived in the country normally tended to have very early dinner, at around 5pm or 6pm. It would be unusual for all the adults and children to have dinner together except for special occasions such as Chinese New Year. We usually brought our bowls filled with food and sat down in front of the TV watching the most popular drama at the time. Sometimes we would quickly finish our dinner and rush over to the night market that took place in front of the village temple every Thursday from 7pm to

10pm. We would ask for change to get sweets, soft drinks, cakes, ice cream or girly things like hair brushes, clips, bands or purses. On other days of the week, everything became quiet after 9pm; all lights went off, leaving only the cicada's singing in the darkness.

My father was born in Chi-Zhin in the second biggest city Kaohsiung, a southern region that specialised in fish products. The first two years after I was born, I was raised in Chi-Zhin by my paternal grandmother as my mother was working in the footwear factory in which my father was one of the managers. My grandmother owned a small mountain of banana trees across the road from her house and had a small grocery shop located in her living room. My memories about my grandmother and grandfather were pretty vague except for a motorbike accident that happened when I was just learning to walk. One day when I was stumbling to cross the small road trying to reach the concrete bench in front of the banana farm, I saw a motorbike coming toward me. I did not feel afraid when the man on his motorbike was running over me, nor did I feel pain. The next thing I remember was my grandmother holding me in her arms and trying to take something out of my mouth. Later on as I grew older, I was told that when the accident happened, I was not hurt anywhere, but my two front teeth were stuck with a coca clip. Because the doctor could not manage to take the clip off my front teeth, they had to pull out the teeth along with the coca clip. It was not until the middle years in primary school that my front teeth started to grow again. Looking at the photos of my early childhood, I recall I was always told to close my mouth when having a photo taken. My having no front teeth was a cause of humiliation for myself and the adults, and I was often teased about my awkward speech and unattractive appearance.

My sisters and I had a close relationship with my father. He was cheerful, fun and entertaining; a man whom I believed nothing in the world could defeat. My father has had a diverse career, as a teacher, designer, investor and advisor in the shoe industry. After failing in a business venture, he had to move to China for work when I was in my first year of junior high school. Sadly, my relationship with my father weakened. His absence from the family worsened the relationship between myself and my mother. Although my parents would hardly ever ask us about our school life, my father found ways of

having quality time with us; he danced and sang to make us laugh, played cards with us, taught us how to play ping pong and badminton, took us to the park and played kites with us.

My parents put tremendous effort into providing their children with a good education. Whilst other children did not have the opportunity to learn English in their early years, my sisters and I were sent to private lessons every weekend for a year. I enjoyed it when my mother would sit down with us when we were doing English homework; she watched us writing and helped us to erase the mistakes we made or we would read western fairy tales to her. These were the moment when I really enjoyed my mother's company. Being luckier than my younger sisters, I was also taken to piano lessons when I was in primary school, though I have to confess that I did not want to play musical instruments at the time.

One weekend my father rode out with me to get some fresh air and stopped at a centre which gave lessons for young children. I was attracted to the colourful environment that was constructed with big French windows, surrounded by a nicely designed garden and playground. The receptionist talked to my father briefly about the lessons they offered for early years learning. I did not expect that I would be given the chance to join any of the lessons as I understood that my father was just planning to take me out for a short ride. Besides, it would be a risk for my father to make a decision that involved money without consulting with my mother. However, he asked me if I wanted to take any particular lessons. I obviously did not want to lose this opportunity so I timidly replied that I would like to have ballet lessons. Although my decision to take ballet did not impress him much, he paid for me to have the lessons for one or two months. I wished I could have been registered for a longer period but I was pleased. My mother, when later told about this was not so happy; not only was ballet not a popular subject in Taiwan, it was she who would have to leave in the middle of her housework to spend 30 minutes motorcycling me to the centre and then stay with me in the class for an hour.

Getting ready to leave the house was time-consuming for my mother because she would protect herself from exposure to the sun. Believing that whiter-skinned girls were more attractive, she put on

a number of layers of clothing even if it was very hot. Preparing for ballet was therefore unpleasant and not the pleasure I had anticipated. I did not enjoy it at all, as my mother tended to be irritated with me before we even got there.

All after school lessons stopped when I began junior high school, as study was much more intensive. We stopped spending the summer in Pin Dong as I had to go to school during the summer vacation. There were 13 classes in my year and they were divided into 10 average classes (1-10 class) and 3 advanced classes (11-13 class). This was decided depending on the tests we took on the first day of junior high school. Advanced students had to go to school during the summer vacation, as these students were considered to have more potential to pass the entrance exams to better High Schools. So, I found myself working very hard both after school and in the holidays.

The atmosphere at home was not easy either. My mother had a number of house rules; we had to take off our shoes and socks at the front entrance to the house, wash our feet before going in, and immediately change out of our school uniforms so that dust would not be brought into the house.

My mother would only start to prepare dinner upon completion of the housework. Every day after my father left for work and my sister and I left for school, my mother would start sweeping and mopping from the fourth floor down to the ground floor. In each room - lounge, bathroom, dining room and kitchen - she would clean every single piece of furniture and underneath it. As this was such a massive daily undertaking, it was impossible for her to prepare dinner at a regular time. My father often became irritated when she insisted on finishing the cleaning before she started cooking. Our dinner was usually late compared with that of our neighbours.

My sisters and I would end up being beaten or scolded if we broke the dining utensils, dropped a bowl of soup or did not clean our hands straight after picking up food from the plate during the meal. I felt a constant tension in the family. My father did not interfere much when my mother beat me or my sisters with clothes hangers, long rubber pipe, thick long wooden chop sticks or whatever was at hand.

There were times that I looked to my father for empathy and his understanding of the pain I experienced from punishment. The pain felt like someone was flicking my nerves back and forth, like playing the strings of a guitar. I could hear noises in the back of my head, like the screams I was trying to hold back. I never wanted to cry when the beating was taking place; the more I cried, the longer the punishment would go on. Not only did I intend not to cry each time it happened as I grew up, I did not want to make my mother believe that I was scared of her when she threatened to do this, even though I was.

My school friends were hardly ever invited to visit our house. It was impossible to ask my friends to undergo the complicated rituals before they could be allowed to step into the house. More to the point, I was never permitted to receive phone calls from my classmates; they would be questioned by my mother, who hung up the phone regardless of whether I was home or not. There was constant shouting and anger in the house, the discomfort of being spied on by my mother who would suddenly shout to interrupt what I was doing, or staring at whatever I was about to do, as if in attempt to prompt a mistake that she could use to get mad at me. To help out on the chores was a challenge as I did not always exactly follow my mother's instruction about how the housework should be completed. However, I hoped that she would show a little appreciation. When the jobs were not completed according to her criteria, I would be instructed to do it again in front of her. As time went by, I avoided any contact with her.

Arguments, punishments and shouting were the major features of our conversation. The term "communication" did not exist in my family. I was not allowed to question and could only speak and act when I was told that I could. I then lost interest in communicating at home and, my silence continued at school. I found it difficult to express anger, sadness, frustration, disappointment, fear, happiness, excitement or enjoyment. My mind was in a state of stasis and yet dreadfully chaotic. There was hardly a space or moment where I could totally be myself, or be aware of my real self, I am not sure I ever understand who I was.

The intense level of study in junior high school was incredible. Students became competitive under pressure from their parents and the school. All the teachers in the junior high schools in Taichung, and perhaps everywhere in Taiwan, did everything they could to maximise education, asking students to stay until 6pm or even 9pm, or conducting written tests during every recess in order to have a greater number of students achieving high marks in the high school entrance exams. I struggled through junior high school and did not perform well in the entrance exams. I had the choice to go to high school or college. Without understanding what the subject was about, I decided to take a Business Management course in the Overseas Technology College in Taichung.

College life was definitely much more diverse. Instead of going to school by bike, I took the school bus and later on had a motorbike that I could use to go to friends' houses around Taichung. Although we still had to wear uniform to go to school, we were permitted to wear casuals on Saturdays (we had to attend classes on Saturday mornings). We had a maximum of 5 lessons rather than 9 lessons per day; as there was no more evening studies, I joined the school drama society in my free time. I worked part-time in the summers. My developing social life meant that I spent less time at home and therefore conversed less with my mother. She would sometimes become unhappy when I was out all day. I, on other hand, did not care much about how she felt. My beatings continued even when I was 15 years old. None of my friends were under the same stress and I tended to come home late to avoid trouble at home.

In my fourth year in college, I started seeing a boy, Allan, from my class in junior high school. I knew my mother liked him by the way she talked with him and by the fact that she let him break her strict house roles. I made significant progress in my studies after I started going out with Allan, who was studying in one of the top universities at the time. I was intimidated by seeing a boy receiving a higher education, whose parents were both teaching English in the best college in Taichung. I was not confident that I would be able to go to university. However, I said to myself that at least I could perform well in college. I enjoyed competing for the goal I set for myself that year.

Unfortunately, our relationship did not last long. Allan's character was easy going, positive and optimistic. He never appeared to be angry with anyone. This led to a situation where he tended to dismiss my anxiety as a way to avoid conflict with me. This made me feel frustrated. Selfish as I was, I expected him to try and understand more about me.

After leaving Allan, I began dating a new boy and that created war between my parents and myself. I ran away from home to stay at my best friend's house, who told me later that her mother knew I was escaping from home, as her second child (my classmate's younger sister) had once run away from their family. My friend's mother treated me so nicely that I found it hard to believe that any child would want to leave her. I was absent for nearly two months and during that time, my friend and I went to school, lunch and came back to her house together. I did not have much money when I left home so my friend and her mother helped me with my daily expenses. One day when we were taking the final term exams before the summer vacation, my middle sister appeared at the college. When she saw me, she started laughing and said, 'What are you doing away from home? Dad asked me to tell you to come home, now or never'. Not only did I feel humiliated, I could not understand why my sister found it funny that I had run away. I did not want her to stay and I asked her to leave before she attracted the attention of the other students. Nevertheless, knowing my father was upset with me, I was intimidated. I also felt uncomfortable about being financially dependent on my friend's family. Later, I told my friend I would go back home after the final exam.

When I arrived home, I did not greet my mother but pretended my disappearance had never happened and tried to act normally. My mother also looked calm, though we did not talk for a couple of days, acting as if my absence had never happened and things were as normal. My mother also seemed unperturbed, although we did not talk for a several days.

That summer brought a twist in my life. I was working in one of the biggest department stores in Taichung. At the same time, my parents paid my fees for private classes for college students who wanted to take the entrance exams to study in the university. At the beginning, I was coping relatively

well with the study and the part time job. However, one night my friends from work invited me to a night out clubbing and in order to get permission to leave the house I had to lie. I always lied to my mother; I would do things without asking her permission because I thought she would never agree; I would lie about having no lessons in the morning so I did not have to wake up at 7am; I would lie about finishing the jobs that she asked me to do; I would lie about working until late at night as a bartender in a restaurant; or I would lie about where I was and who I went out with.

I convinced my mother that I was going to study and stay at my friends that night. It had been a while since I had been to the club, but this time it seemed to be more than just entertainment. I became obsessed with the night life, with the crowd dancing to the music, with the environment that seemed to offer discovery. I wanted to work in the club, so I quit the job in the department store even though my friends warned me that it would not be a smart choice to work in the night club. I dismissed advice and told my mother that I was going to work in a place that did not even exist. I missed almost all my lessons after I started working in the club.

I thought that my lie would not be discovered in the short term as I intended to give up the job when the college summer break finished. However, one night when my father was back from China for his holiday, he and my mother tried to find the place where I said I was working. When they realised that I had lied, my mother called me at the nightclub using the telephone number that I had given her. As she was scolding me, my heart felt as if it was jumping out of my chest. I thought I would be beaten up badly when I got home, but I was not. As guilty as I was, I quickly left the nightclub after my father flew back to work in China. Although my mother was the more aggressive parent, I was even more afraid of doing something to upset my father. When he was absent from the family, I repeatedly told lies so I could go out with my friends. When a lie was told, more lies were needed to cover it.

I was seeing a boy, Jam, who I met at the club; he was passionate, creative, artistic, and entertaining. Jam was the first person who had ever made me laugh, who wanted to know why I was difficult at times. He inspired me to understand why communication was essential between two people and

taught me that there was something called affection. Dating Jam upset my parents; he was nothing like my family. I did not want to leave him since he was the only person I felt loved me at the time.

This relationship turned my life upside down in my fifth year at college as I spent most of the time at Jam's place, missing college lessons and course preparation for university entrance exams. When I returned home, my mother and I constantly argued about where I had been, what I had done and who I was with. I never wanted to tell the truth as this always brought more fights and punishment. When the punishments came, I did not stay silent anymore. I defended myself by covering my face and head with my arms and my mother resented this even more. The lies I told once I began seeing Jam were innumerable; at home, I played liar. The tension was so unbearable that one day I said to myself that 'You've got to leave the house when you finish the college! Being 18 is enough for you to decide your own life'.

My anger seemed to bury my rational mind. I did not care what my parents would feel about their disobedient child. When the end of the school year came, I left my parents again and stayed with Jam for the next three years, 1998-2000. I let my younger sisters know where I was living and who I was with, even though I did not have any contact with my parents, so that they would know I was doing alright away from home.

I had a job in a pub in the south of Taichung and rented a tiny room nearby. It was an exotic area; the buildings were western facing and surrounded by the wonderful parks, restaurants, offices and various shopping malls. Working in the pub helped me discover something about myself; I became aware that I always had a poker face on me, I tended to look at people from the corner of my eyes, to play 'cool' when everyone else was having a great laugh, and appeared constantly in a sullen mood. My colleagues at the pub made me aware of these characteristics, which I had not acknowledged before. I was thankful to see how I appeared to others, though the thought of changing the way I behaved did not occur to me. Nevertheless, I knew that I was not going to spend my entire life working in the pub,

so I managed to save some money and registered for lessons in preparation for the 2000 university entrance exams, the year I left the pub work.

My relationship with Jam deteriorated. As a caring and charming person he attracted many girls becoming involved with some of them thereby destroying my trust in him. I still did not want to leave him, even after discovering infidelities, as he would beg me to forgive him. I was completely broken by the idea that the person who I cared about most, who had revealed for me the wonders of love, could be so hurtful to me. By that time all our friends knew about the affairs apart from myself. I was confused about them and felt like nothing was real. I wanted to go back to my parents, but the thought that I would only fight with my mother stopped me from doing so.

It was not easy for me to continue to stay with Jam when I was preoccupied by the idea that he might be still secretly going out with other girls. I became paranoid when he could not confirm where he was, becoming neurotic when he did not pick up my calls. I secretly dropped by the place where he told me he was supposed to be, or waited in the park in front of our home for him to come back in the morning at 6am, just to see if he would come home with another girl beside him.

The disappointments of love, the frustration of dishonesty, and the exhaustion caused by constant mental anxiety prevented me from continuing exam preparation. It was not possible for me to concentrate on anything, least of all study.

I could not express my anger to Jam as he would react aggressively. Having no way to show my distress, I started drawing. Before, I had not been interested in art, although my father would teach us how to draw portraits of celebrities. I once tried to keep a diary through drawings, but soon gave up because a friend told me my drawing was of primary school level. Now, I could not care less whether my drawing looked childish to others. I drew and wrote whatever was in my head.

The drawings and writings were full of anger, irritation, upset and negative thoughts about people. Even though I was disappointed that my friends had not told me the truth about Jam, I let them read my diaries. My friends loved reading them and their comments encouraged me to produce more drawings. My diaries became a channel for communicating my feelings to my friends and they would often ask first to see my diaries whenever when we met for coffee. Although they did not always ask about the drawings, when they did I found it easy to describe the stories.

Drawing was a good way to prevent me from feeling suffocated by the events around me. However, it was just a way of expressing anger towards something which was unable to fight back. I expressed feelings via drawings, but I remained confused. I could not understand the meaning of my own existence. I did not know how I should live on as a person, and found it terrifying when I began to think about the next day. It was as if living in a body with no soul, heading nowhere.

This went on until one night I went back to visit my friends in the pub where I had worked. I heard the pub accountant talking about a book with one of the staff. The title of the book, '24 minds of Billy Milligan' attracted my attention and I immediately asked about the book. After I read the description, I could not help but ask if I could borrow the book. She kindly agreed to let me have the book until I had finished with it.

I found it impossible to stop reading the story of Milligan's childhood, his desire for love from his mother, the physical abuse of his stepfather, the mental tortures that resulted in the split personalities created to protect him, to suffer the pain for him, to guide him through a life that had no affection, care or support, his difficulties in forming relationships with women and his struggles to become an integrated person.

The book helped me to find out much about my own feelings relating to my mother. Even though my childhood experience did not resemble Milligan's past, the relationship between mother and daughter, a child and a mental experience, the missing love in the family registered as shared experience.

Reading his story for me was a way of re-enacting (expressing) the emotions suppressed within me. I cried not only for his misfortunes but also for the times I had held back feelings when I was younger.

I began to realise that I had never felt loved by my mother so I found it hard to trust her preferring, but listen to the advice of others, who I found difficult it to ignore when they appeared friendly toward me. My mother and I constantly argued because neither of us knew how to control our anger and express our thoughts.

Reflecting on the knowledge I had acquired, I became more careful in my conversations with my mother. I decided to leave Jam after I discovered he was having another affair. I did not go straight back home after the break up, as there were still a number of emotional issues I had to cope with, but from this time on I started slowly to rebuild contact with my parents, even though I was told on a several occasions that I was excluded forever from the family. We went out for dinner as a family every time my father came back from China. It had been a long time since the whole family travelled to the south together, but in February 2001, my father drove us back first to Kaohsiung and down to Pin Dong to visit our relatives during Chinese New Year. It was a great family time after all the years that I had been away from my parents and younger sisters. We chatted animatedly whilst my father drove.

My father took breaks at a couple of his favourite motorway travel stops, where the travellers could purchase some Chinese food, sandwiches, local snacks, beverages and almost anything that you could think of. The environmental design was their selling point. People could sit on a bench of the little decorated park, take their lunch and cold drinks, and sunbath. These stops were always full with travellers during the Chinese New Year.

We were also caught in the traffic on the motorway for hours. However, the traffic jam seemed to give us the chance to be close in the small space of the car. We did not talk about personal issues or the past of our family, rather we all chatted about our surroundings, the looks of the mountains, the

people in their cars, potential improvements to the motorway, the pollution in the rivers or the past events that happened in my parents' families. It was a memorable family moment after all that I had missed.

Things did not go well immediately. When it came to concerns about my future, the gap between myself and my parents was huge. Although I did not do it as often as I used to, I continued to tell lie. Telling lies was never pleasant, but I felt I would never be able to tell the truth to my parents. Yet if the choices were to tell lies or to be stuck in a fight, I chose to lie.

However, my life was about to change. In late 2001, on a family gathering, my parents surprised me with their offer to support me to study in the UK. I never thought the dream that my father used to promise us would come true after what had happened in the family. Despite my own unresolved emotional status and the persistent arguments with my parents, I came to realise that their love for me was constant. It only needed me to explore it and make it visible both for my parents and myself.

This is the goal I intend to achieve via the present research. I want to first understand my own feelings and be able to express and reflect on my thoughts. In doing so, I hope to improve my emotional awareness and my facility in interpersonal communication. As a consequence, this should benefit my relationship with my parents and other people.

Additionally, taking the statement used to introduce the animation installation, 'A residual cleft in my beautiful life; childhood', 'If my life should be seen as a broken vase that can no longer hold beautiful flowers, this project is posited as a search for the missing pieces that make the vase whole again; it may become a repaired vase that regains the value of its existence by illuminating its surroundings with the beauty of love'.<sup>1</sup> I wish to expand the knowledge of personal improvement from personal to system level; when I am able to become aware of and regulate my emotion, it should enables me to

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<sup>1</sup> A line printed on a poster that was placed in the 'Residual Cleft of My Beautiful Life; Childhood installation' by Yeh Yu-Ling, Feb 2007, in the Lanchester Gallery in Coventry University. The image can be found on the DVD.

help others to understand and recognise their feelings and thoughts thereby improving interpersonal interaction and social communication, which in turn may facilitate other aspects of human experiences.

In order to achieve this, I created an interactive animation installation based on my own childhood experiences that served as an expressive medium to reflect on my thoughts and feelings. The next chapter describes the production undertaken to realise the artefact and how engagement in this process helped to promote my self-awareness and emotional insights in personal growth, including, how animation practice facilitated social communication and interpersonal relationships. By presenting myself as an example, I intend to encourage people, who may find it (or do not) difficult to employ verbal language to express personal feelings and thoughts, to use animation as an alternative approach to emotional expression upon which they are able to reflect, thereby leading to personal preferred life outcomes. Thus, I aim to demonstrate the value of animation practice in therapeutic settings and school education.

## **The interactive animation installation**

### **'A Residual Cleft in My Beautiful Life: Childhood'**

To summarise so far, the state of the art review has provided support for the supposition that animation can be used as a means of increasing viewers' awareness of issues that they might not be familiar with thereby increasing their emotional awareness. This supposition was further supported by the evaluation results of the animation, 'Are You Terry', which revealed that viewers are able to fill in the missing pieces of a narrative. The issues surrounding the development of content for the final installation have also been addressed, with a case being put forward for basing this on autobiographical incidents.

This chapter details the construction of the animation installation, 'A Residual Cleft In My Beautiful Life: Childhood'. Rather than giving a procedural account of its construction, reflecting on the research aims and objects, a more reflective stance is taken. This description seeks to illuminate, firstly how the processes allowed the space to examine and work out personal issues, which additionally provides an account of how the practice of animation might benefit others, and secondly how viewers responded to the installation.

The idea for the installation came from reflecting on the semi-structured interviews, and the creation of and feedback from the animation 'Are You Terry' (see Chapter 4). This led me to recognise that an autobiographical approach might be a more suitable tactic for exploring the development of emotions than the use of other people's stories - based on my own response to feelings, thoughts and interests as an artist.

An accompanying DVD is provided for the reader as a documentation of the installation. This contains seven animation clips, a slide-show of the still images, a video clip of the actual exhibition and a description of the design concept. Please bear in mind that the level of emotional immersion

attained in the virtual environment of the DVD may not resemble the visitors' experience in the actual installation. The DVD is used to represent the installation in order to assist the reader in visualising its production and to provide contextual support for the discussion of viewers' responses.

In creating the installation, I wished to explore:

- (1) from an animator's perspective, whether the making of the interactive animation installation would lead me to greater emotional awareness and understanding of my childhood experiences; the examination of the animation practice showed that I was stimulated to reflect on other childhood stories recalled during the production thereby enabling me to identify a casual relation of the changes in my behaviour and feelings towards my parents. Additionally, I was able to employ the increased capability of self-monitoring in other situations thereby gaining emotional insights in the on-going events,
- (2) from the visitor's perspective, whether the viewing of the animations might help them to acknowledge and relate to my experiences, and to reflect on the emotional aspect of their childhood experience; alongside supporting the previous result of 'Are you Terry' that viewers are able to emotionally engage in an animation narrative, the visitors to the animation installation additionally state that the level of immersive experiences in the multimedia installation would be stronger than the weight of that in the movie world.

In doing so, it is proposed that the animator and the viewers' understanding of emotional development is likely to increase.

The effectiveness of this development was examined by my own expression of, and reflection on my childhood experiences with a view to evidencing increased self-awareness. This is achieved through reflecting during and after practice, and is supplemented by analysing the visitors' feedback. The descriptions are presented in response to the positive feedback, on the value of including animation programme in a therapeutic and educational setting, from one-to-one interviews with art-related therapists, and an online survey with primary and secondary school teachers (see chapter 7).

### 6.1 The aesthetic style of the installation: Collage

Janis and Blesh (1967) describe collage as originally being an activity that involved collecting, cutting and pasting segments of text and graphics into new images or ornamental creation. This art has been practiced and reformulated for centuries so it is hard to date the time, pinpoint the place and identify the forerunner whose works could be recognised as originating the collage medium. Janis and Blesh (1967) state that the art of collage is created for different purposes; political, social change, and the representation of personal inner experience.

Max Ernst (1891-1970) started to use collage in 1919. He claimed that he was self-taught and belonged to no particular school in terms of aesthetic style. Ernst's antiauthoritarian voice, inspired by his father, can be recognized in much of his collage practice (Spies 2005). Ernst's studies in philosophy, art history, literature, psychology, and psychiatry had a tremendous impact on his art. "This constant reflection on his own work is characteristic of Max Ernst's entire artistic career: he had already begun to comment on his curriculum vitae and his artistic creative process at an early date" (Spies 2006:17).

Spies (2006) describes Ernst as the most inventive modern art creator, because of his attachment to writing and rewriting his autobiography and the text to his collages. He developed an autobiographical collage method in which he repeatedly returned to his earlier biographical notes in the final years of his life to interpose new information into the written text. This established the association between his life and work. Ernst wrote, "I had...a banal and almost happy childhood. There were however a few jolts. The lasting traces which they left can be seen reflected in my work" (Spies 2006:23). "Like his art, the way in which Ernst dealt with his life reflected the decisive ideological and technical innovations he introduced into 20<sup>th</sup> Century aesthetics" (Spies 2006:9). The "visual alchemy" (Spies 2005:XV)- collage- was also present in his autobiographical writing which Ernst used to evaluate his expressive inventions and communicate his previous perceptions of his own self (Spies 2006).

Collage has also been employed as a research method. Vaughan (2005) outlined a number of characteristics of collage methods during her own textile-sculpture-practice. The process was instigated by a photo of her father. She aimed to make a series of 'Unwearable' garments to invoke the complexities and contradictions of the past and present; the truth of what she used to see in her father and the unknown history of her father extrapolated through the photo. Vaughan believes that using collage in practice-led research should be innovative and not just a replication, that allows new experiences and insights to be embedded in existing human experience. By collecting pieces from multiple sources an artist creates 'resonances and connections that form the basis of discussion and learning' (Vaughan 2005:12). Vaughan explains that the level of interplay of the practitioner with his/her own work helps situate the direction of the process which is a conversational moment, a mode of constructing/generating knowledge. Vaughan indicates that the collage method should also be composed of the features linking it to daily life; the practitioner voicing his/her personal history, meaning and culture through collage as a way to situate the internality (emotions) and externality (events) onto a broader platform so that people can see them.

Vaughan believes her research 'Pieced together: Collage as an artist's method' meets the seven qualities that infuse art-based research identified by Eisner and Barone (1997):

- (1) the creation of the world of virtual reality,
- (2) the presence of ambiguity,
- (3) the use of expressive language,
- (4) the use of conceptualized and vernacular language,
- (5) the promotion of empathy,
- (6) the personal signature of the researcher, and
- (7) the presence of aesthetic form.

Similarly, this research, having a strong relation with art-based research, also exhibits these features.

### 6.1-1 Applying collage method to my own practice (figure 6 to 10-1)

Collage expression plays a significant role in my life. I see myself as a “collage person”. I felt disconnected with the meaning of my existence, as I felt that I did not have anything to give to and no one to receive from; there was no character in me. I later tried to draw into myself/create myself from collecting the patterns of other people’s behaviours, values, beliefs and morality. I selected from these characters and pasted them onto myself to form the personality of the person I thought I would like to be. I adopted the found materials, trying to improve my own perception of myself, in order to find a path to achieve better personal growth.

Some practitioners use existing materials cut from newspaper, magazines, or other sources, transforming the meaning of the original context through the juxtaposition of found materials (Jennis & Blesh 1967). My practice, even though it is not entirely categorized as collagist, has taken the practical meaning of its beauties i.e. I select materials from multiple sources that might not have an original meaning (plain fabric or random images), I cut out, paint, print and paste the materials into a new visual presentation of meaning. I wanted to not only focus on the outcome of the artefact presented to stimulate viewers’ awareness of emotions, but also to show that the understanding of emotions resonates with a college-based process.

The collage method has become my chief vehicle of expression. Using fragments of found materials to create a new image is a metaphor for the construction of a ‘new person’. Each visual element of the animation and hand-made design symbolise the shards (disaffection and lack of self-identity) embodied in my childhood. By stitching all the materials together, I am reconnected to the emotional aspects of childhood that helps me to become an integrated person. By setting these visual materials in a space (i.e. the family environment that I would not discuss) which depicts my own childhood, the family events, space and time are re-established to re-enact my own feelings and thoughts in an attempt to reflect the relationship with my family. Herein I gain the ability to reconsider the history of my own family from a different perspective (e.g. all parents in the world love and care about their children but to help their children to see may depend on how they show it).

## 6.2 Why combine animation in an art installation?

It was reasoned that a multimedia integrated screening in a physical space might facilitate the viewers emotional immersion in the virtual world of the installation. This was supported by Ryan’s (2001) argument, that the level of the appreciator’s (Ryan uses the term for audience/visitor/user) interaction in digital virtual reality depends remarkably upon the weight of the user’s immersive experience - a feeling of the presence and embodied consciousness in the world. This psychological phenomena is built up in layers beginning with the appreciator’s entry into a real space (the sense of realism), his/her freedom to walk around, look at objects from different perspectives and the possibility to touch objects (embodied consciousness).<sup>1</sup>

Correspondingly, the visitors are free to choose where to navigate in my installation. By doing so, they become co-authors (Ryan 2001). They can re-picture the nonlinear childhood memories into a more personal linear story dependent upon their interpretation, experience and interest. In this interactive immersion, the visitor is provided with a more forceful physical and emotional involvement in the atmosphere of the childhood narrative so that they are more likely to engage in the subject matter addressed in the artefact. The multiple-virtual-reality environment i.e. the real space (the installation), and the virtual world- both in the animations and Barbie doll house - enable the visitor to physically walk around and look into the space and to become immersed in the virtual world of the animations.

Additionally, “The spirit of a place manifests itself through the narratives that recount its origin, thereby establishing its sanctity and affective significance: when a person visits a place, the stories that are told about it- by companions, by rock art or graffiti, or even by oneself through memories or fantasies- become part of the character of the place” (Ryan 2001:323-324). These retold/reconstructed stories comprising the installation (the place; my own family) served as the contributions to the

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<sup>1</sup> I am aware that Ryan proposes virtual applications should include the appreciator’s ability to modify physical objects- the extent of the user’s body to control or change the environment. However, as this potential stimulus of the enhancement of immersion does not necessarily fit the intention of helping the audience understand the truth of my own childhood memories, this was not adopted in the installation in order to remain the narrative flow.

original knowledge of the place; the visitors' responses to my childhood experiences became part of my expression of and reflection on the culture of family.

### 6.3 'A Residual Cleft In My Beautiful Life: Childhood'- interactive animation installation<sup>2</sup>

The installation employed three expressive media; animation, other media of visual arts and graphical designs. All them were designed in collage form, constructed from fabrics with paintings and stitchings to create the appearance of a family space that was a replica of my parents' house. As such it had a physical structure representation of a front garden accessible from large French window, washing machine, shoe chest and a lounge with tables, a bookshelf, childhood toys, stairs, a family-snapshot-graphical clock, Barbie doll house, corridor, toothbrush holder and bathroom.

Animations were located at significant places i.e. the lounge, corridor and the mirror and bathtub in the bathroom. Graphic works included representations of fences, a broom, a piano and a TV.

This representation of my own childhood experience, my relationship with my parents in particular, was a work of expressive creativity in which certain issues were presented, noted, discussed and reflected upon. It was designed to present my awareness of a need to communicate, have the opportunity to feel comfortable, contemplate and see inside the problem in a creative space where I felt safe to tell stories relating to my innermost thoughts. Externalising and presenting these issues in the form of a public installation would enable me to appreciate the value of my personal expression and become more self-confident. Some elements that intended interactivity were withdrawn during the process of building the installation (the reasons for this will be addressed later).

The diagram (Figure 11) shows the four main parts of the production;

- (1) the moving images that were used to narrate the stories of my own childhood experience, and

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<sup>2</sup> The reader may wish to look at the accompanying DVD before this section.

- (2) the physical visual elements that were used to construct the appearance of the family environment,
- (3) the process of the actual construction of the installation.
- (4) post-project reflection-on-practice.

The descriptions of the knowledge acquired during the activities are provided in the following sections. Before continuing to introduce the following part of the chapter, I want to recapitulate how self-awareness of emotions (i.e. emotional awareness) is characterised. This will enable the reader to relate the descriptions to what is recognised as indications of increased emotional awareness.

As aforementioned in the Literature Review, an emotionally insightful person is constantly engaged with his or her feeling life and is able to produce the subject meaning of their emotional responses (Kenny-Moore, Watson 1999). Gardner (2006) also argues that intrapersonal intelligence (i.e. emotional intelligence) requires expressive forms of intelligences (e.g. linguistic, imagery, music) to observe and visualise one's own emotions. Thus, the visual representations provide emotional information upon which one can reflect, thereby leading to emotional awareness. The following sections describe how I used animation to express my own childhood experience, how I reflected on the context of the visual representations, how I interpreted the recalled emotional events during the processes, which in turn evidence an increased self-awareness.

### 6.3-1 The animations

There were four animations displayed in the installation. These were completed in the UK prior to the physical visual materials. The animations involved three processes (1) script writing, (2) motion picture editing on Photoshop, AfterEffects, 3D studio and Premiere, and (3) audio recordings (voice over).

#### (1) Writing my own childhood stories (script writing)

The four scripts were based around important moments in my family life that I believe have had a significant effect on me and the person I am today.

These were based in or around areas of the house

- (1) Living room (Figures 12 & 13): This story tells how Debby asks for help from her father about a maths problem. It reveals how she later sees herself as being intellectually inadequate and afraid to ask questions because she was rebuked for not understanding a 'simple' problem.
- (2) Corridor (Figures 14 & 15): This story describes how Debby used to see the Barbie doll's artificial smile as a metaphor for her jealousy of others having a pleasant time when she never experienced this.
- (3) Bathtub (Figures 16 & 17): This story shows the lack of intimacy between Debby and her mother that makes her feel more welcome and comfortable in another family.
- (4) Mirror (Figures 18 & 19): This story depicts the relationship between two events; Debby always looks at people from the corner of her eye and was frequently shouted at. The cause-and-effect relationship between these factors is my own interpretation of this particular issue: when I was shouted at by my mother, I looked at her indirectly with an angry state of mind. This rebellious sideways glance became habitual in family situations and was adopted in other social contexts. The relationship between these two events may not be evident to the viewer. This was the same situation that I was in; I was not aware that I did not make eye contact, until my friends pointed out that I stared at people or watched TV with my head at the direction of 10 o'clock and my eyes of 12 o'clock. As embarrassed as I was at this revelation initially the solution became clearer as I became more aware of my body language. One day when my Mum became terribly angry with me, I realized I was staring out of the corner of my eye; this recognition occurred as if witnessing myself from a third person perspective. This idea was carried forward in the installation where the visitors view the animations from a spectator's point of view.

- reflection-in-practice and emotional awareness

Childhood memory has always been an important engine that drives reflection on my own emotional history. Although the story of Billy Milligan helped to bring my difficult feelings and thoughts to the surface, it was only when I started making the animation installation, that I was able to express and reflect on the impact of my own childhood on my adult identity, I was able to explore the causes of my emotional tendencies. This helped me to interpret my inner reality more accurately.

Additionally, I personally found language and text effective for description, but inadequate forms for narrating 'inner events'. Written expression is as much a direct form of expression as vocal language, thereby reducing psychological safety and freedom. What is written has a precise meaning, which people can look up in a dictionary. Textual expression is a relatively direct form of voice. On the other hand, script writing (including poetry) was more flexible for me as it served to complement the visual representations of my childhood experiences. Storylines in the screenplays were 'filtered' as I decided what should be performed through the characters. For example, I created the mathematics and mirrors animation to narrate the incidents which happened between myself and my parents. I simply described the family events, and I did not want to narrative my feelings relating to, or the emotional responses to my parents' actions in the events (e.g. my father should not have called me stupid, it was not right to say that to his child; my mother should have reconsidered her illogical behaviours to not distance herself from her child). I purposely left these out, as I did not feel comfortable revealing them in a direct manner. The visual elements of the animations should enable the viewer to acquire this knowledge. Thus, creating the screenplay provided me with more choices to express my emotions in a different form than merely producing stories in a single form.

When attempting to distil my childhood memories to form these four childhood stories, I had to overcome my own resistance to being seen. Throughout my childhood until young adulthood, I could not possibly remember any occasion when a conversation with my parents was positively constructed; my mother would always be extremely busy with chores and my father would be editing books or listening to TV programmes behind his newspaper.

Both my parents suppress personal expression and, in the past, rarely employed changes of expression in family communication. My vocabulary in early life was limited as a consequence and therefore had difficulty expressing my feelings verbally. I found it easier to keep quiet and did not let others know my inner thoughts. The lack of experience in expressing myself, together with the deep-rooted belief that ‘whatever comes out of my mouth is going to cause trouble’, made scripting a story of my own childhood difficult due to an ingrained tendency not to vocalise feelings.

When I found myself still trapped in this mindset, I began to look back at what I had learnt from my research- the semi-structured interviews and animation ‘Are You Terry’- i.e. the cycle of weak family relationships caused by poor communication repeats itself if we dismiss the impact of parenting on personal development, and the production of animation is an important key to increasing self-awareness. Thus, it was necessary to use myself as a subject to show how the animation practice may assist me in challenging and understanding emotions.

I came to understand that the family-based issues around the inability to express emotions or communicate would continue on into my own life if I did not confront them. This realisation of the need to overcome emotional barriers for a better life for my parents, myself and future family, diminished the fear of socially-defined, or perhaps family-defined, expressive behavioural norms. In response to the interviewees’ statements (see Chapter4 for further details), I became committed to showing that the lack of communication in Taiwanese families has a significant impact on the dynamic of children’s growth. These reflections encouraged me to complete the stories in a more open manner. I felt more positive and in control of what I intended to achieve as such the process served as a therapeutic experience for me during the script writing.

One day, after the scripts were completed, I was telling stories about Taiwan to my partner. In response, my partner asked me that ‘Isn’t there anything pleasant about Taiwan? All these things you say make me not want to go to Taiwan. Or, you only see the negative’.

His statements startled me. I denied being negative arguing that the stories were accurate descriptions of real experiences. However, when looking at the scripts later, this conversation was recalled. They did indeed relate to the negative aspects of my childhood. In fact, the past cannot only be inscribed with unpleasant feelings. I began to look at my childhood from a different perspective and I recalled my mother's gentleness when she brushed my hair, and carefully helped me erase mistakes in my homework. I appreciated the time she spent helping me with my homework. The scripts functioned as objective phenomena which allowed me to reflect on my own way of thinking (i.e. the perspective that I adopted when recounting my own childhood).

Reflecting on the script writing process it can be seen that:

- (1) reflection may occur when looking back at the completion of the activity i.e. the creator may be able to discover the connection or similarity between his/her own practice and life events and subsequently this may trigger the creator to reflect on the disclosure.
- (2) the reflection or understanding may not be visible in the creation (i.e. it may not be understood by the viewers).

(2) The process of designing and animating the characters

The characters in the animations included my father, mother and myself. Each character was modelled using basic tools on 3D Max studio - creating object mapping (colour and textures), reflection and lighting. Transforming simple 3D spheres and boxes into human characters created the physical features of the characters. The structures of the characters' bodies were connected to individual bone points that facilitated the characters' movements. The mapping tool was used to apply colours, patterns and features on the characters and other objects in the four animations. Lighting and reflection effects were also included to produce an aesthetic which recreated the atmosphere of my family environment. The characters' personalities reflected my own feelings about them.

Moore and Watson (1999) explain that emotional expression is a form of emotive response. It can be both verbal and non-verbal and may occur unconsciously. Emotional expression is evidenced in the animations. The three characters symbolise my emotional responses to my childhood, my feelings of confusion, frustration, anger and fear are illustrated through the combination of the verbal expression (voice recordings of scripts) and non-verbal representations (the characters' body language).

- reflection-in-practice and emotional awareness

The process of animating visual materials (design elements) serves as a safe space for free expression. However, personal reflection on these expressed materials may not be accessible at this stage; when animating a character, the animator may be deeply immersed in expressing thoughts and as such may only be able to reflect on these when she takes a break or returns the work.

When I was animating, I concentrated on delivering the messages (e.g. how I could show the character's frustration) without reflection. My use of other media involved a number of repeated actions (e.g. I spent a long time stitching pieces of fabric together to create the physical elements of the animation installation) during such processes I was more likely to reflect on other related childhood experiences (see 6.3-2 for further details). Thus, reflection-in-practice might not be inhibited when one is engaging in digital production that requires great concentration and technical thinking.

The process of animating moving visual expressions may also trigger behaviours such as crying (emotional behaviour) out of sadness, frustration, struggles, disappointment and misunderstanding (i.e. a feeling of release). For example, crying was one thing I used to forbid myself from doing, so when I felt the need to cry I substituted another behaviour I sulked or did things that affected other people. I was not willing to respond to people, I pretended lacked of concern in order to avoid being seen as a weak person. By animating the four stories, I was able to re-enact the suppressed feeling and this time in the comfort zone of the digital space, I was able to express myself freely - without feeling judged, resulting in a therapeutic experience.

One day when viewing the uncompleted mathematics animation, I started thinking that why my father felt angry when I did not understand his answer to the math problems. I was not inclined to think he was impatient because he is generally not, especially to his children. However, I recalled that my mother once told me my father used to teach students at weekends in our old house in Taichung. My father was a very strict teacher and my mother did not agree with his teaching methods. When the incident was mentioned later, my father told us that all he wanted was to make sure his students learn best. When his students could not understand in the class, he became angry with them. Although this might have explained the incident with my father, I found it was not good enough for me (i.e. his students or I might not capable of what he could do and yet we were judged because we failed to learn the subjects).

I tried to recall the times when I was upset and it was not hard to realise that I was constantly angry with 'something'. When I was sharing a house, I tended to do housework and asked my housemates to maintain its cleanliness, and when they did not help, I became even more 'FRUSTRATED'. Suddenly, I came to register the word 'frustration'. Thus, it could have been that my father was upset because of his frustration when I did not understand the mathematics problems, and he transformed the feeling into 'anger'. Subsequently, I was stimulated to reflect on other possible events that could have caused my frustration. However, I was not able to clarify the causality of the emotionally unpleasant event other than recalled I was frustrated. It is reasonable that I had not understood the real reason for my frustration with the chores event; i.e. it could have been that I had repressed difficult feelings derived from other events, and the state of the house was only the catalyst of the feelings to be expressed, not the actual source of the negative feeling. Thus I failed to gain more insights in my own feelings. Nonetheless, I became aware of the impact of misleading feelings on my behaviour. I attained the ability to access to, and interpret emotions in me and others.

(3) The voice over recordings with the artists and young participant

Two female artists and a 9-year-old girl participated in the voice recordings of the three characters i.e. one artist voiced the mother character, the other voiced the narrator and the child voiced the young Debby. All three participants were asked to sign a consent form to agree to take part in the production - the young performer's parent signed a consent form on the child's behalf. The recordings were made in a place chosen by the participants- the studio or family home using a digital video camera.

The young participant, who voiced the character of Debby, had also taken part in the animation 'Are You Terry', where she had provided the voice of Terry. I had used her a few times and thought that she was charming, energetic and joyful. However in the first recording for 'Are You Terry', she appeared remote but still gave a professional performance which captured the character of Terry. I assumed that her behaviour have been the result of her unfamiliarity with the place of the recording and the experience. Hence, when I invited her again to take part in the next animation, I asked her to choose where the recording would take place. She decided on her bedroom. However, in the middle of the session, she asked to put on her sunglasses as she thought this would help her perform better.

Her narration was very professional and proficient. During the recording she commented on how she felt about my childhood experiences. She said rehearsing the script had made her feel sad. I reminded her that she did not need to participate if she did not feel comfortable and also explained childhood is a mixture of happy and unhappy events. She confirmed that she was happy to continue with the work.

The artist who voiced the character of the mother is a well-experienced actress. She chose to produce the narration in her own studio. Before the recordings began, she asked me to describe the characteristics of the mother and how the mother might react in different situations. She quickly understood the central character, the angry expressions, body movement and language. During her rehearsal, I started to recall other childhood events where I had felt frightened and upset. However, I did not recall the same feelings about these incidents (i.e. I would become irrational and not understanding when recalling my mother rebuking at me), but I wondered whether I still had the same

facial expression when I became upset? Was I still able to excuse my own unpleasant behaviour that hurt others? Was I aware of my own emotional response to events?

Whilst familiarising herself with the scripts the artist often turned to me to show her understanding of my emotional experiences. From her words of comfort and understanding, I felt that someone was there, being supportive, when I was experiencing inner conflicts. Sometimes the artist stopped rehearsing to share her own family stories with me.

The other artist who voiced the character of the narrator, was an interdisciplinary artist based in Birmingham, possessing a PhD in the theory and practice of Fine Art. She requested that the recordings were made at her house. Before this she asked me to discuss the scripts. I explained how I had felt when the events happened so that she could imitate the character. While I was trying to express my feelings, she also began to tell me her stories and that she had similar feelings when she was a child. We spent about an hour expressing and reflecting on the feelings we had as children before making the recordings.

- reflection-in-practice and emotional awareness

The stages involved in creating the animations were fairly isolated, separate from the physical construction of the installation. I would have liked to have provided the voice of the narrator. However, I felt anxious about producing the spoken narrative (i.e. using my own voice would be a direct form of expression, I did not feel 'safe' to do so). Therefore, I invited others to take part. What I did not realise was that I still had to confront my own difficulty of verbal expression i.e. I needed to describe my feelings about my own childhood stories to the artefacts. I also began to understand that I felt more comfortable to vocalise the emotional aspect of my childhood experience in the space provided during the animation practice, which enabled me to see how people's empathy with and understanding of childhood experiences can encourage a person to open up (i.e. without working together on the animations with the participants and others, I would not have the opportunity to verbalise my feelings about my past, I would have been unlikely to have observed people's

understanding of my childhood experiences). This helped me to come out of the isolating work environment and to start engaging in social interaction. Thus, it can be suggested that the processes of animation may benefit one’s verbal expression and interpersonal relationships, including a therapeutic experience derived from people’s empathetic connection (e.g. a feeling of being understood and accepted).

This activity prompted me to think about other people’s views of my childhood (e.g. my stories made the young child actress unhappy), to re-consider my previous incommunicable behaviours, such as my sullen expression, avoidance of people’s gaze and ignoring others when they tried to understand the situation better, and to reflect on whether or not I still employed the same non-verbal behaviours.

The spontaneous conversations with the artists about family issues helped me to see that most people undergo similar emotional aspects of childhood experiences, which can be shared regardless of different cultural backgrounds (e.g. the second artist was a British born Iranian). I felt more comfortable verbalising my difficult thoughts with the artists in our working environment. I was able to produce work that would be valuable to myself and the viewers, and this encouraged me to overcome my difficulties.

The descriptions in the following sections show how the skill of self-awareness enhanced by engaging in the animation production continued to benefit my emotional insight during the creation of physical visual representations.

#### 6.3-2 The physical elements of the animation installation (figure 20 to 29)

In my creative practice I combine various techniques. I wanted to produce a visual representation of the sort of house matching my mother’s preferences- simple design and furnishing, spacing and clean. I thought that this could be achieved through designing on white fabric. In addition, the choice of fabric to construct a family space also took into account of the flexibility of the material. Fabric was easy to manipulate by cutting, colouring and stitching, and it required little storage space. The

drawings of furnishings (washing machine, small bathroom wear and the black front door) were created with acrylic. Some fabrics were printed with digital photos of my parents’ house (the stairs, the bookshelf, and shoe chest); other fabrics were used to make 3D dimensional objects such as the café table, large French window, stairs and walls/partitions). All the designed fabric was completed with stitching and fishing wires enabling the physical elements of the installation to be suspended.

- reflection-in-practice and emotional awareness

The physical elements were produced in Taiwan whilst I was teaching animation in Chin Shien junior high school (see appendix 8 for more details). At this time, I frequently travelled back to visit my parents. I spent after-school hours cutting, painting and stitching the fabrics in an empty classroom and at the weekends at my parent’s. I occupied three different time domains - the past, present and future; my physical functions operated in the present; my mind navigated the stories of family events of the past; the future – what the installation would look like, what effects I wanted it to have.

When working on the fabric for the washing machine (Figure 30), I recalled that I used to like helping my mother wash clothes by hand in our front garden before we put them in the washing machine. I volunteered to do the laundry when my mother went shopping and the neighbours would tell my mother that I was very helpful. My memory then switched to the period when I became reluctant to help with any housework, irritated by the idea that when I was at home at weekends, I would be asked to do chores. I began to think about what had changed me? Did I start avoiding housework because I grew older, was it because of the academic pressure I was under, that meant I wanted to relax after school, or was it because my mother was a strict disciplinarian about the housework, that drove me away?

All these detailed thoughts about my childhood were not represented in this design piece. Although it did not have a direct connection to the animation stories, an added value was that the process of making the fabric washing machine stimulated me to reflect on this particular issue and to reconsider the reasons for its cause. I did not expect a concrete answer as to why the change had occurred but the

process of reflection induced by the productive process refocused on the situation I lived with, but had never carefully examined before.

The design of the family-snapshot graphical clock (Figure 31) provided a clearer example of how the creative process provides the space to reflect. This was cut in a round shape, stitched with lace and printed with a digital montage of photos of my family and life in the UK. The clock time represented my age with one minute representing one year of my life. Before my early 20s, the photos were black and white. The selected photos of this period related to happy family moments and joyful times in my teenage years. However, I wanted to show that these graphical representations were unconnected with my inner reality and what I actually felt at the time. Starting from the age of 20, colour was introduced on the clock. Some of the family snapshots placed in the area representing age greater than 20 were printed on the clock partly black and white, and partly coloured. The idea was to show that I had gained the ability to appreciate the history of my family as well as to learn from it. My expression and reflection on these feelings and thoughts were projected onto the memory clock.

These two pieces of designs illustrate how the expression and reflection on feelings can be stimulated during the creative process. Some may remain personal to the artist, others may be partly or fully manifest in the artefacts with which the viewer may find identification. In all cases the creator has benefited. However, it is her choice as to what is developed. Additionally, the viewer may not fully understand what is presented to them or interpret it in the light of their own experience.

During the physical production in Taiwan, late one night, my mother and I chatted in the living room. When my mother changed the subject to my personal choices and decisions in life, that I used to avoid discussing, I decided to explore this carefully with her. As I had always known that my mother could at times use very strong language, I prepared myself for that challenge and intended to stay calm. However, our conversation became extremely uncomfortable. I tried to encourage my mother to understand that parents need to respect their children’s decisions in life (e.g. living in a different country does not mean that her child is not caring for her, making decisions between her and whom

her child stays with is needless, minding how people would interpret the relationship between her and her child is unnecessary, asking why I am her child is incomprehensible!). I was confused, frustrated and disappointed. I thought that I had become an emotionally insightful person, and believed that I was able to deal with the conversation with my mother better than before. Indeed, I performed better; I expressed my feelings and thoughts, which I used to avoid doing. On the other hand, I did not succeed in maintaining the appropriate emotional expression as I replied to my mother ‘I am absolutely going to do the things that you don’t like!’ I was in tears and my mother yelled ‘Stop that, you are not dying for food’. Our conversation woke up my father who came downstairs to ask her to go to bed. Then, my mother left. I was reminded of how much I enjoyed being in the creative space of safety in which the act of crying is not criticised as a negative expression. The space of expressive production not only allowed me to express and reflect the history of the family- as in the mean time I was also coping with my ongoing life- but also became a place where I could go to discharge unpleasant feelings.

Throughout the creation of the installation, I intended to explore the relationship between my own practice, my past and ongoing life. I became most aware of my own emotional responses to issues that related to my parents as I considered that they are the main source from which I can learn more about myself i.e. I tried to understand their personal attitudes, values and beliefs and how these impacted on me. However, I could not confront my parents about issues relating to personal decisions about the life in the future. I respect very much their opinion of the need to stay close. Whilst trying to maintain my relationship with the family, I am struggling with their beliefs.

#### 6.4 The physical construction of the installation

The place of the exhibition was decided in advance and was measured before the fabrics were produced in Taiwan. On top of each large piece of fabric (partitions/walls) wooden sticks were nailed and fitted with fishing wires to suspend the fabrics from the ceilings (Figures 32 & 33). The physical construction of the family environment was completed with five large pieces of fabric that divided the

space into the individual rooms and the suspended furnishings (Figures 34 to 35), and the collaged graphics employed for the front area and the lounge (Figs 36 & 38).

Four projectors were used to project the animations onto a piece of white fabric that was either suspended from the ceiling (figs 39 to 42), on a big fabric that was used to divide the rooms (Figures 43 & 44), on the little screen of the Barbie doll house (Figures 45 & 46). Given short distance between the fabric screen and the projector, a mirror was used to reflect the piano animation upward on the fabric of the bathtub.

Some real objects such as chair, plinths, lamps and childhood toys were placed in the family space (Figures 47 to 49); the plinths were covered with white fabric and used to support the projectors and stand as the furnishings; lighting (lamps) was set up to enhance the domestic environment.

- Reflection-in-practice and emotional awareness (changes made during the construction)

The original intention was to include interactive technology in the animation installation. However, changes were made upon reflection on my practice in relation to my emotional behaviour, as follows.

Figures 50 to 53 depict the intended interactions between the visitor and the animations at the lounge, corridor, bathtub and mirror. A PIR infrared sensor<sup>3</sup> that measures body temperature was to be placed adjacent to each display so as to trigger the presentation of an animation or a still image:

- (1) In the mathematics animation (Figure 50 & 50-1): the visitor was to sit on the chair (where the infrared sensor was to be placed) in order to trigger the animation.
- (2) To activate the Barbie doll animation in the corridor (Figure 51 & 51-1): the visitor would complete a computerized jigsaw game on the small screen of the Barbie doll house.
- (3) The animation on the mirror (Figure 52 & 52-1): would be triggered by a PIR sensor.

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<sup>3</sup> For more information related to the sensor is [online] available from  
<<http://www.pdl.co.nz/brochures/PIRSensorsTechnicalGuide.pdf>> [4<sup>th</sup> Nov 2007]

- (4) For the piano lesson animation on the bathtub (Figure 53 & 53-1), the visitor would have to open the shower curtain so as to start the PIR that triggers the animation (I played with water in a bathtub before I went to my piano lesson).

I justified the initial idea of employing interaction in the installation by reasoning that people should come and ‘talk’ to ‘Debby’ to find out what she was feeling or she would not tell them. The interactivity was designed to mirror my own inability to voluntarily communicate about my emotions.

One day before the installation, the interactive settings were still in progress. Although we successfully completed the interactivity of each animation, there was a problem to activate the settings to run interactively. As a creative “fractioned”, an incident such as usually caused me distress. Subsequently, I reflected on the reason for including interactivity in the animation. I wanted the visitor to experience a passive mode of social interaction that happened not just in my own childhood, but even now, as I was still adopting the same insufficient communication method which were projected onto the trigger-and-display (come and see) interactive program. In response to the reflection, I realised that the barrier to communication was merely a duplication of my unhelpful interpersonal skills. As I did not wish to employ this mode of behaviour anymore, it was reasonable that it should be prevented from occurring in my practice, thereby reflecting my more recent proactive stance as compared to my former reactive withdrawn behaviour. The reflection affected my emotional response to the incident. I felt positive that the artefact could be shown and performed without the interactive settings. Therefore, the interactivities were excluded.

The above descriptions evidenced that my creative practice enhanced the levels of self-awareness in myself and others. The processes facilitated both my linguistic and visual expression. I was prompted to contemplate my childhood experiences from different perspective and reflect on them. It provoked me to examine and understand my own inner experiences and emotional responses. I was able to employ the acquired emotional insights fairly effectively to facilitate my performances in various aspects of life.

### 6.5 post-project reflection-on-practice (the animation installation as a whole)

Scrivener (2002) argues that visual art is not primarily a form of knowledge communication as the knowledgeable things in art cannot account for deep insights that are believed to arise through the experience of art. When he says this, Scrivener refers to visual art and painting in particular. For example, looking at the old drawing I made when a teenager (Figure 54), its meaning is not certain, even to myself. The drawing comprises two main images; one shows ‘Debby’ looking tense and surrounded by eyes, and the caption above the image says that ‘It felt like being spied on whatever I did!'; the second image shows that ‘Debby’ feels awkward as she is being laughed at by ‘smiling faces’ and is captioned with the words, ‘The worst thing is that people are laughing at me!’ However, the visual representation does not enable me to extract the illustrated narrative. I do not know what happened that made me have those thoughts, who was involved, where it happened and what I did in the situation? How I reacted to it, or what I learnt from it. Knowledge of this kind is not shared (i.e. the causal relations of the emotional responses are not knowable). I learnt that ‘Debby’ was upset, which was an outcome of negative feelings, but I did not know why. Although it can be argued that I was able to access to my own emotions, I was incapable of creating a drawing in which a comprehensive story would be presented. I found it difficult to convey a full narrative in an image.

In contrast, creating moving images (animation) helps to overcome this difficulty. The art of the moving image is an art of storytelling. It has a beginning, middle and end, even though the temporal order of the film can be out of alignment with the narrative order. Non-linear story requires concentration and reasoning in order to piece the story together. Whether linear or non-linear, the motion picture is capable of delivering a full meaning of a story.

On the other hand, the outcome of the creative project does not reveal the emotional insights I acquired during its creation. The artefact itself does not transfer the understanding of my own emotional responses to other related childhood experiences, family events or my practice, neither does it make ‘explicitly’ self-awareness (By explicit, I refer to a solid demonstration of self-awareness in

the visual representations). The installation largely illustrated my own expression and reflection on my childhood stories.

Scrivener (2002) states that artefacts may embody knowledge that merely needs to be extracted, though this is still hotly debated. In this sense, I would like to think that extracting knowledge from a creative production requires one to think, reason, recount, organise and provide constructive possibilities i.e. this resembles an approach to developing self-awareness of issues tackled in artefacts. Similarly, although my own increased emotional skill might not be read or understood by the visitors, their interpretations (expression in written form- questionnaire) about the installation become part of their (and my) experiences. The visitors were encouraged to view, listen and respond, and to extract meaning from the artefacts. Their emotional responses to my stories served to measure the extent to which my own awareness had been depicted in the installation.

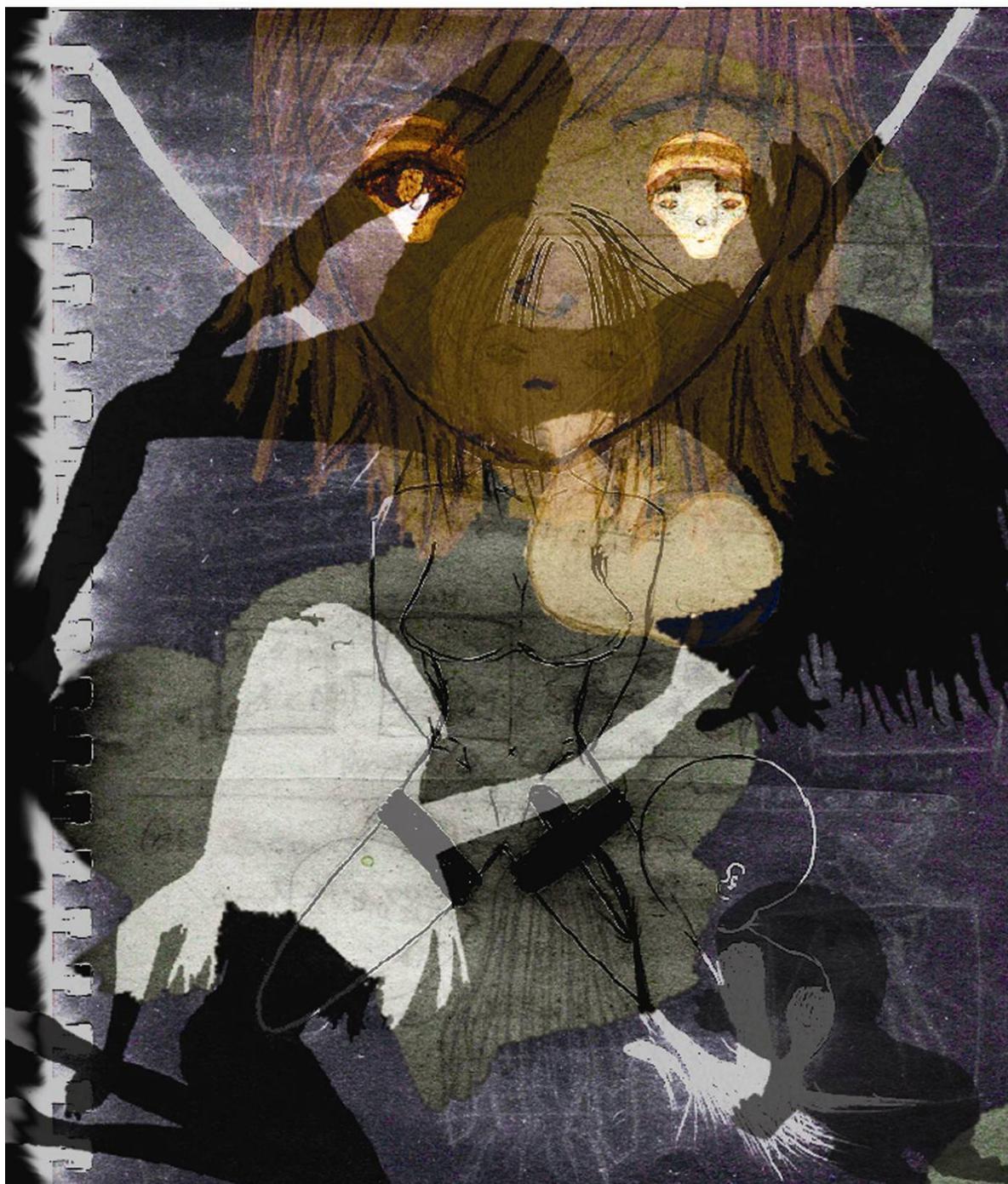


Figure 6 The collage work 'The Mind'



Figure 7 The Collage work 'The Edge'

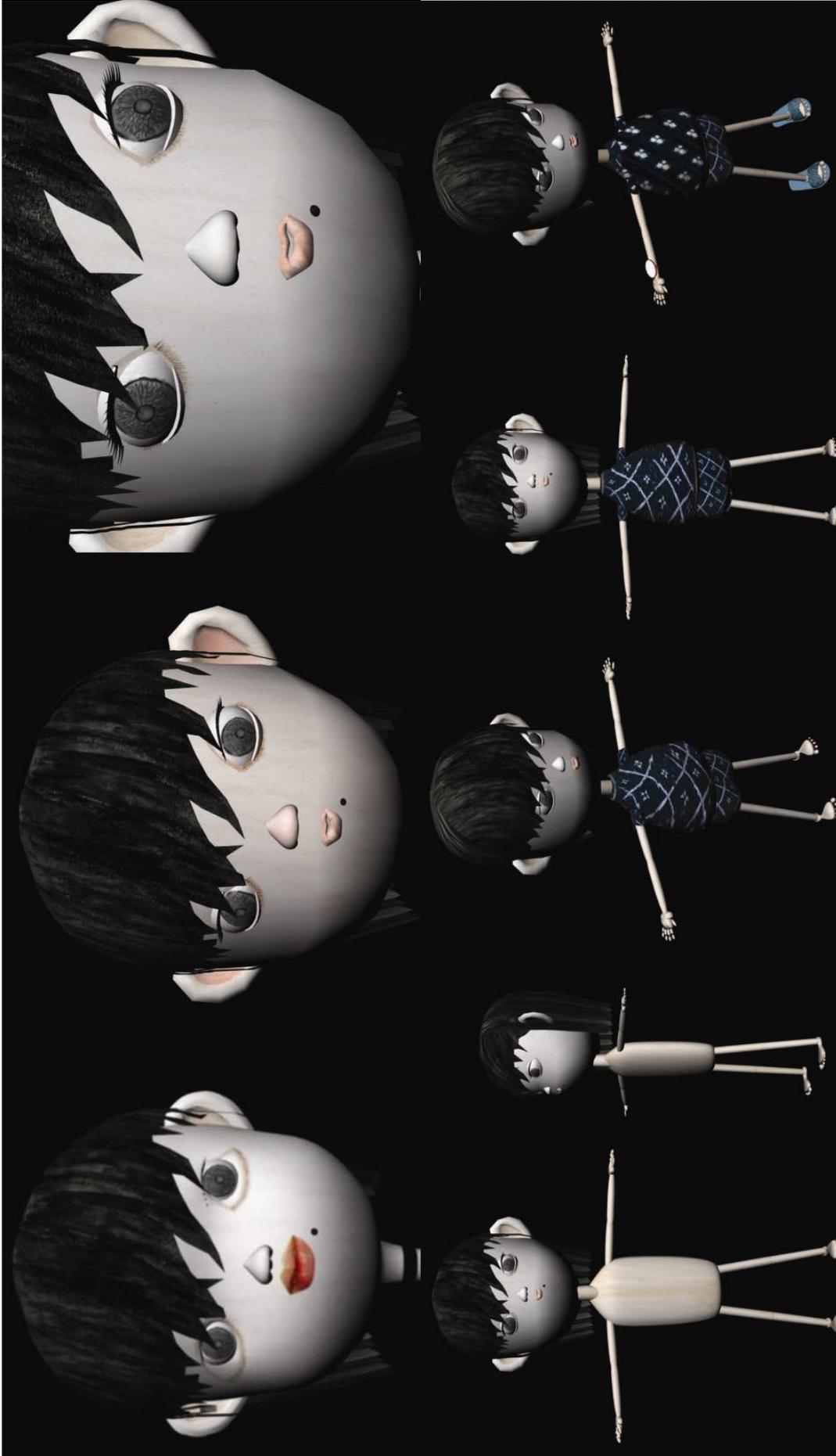


Figure 8 The production of the 3D characters of 'Debby'

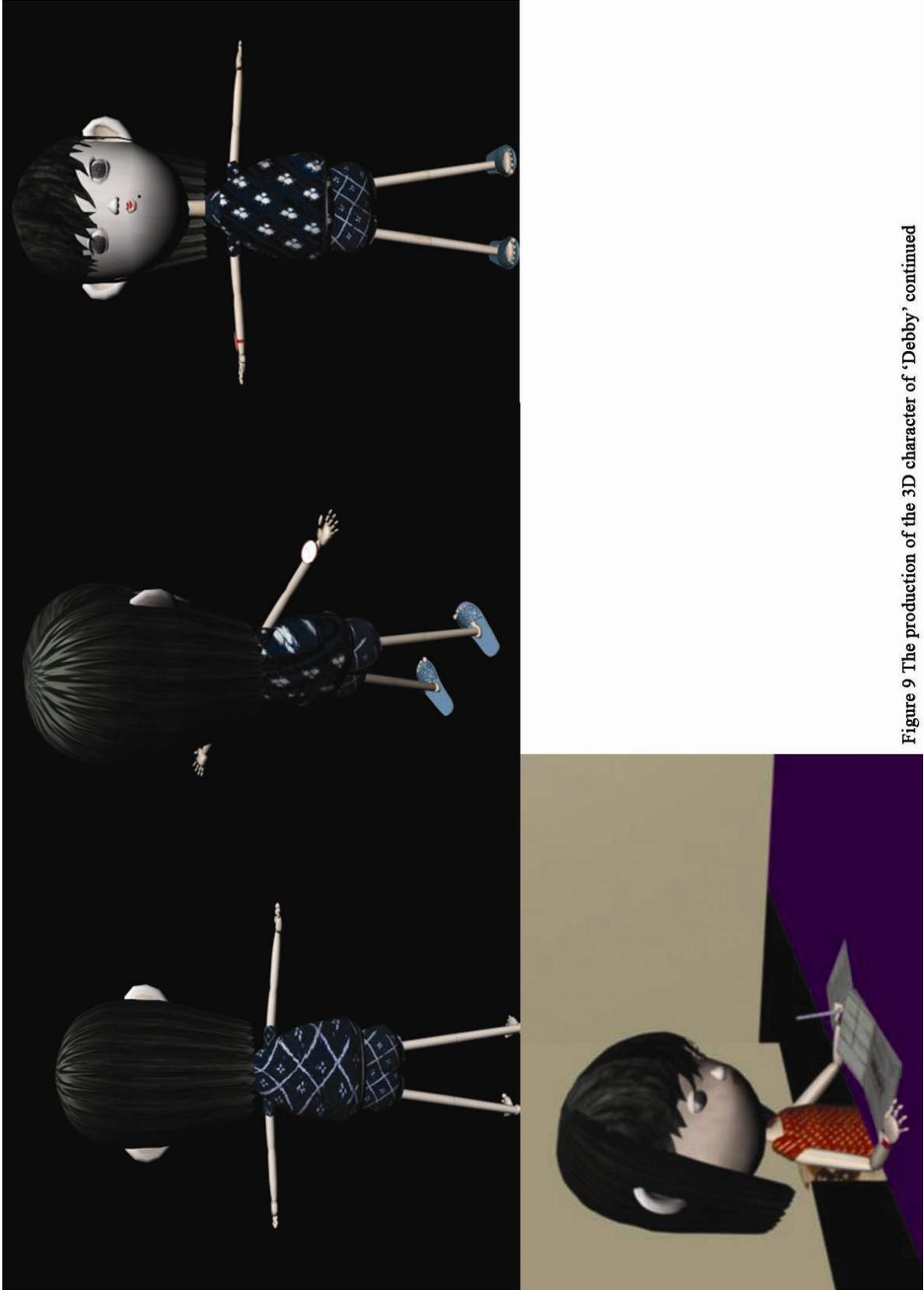


Figure 9 The production of the 3D character of 'Debby' continued



Figure 10 Some visual components of the work of 'Are You Terry' and 'A residual cleft in my beautiful life: childhood'



Fig 10-1 More visual components of the colligen work of 'A residual cleft in my beautiful life: childhood'

Post-project reflection-on-practice		
<p>1) the moving images enables the knowledge to be shared and reduces the misunderstanding of the meaning the creator tries to deliver (i.e. the impact of childhood experiences and the intention of the creator to the installation were understood by the visitors)</p> <p>2) the visual representations of my own childhood stories may not embody the knowledge that the creator acquired during the creative process</p> <p>3) although the new knowledge learnt by the creator during the art making were not stored in the artefact, the visitors were encouraged to think, organise, recount, and reconstruct the presented narrative such that the visitors were prompt to become aware of the issues tackled in the artefact</p>		
Stage of the processes	Processes of the activity (creative process)	Reflection-in-practice and emotional awareness
(1) Designing physical elements of the installation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-collecting fabric</li> <li>-cutting fabric</li> <li>-painting and printing on fabric</li> <li>-pasting/stitching the designed fabric to create the partitions, black front door, french windows, café table, shoes chest, storage, washing machine, clock, stairs, bookshelf, Barbie doll house, bathtub and bathroom wear</li> <li>-Script writing</li> </ul>	<p>1) self-expression and the act of reflection can take place concurrently during the creative process</p> <p>2) some details of the creator's triggered reflection may not be fully realised by the visitors, depending upon the artist's choice of what to be presented</p>
(2) The digital art productions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Creating the characters (four animations)</li> <li>-Spoken narrative (audio recordings)</li> </ul>	<p>1) the activity allows the artist to choose to express in the verbal or non-verbal form</p> <p>2) script writing benefits the artist's ability in linguistic expression</p> <p>3) the act of reflection may not take place at the same time when the artist is projecting feelings and thoughts onto the characters</p> <p>4) reflection on the completion of the screenplay can assist the creator in understanding her way of thinking</p> <p>5) reflections by the artist may not be explicitly visible in her work</p>
(3) The process of the actual construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-hanging up the designed fabrics</li> <li>-placing other physical equipments (projectors, monitors, chairs, plinths)</li> <li>-designing lighting</li> <li>-setting interactive program</li> <li>-printing collage graphics (the fences, bloom, piano and TV)</li> </ul>	<p>1) the creative space offers psychological safety and freedom which allows free expression such as crying to take place without feeling being criticised</p> <p>2) the activity of reflection may not take place during the expressive process</p> <p>1) the activity encouraged the creator to practice verbal expression to engage in social interaction communication.</p> <p>2) collaboration with the participants, the creator was prompt to reflect on the old pattern of expression and became aware that empathy could create an intimacy between the artist and other people</p> <p>1) some elements were expelled in response to the representation of a change of the artist' old pattern of behaviour</p>

Figure 11 The diagram shows the three stages of the processes undertaken to complete the installation followed by the descriptions of reflection-in practice and emotional awareness gained during the processes, and post-project reflection-on-practice



Figure 12 A still image of the mathematics animation

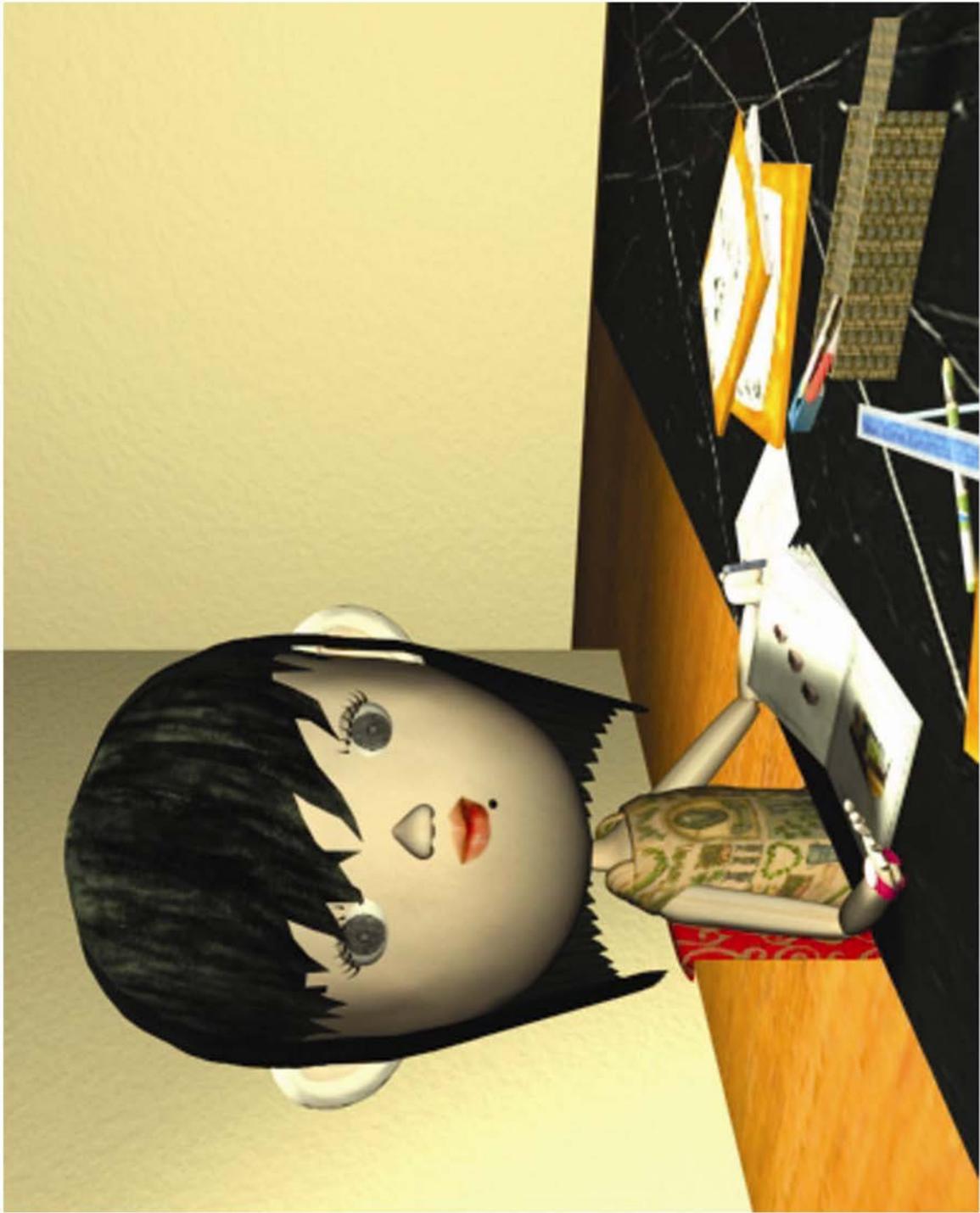


Figure 13 Another still image of the mathematics animation



Figure 14 A still image of the Barbie doll animation



Figure 15 Another still image of the Barbie doll animation



Figure 16 A still image of the piano lesson animation



Figure 17 Another still image of the piano lesson animation



Figure 18 A still image of the mirror animation

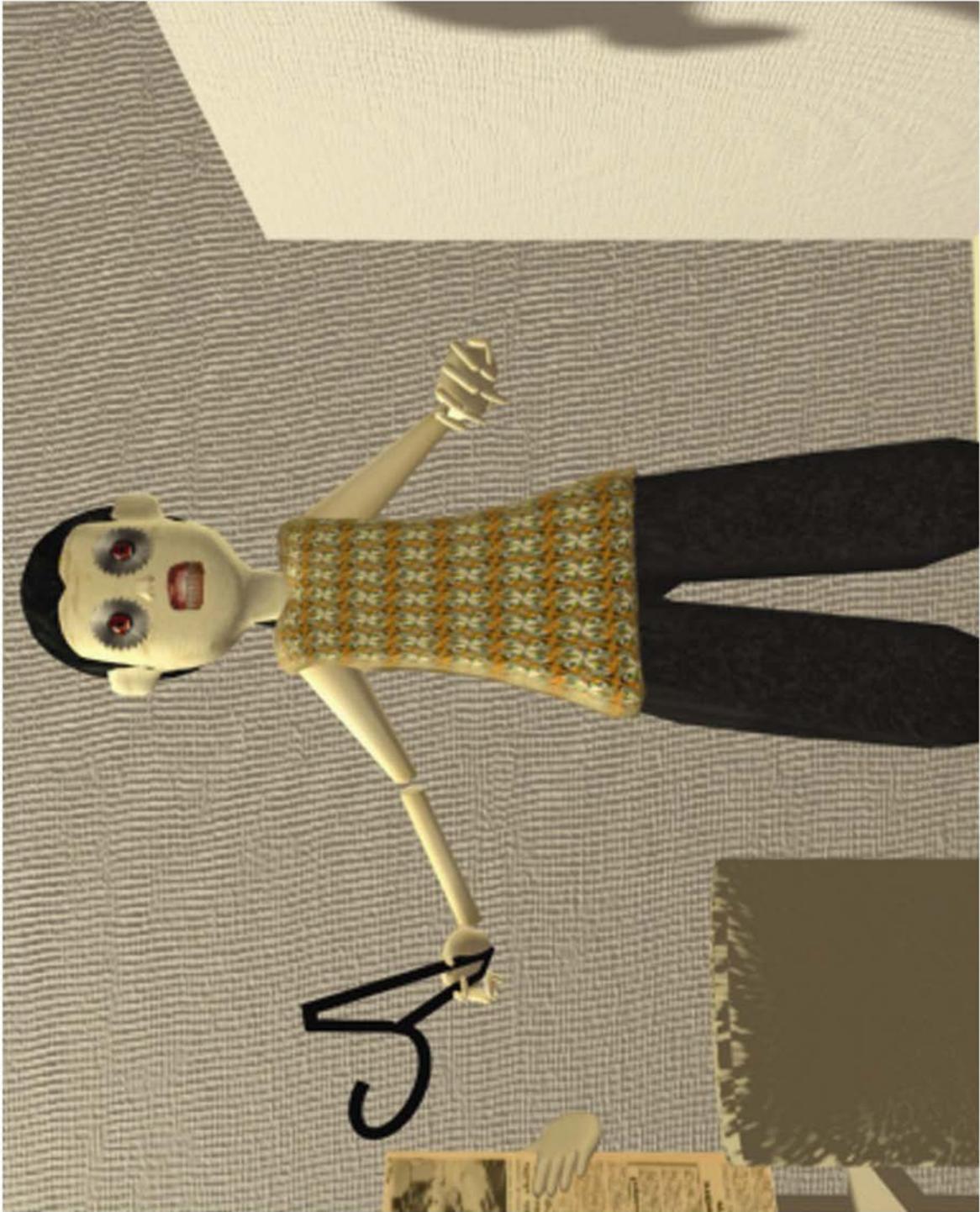


Figure 19 Another still image of the mirror animation



Figure 20 A photo of the collage shoe shelf



Figure 21 A photo of the collage black front door



Figure 22 A photo of the collage bookshelf



Figure 23 A photo of the suspended staircases



Figure 24 A photo of the collage staircases



Figure 25 A photo of the collage toilet

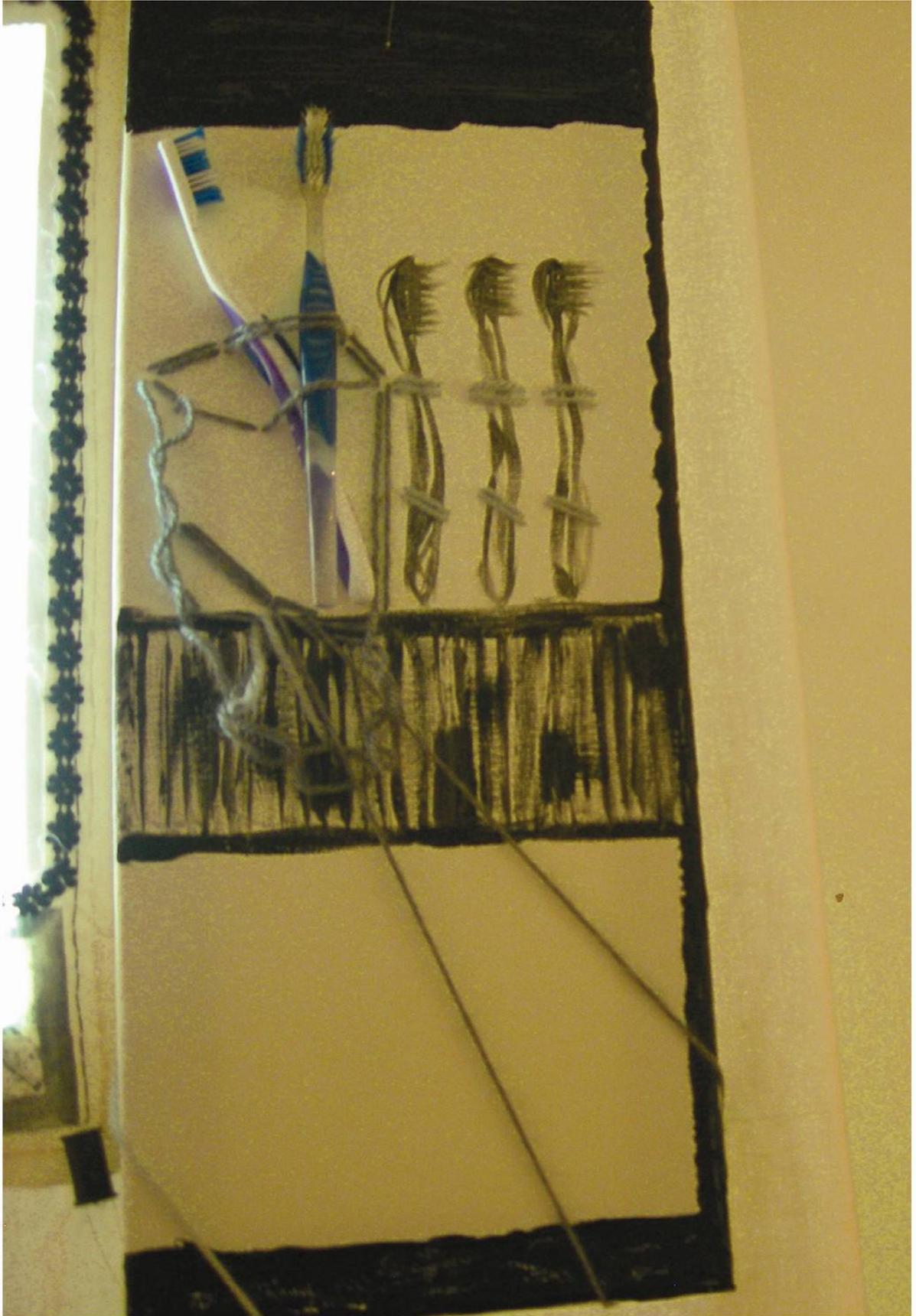


Figure 26 A photo of the collage canvas



Figure 27 A photo of the collage sink



Figure 28 A photo of the collage bath tap



Figure 29 A photo of the collage shower



Figure 30 A photo of the collage washing machine



Figure 31 A photo of the memory-snapshot graphical clock

**Figure 32: The designed fabric placed in the approximate locations before they were suspended to form the installation.**

This figure has been removed for data protection reasons. The unabridged thesis can be consulted in the Lanchester library, Coventry University.

**Figure 33: The fabrics were suspended by fishing wires attached to wooden sticks.**

This figure has been removed for data protection reasons. The unabridged thesis can be consulted in the Lanchester library, Coventry University.

**Figure 34: The fabrics were suspended to form the back wall of the installation, representing construct the bathroom and corridor.**

This figure has been removed for data protection reasons. The unabridged thesis can be consulted in the Lanchester library, Coventry University.

**Figure 35: The second suspended fabric that was used to construct the stairs and living room.**

This figure has been removed for data protection reasons. The unabridged thesis can be consulted in the Lanchester library, Coventry University.

**Figure 36: A view of the front of the installation.**

This figure has been removed for data protection reasons. The unabridged thesis can be consulted in the Lanchester library, Coventry University.



Figure 37 The family environment viewed from the front



Figure 38 The front of the family environment, this time showing an enclosing wall



Figure 39 The projection of the mathematics animation, was located in the living room

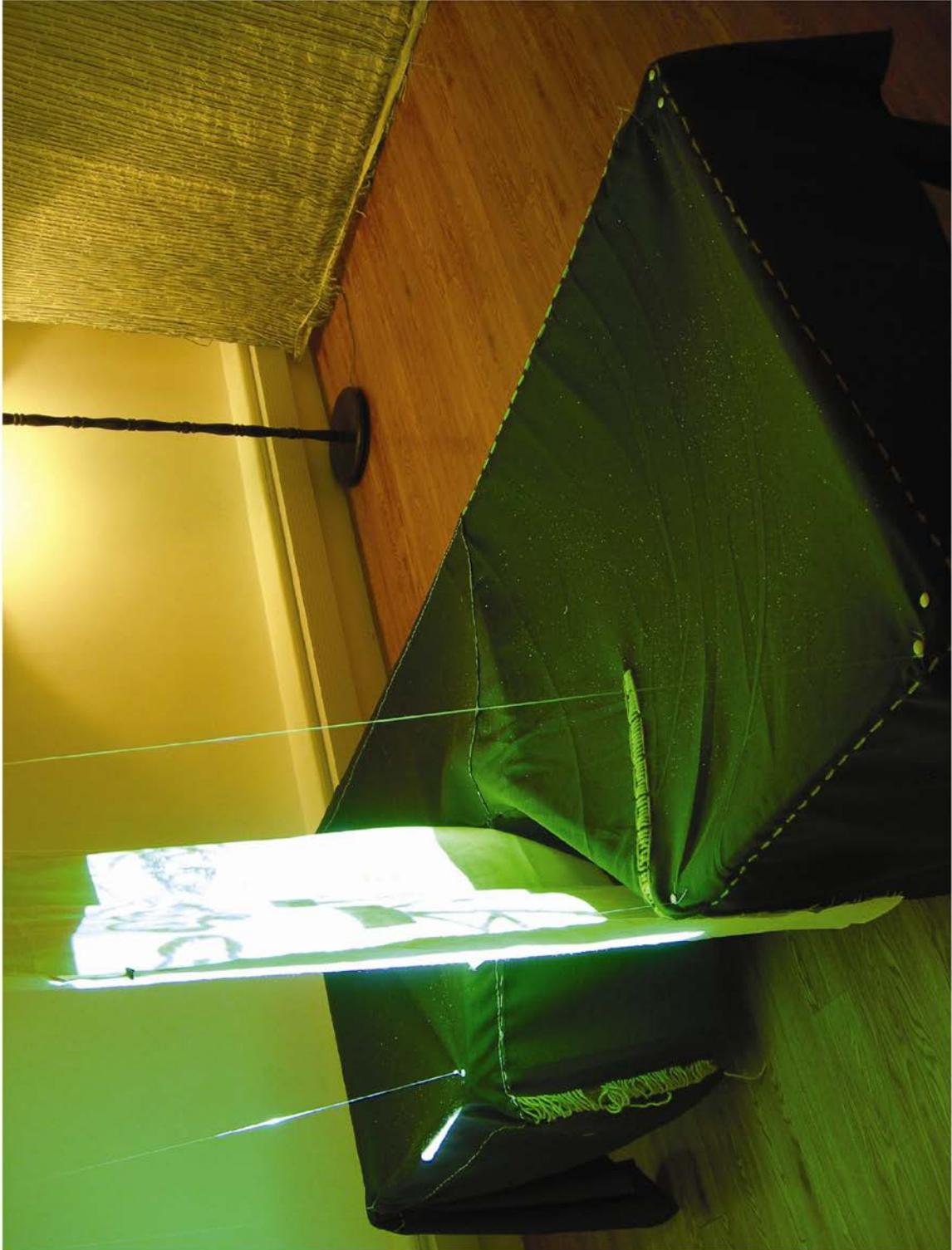


Figure 40 The mathematics animation was projected onto a piece of suspended white fabric



Figure 41 The projection of the piano animation, located in the bathroom

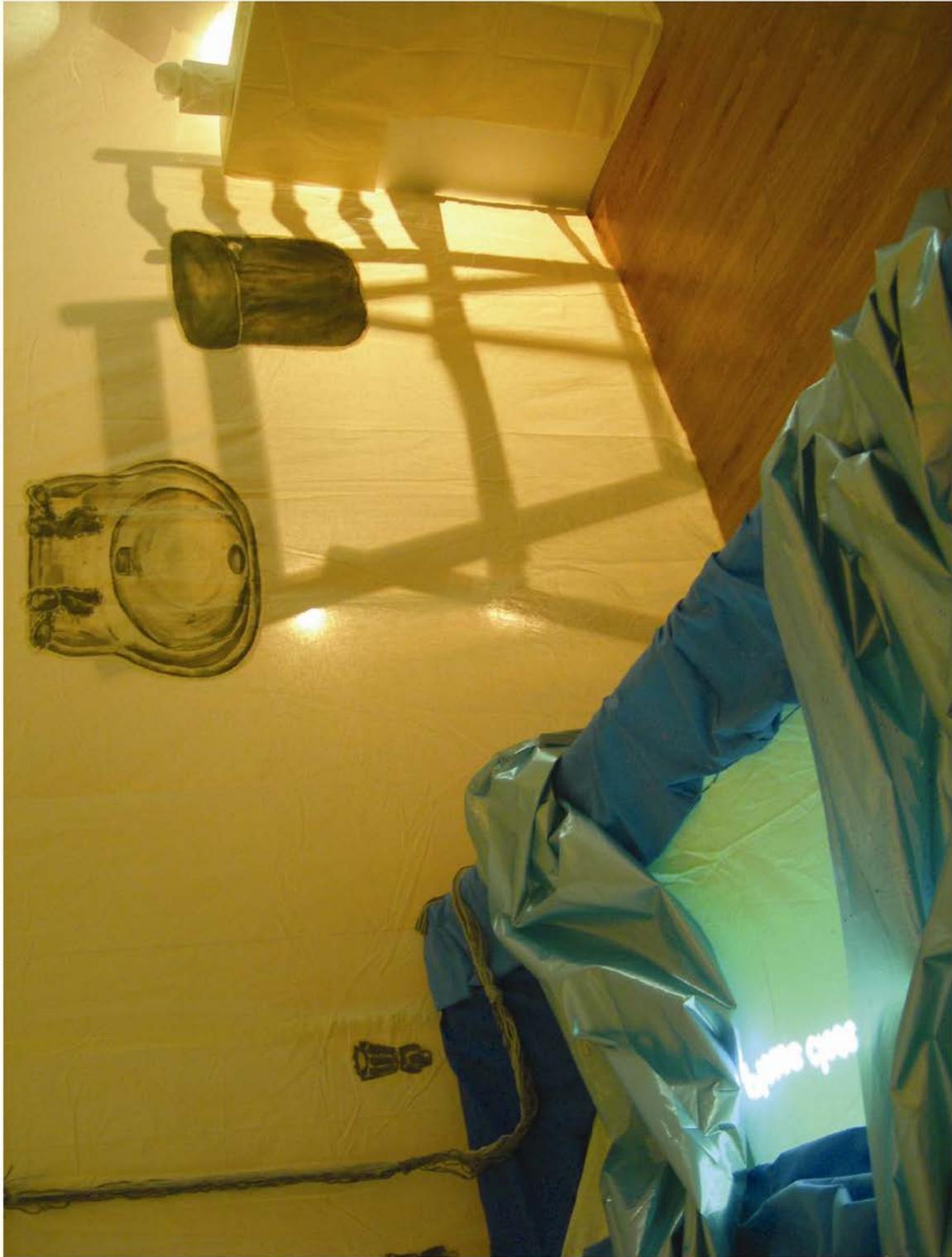


Figure 42 The piano animation was projected onto the top of the bathtub



Figure 43 The projection of the mirror animation, which was displayed on the other side of the bathroom



Figure 44 The mirror animation was projected onto the fabric partition suspended between the bathroom and corridor



Figure 45 The Barbie doll animation was located at the corner of the corridor



Figure 46 The Barbie doll animation was projected onto the window (small piece of white fabric) of the dollhouse



Figure 47 Chairs used in the installation



Figure 48 Lighting (lamps) effects that was used to enhance the domestic appearance of the whole installation



Figure 49 Childhood toys were displayed on the suspended on green paper rolled wire built frames

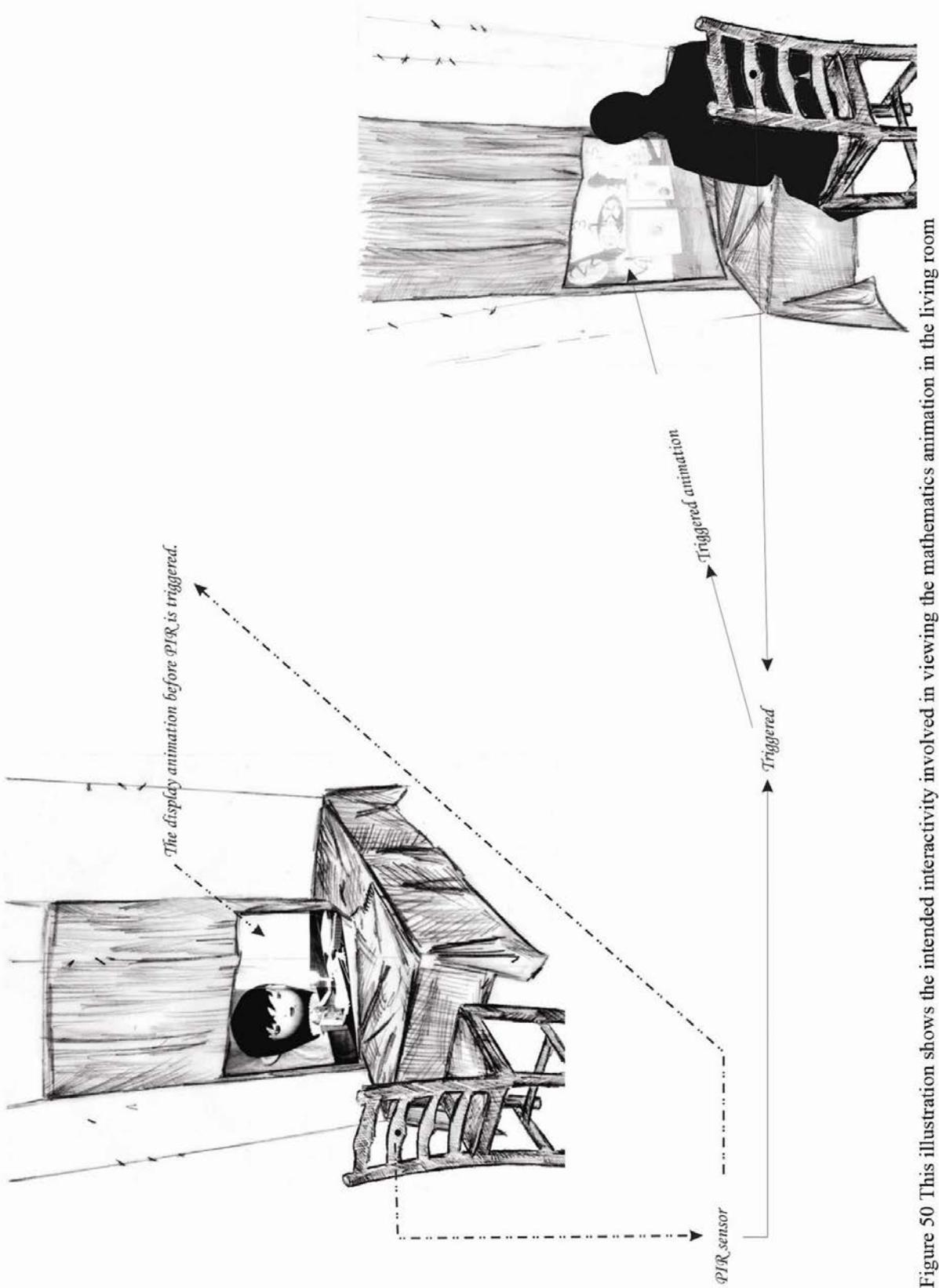


Figure 50 This illustration shows the intended interactivity involved in viewing the mathematics animation in the living room



Figure 50-1 Some still images of the intended animation played before the PIR was triggered to play the mathematics animation

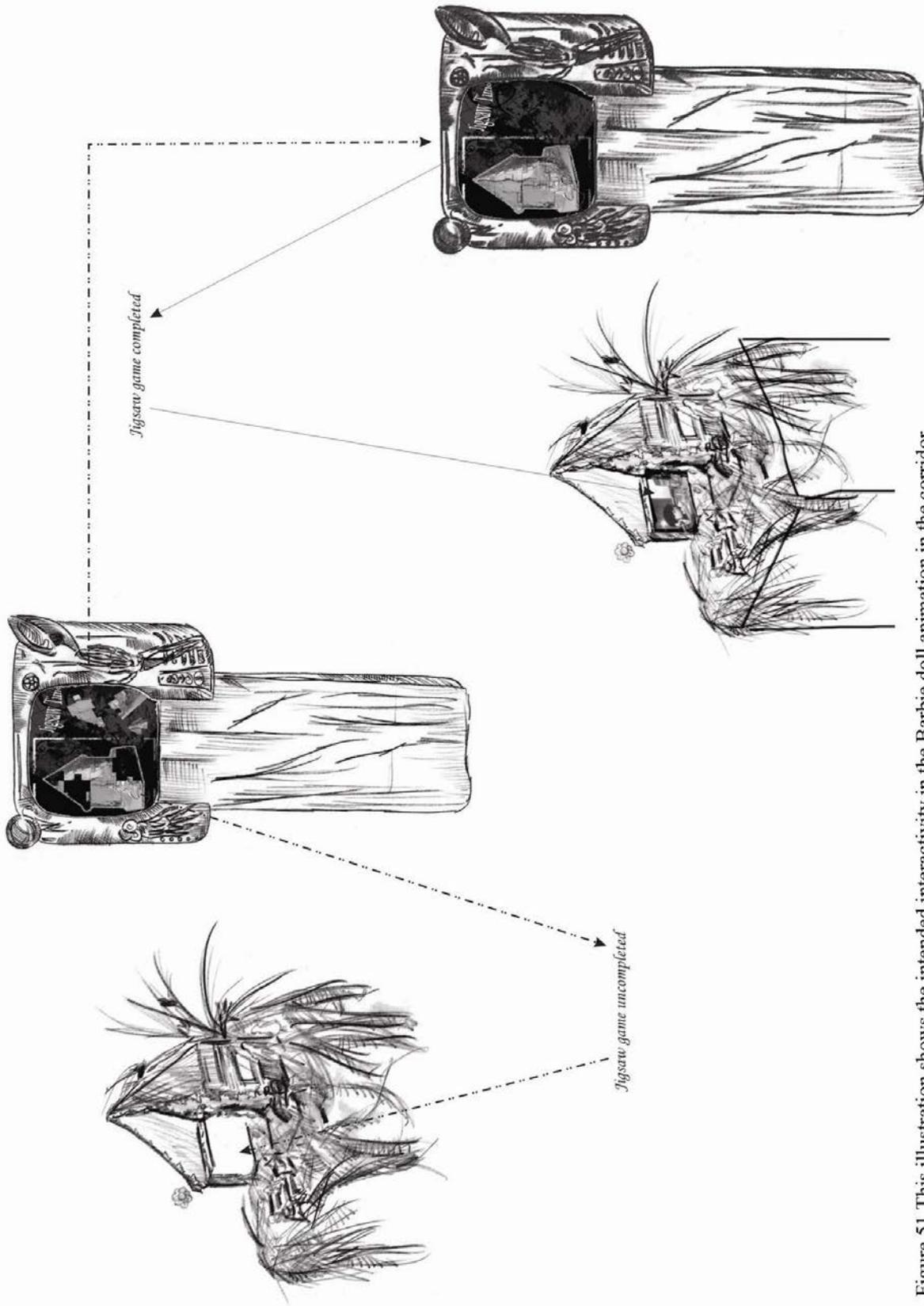


Figure 51 This illustration shows the intended interactivity in the Barbie doll animation in the corridor



Figure 51-1 A still image of the intended jigsaw game, that the visitors were expected to complete in order to view the Barbie Doll animation

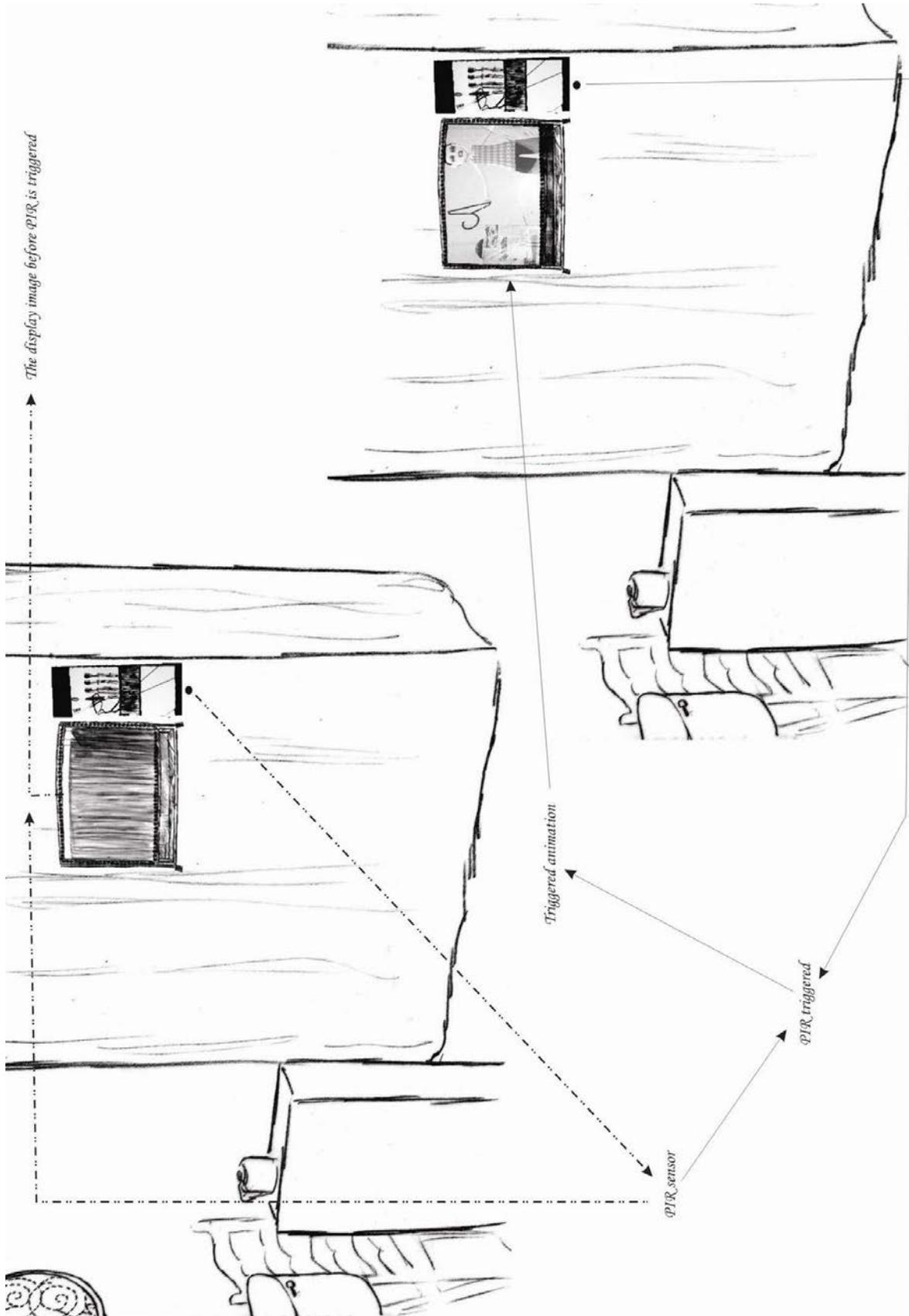


Figure 52 This illustration shows the intended interactivity in the mirror animation in the bathroom

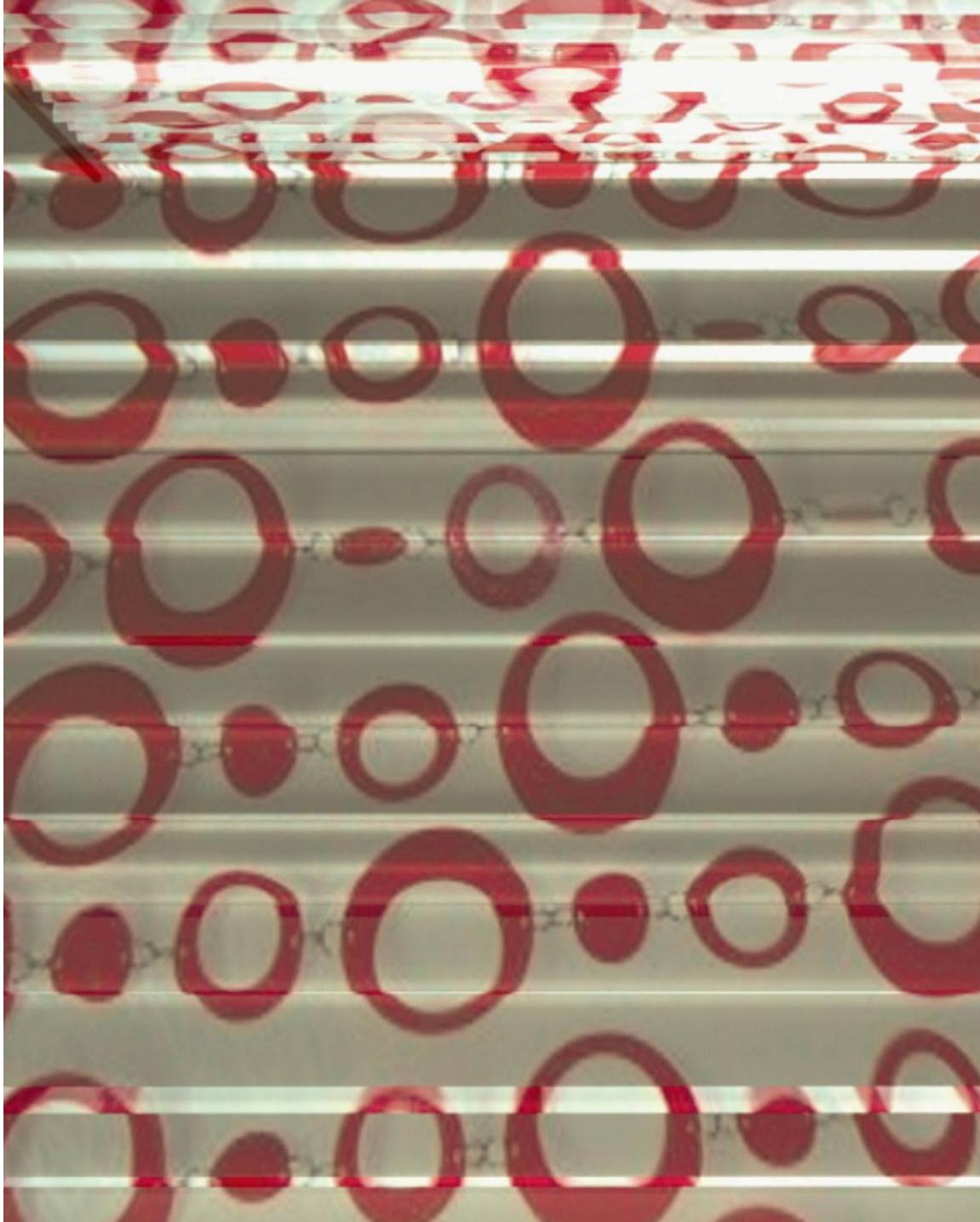


Figure 52-1 The intended still image displayed before the PIR was triggered to play the mirror animation

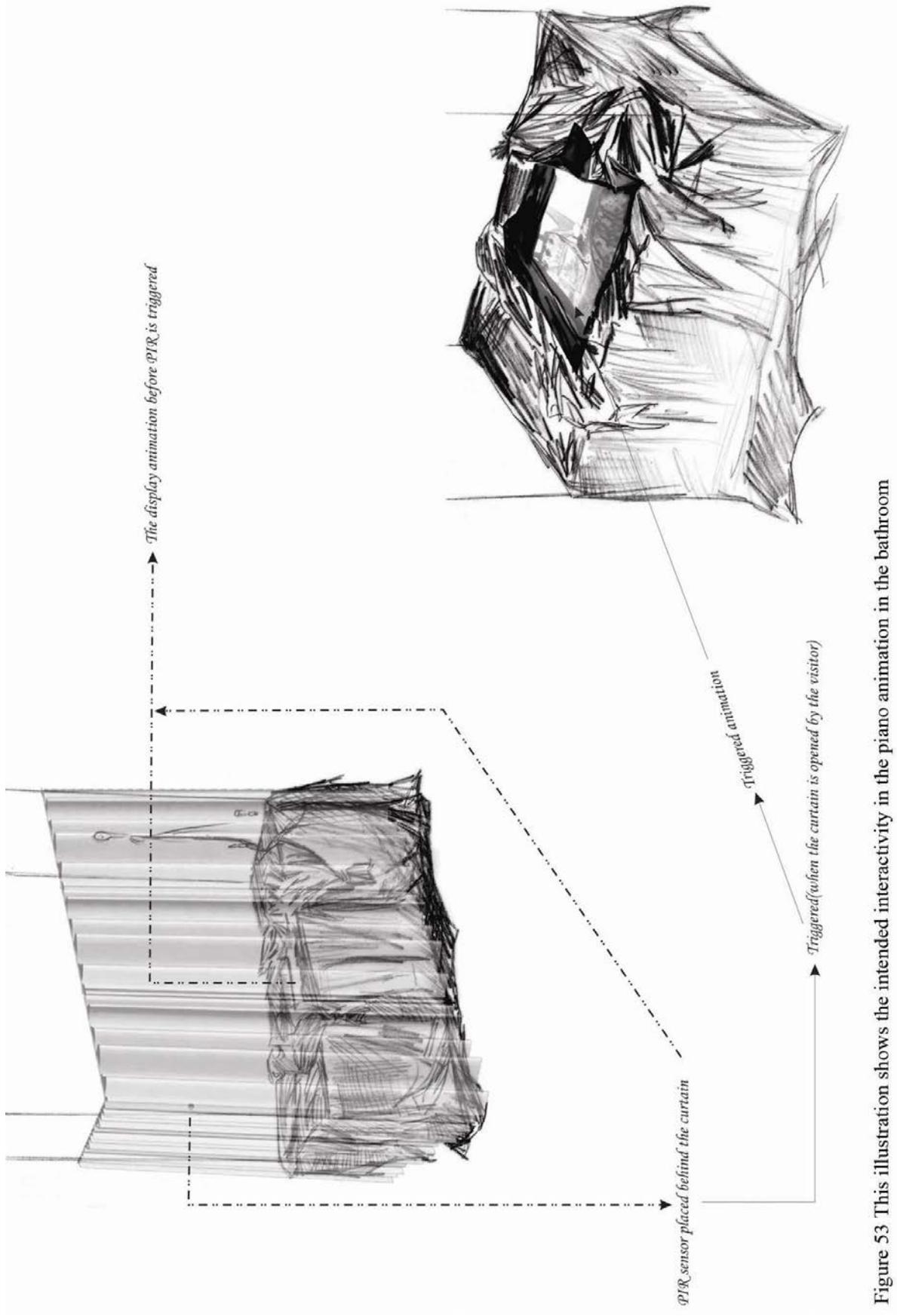


Figure 53 This illustration shows the intended interactivity in the piano animation in the bathroom

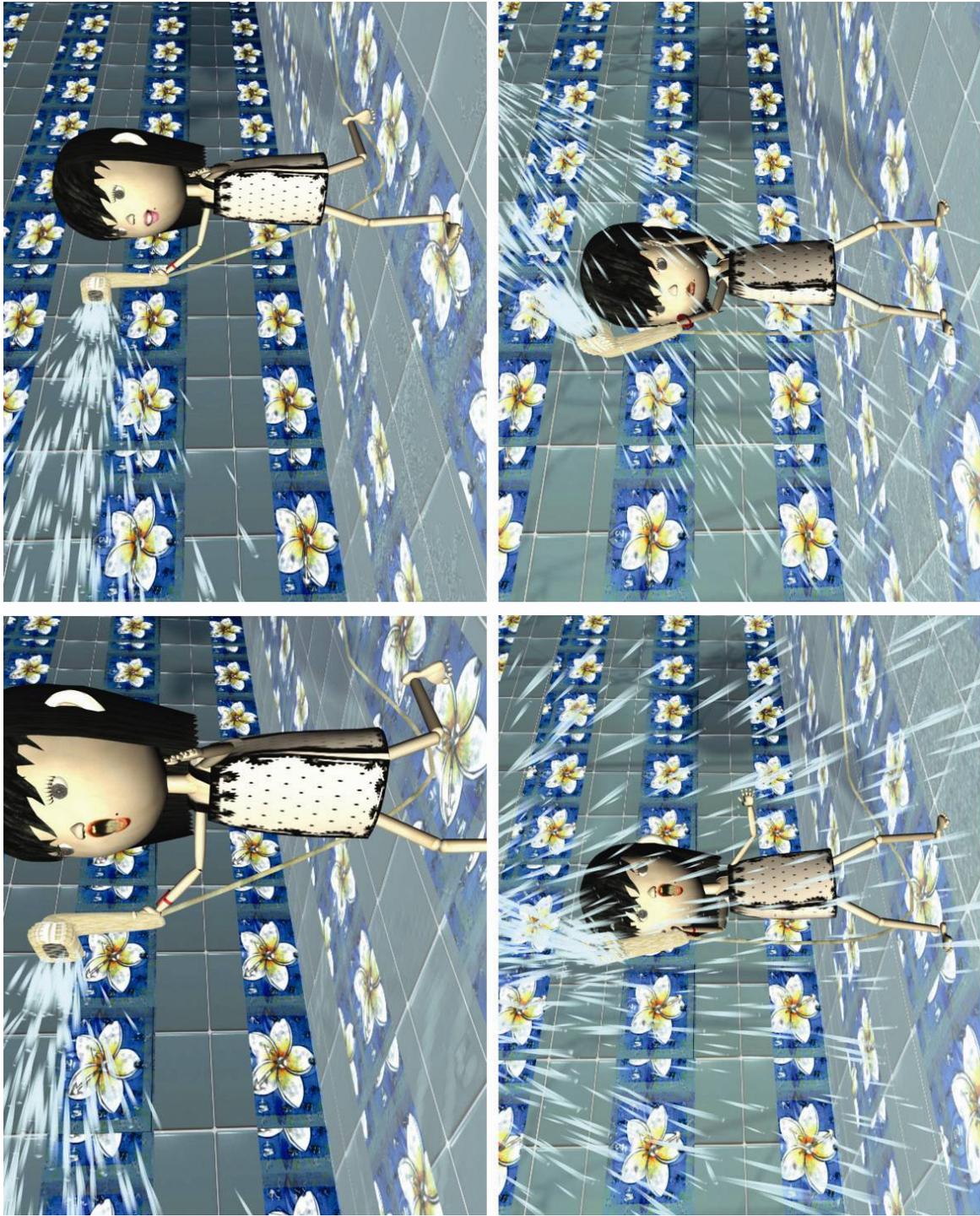
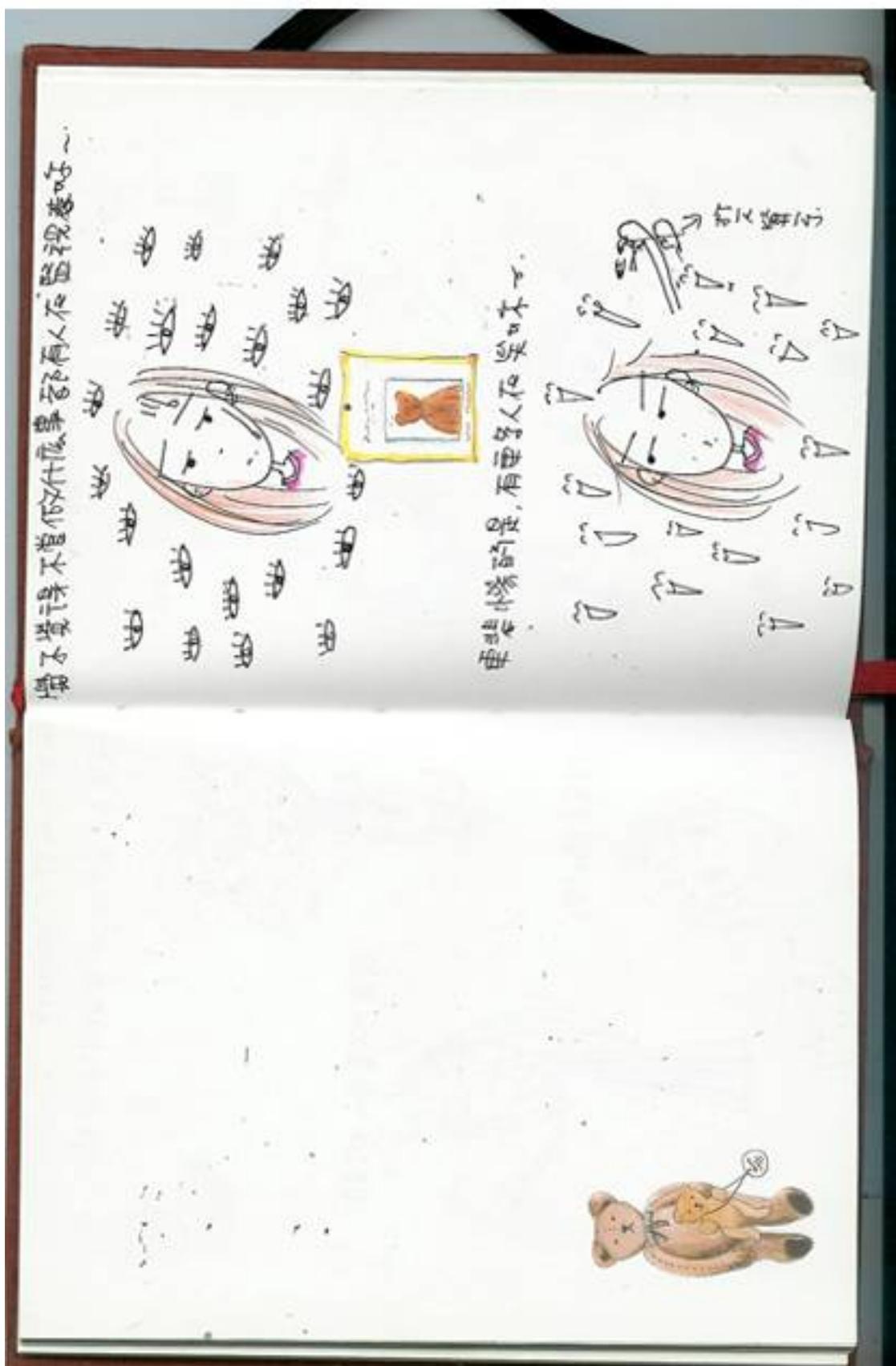


Figure 53-1 A few still images of the intended animation played before the PIR was triggered to play the piano animation



## **Evaluation of the interactive animation installation**

The installation was evaluated using two methods,

1. reflection on the effect the creation of the installation had on my thoughts about my relationship with my family (see chapter 6 details on this), the impact of the completed installation and the way the participants reacted to it,
2. analysis of visitors' feedback,

Feedback from interviews with expressive arts therapists and the online survey with the school teachers (see 7.5 and 7.6), and observations of the experimental animation class in junior high school in Taiwan (see appendix 8) all provide evidence for the potential of animation to provide opportunities for developing greater emotional awareness.

This chapter describes the visitors and therapists responses to the installation and school teachers' thoughts about learning emotions through creative expression. Together, this feedback was used to support how the artefact stimulated visitor's awareness of the issues depicted and alluded to, and the potential of digital art to facilitate practitioners and students' emotional skills and self-awareness.

### 7.1 Presentation methods

The installation was shown in Coventry Lanchester Gallery from 21th to 28th February, 2007 (figure 55). The visitors were informed that they might be filmed whilst in the installation for documentary purposes. Tables and chairs were located in front of the installation. This provided a location for distributing information and the completion of the consent form by visitors (figure 56 & 57). Approximately 100 people visited the installation and 67 questionnaires were completed. All the completed questionnaires were anonymous and kept safe in a locked cabinet accessed only by the researcher and those involved in the research. For those who were not able to come to the installation, they were invited to view a DVD of the production or visit the survey site

at <http://www.coventry.ac.uk/researchnet/d/454/a/3806> which provided descriptions of the work and a link to download the questionnaire.

## 7.2 Emotional immersion of the visitors

The emotional aspects of childhood experience are not often discussed in daily life. We talk about experiences relating to work, projects, shopping, holidays or visiting friends. When we do relate childhood stories, we may omit the part that concerns our innermost thoughts. The impact of childhood experiences on later life is nevertheless important, formative experiences may never be discussed. Thus, in order to encourage visitors to think about childhood events (and how they might have felt a child), it was crucial to facilitate their engagement with the content, by providing an interesting, welcoming and thought provoking environment i.e. the installation.

Feedback from the questionnaire was very good - with no respondents providing negative comments. The visitors described the installation as impressive, eye catching, powerful, artistic, experimental, inviting, upsetting, disorienting dealing with multiple arguments and being deliberately chaotic.

The visitors were impressed by being able to walking into someone's house and thought it was a unique way of construction - hand made art combined with an individual style of screening of the animations. The visitors were interested by the integration of different forms of media to express a complex of feelings, memories, recollection and minutiae.

The visitors' descriptions suggested a strong immersion with the childhood stories and family environment. Comments included 'I would like to see more', 'homely feel and yet suggesting loneliness and isolation', 'you feel like a kid again', 'I was drawn to it', 'felt confusion and lost (like the girl in the family)', 'I can feel like I am inside the story from the sensory environment', '...my attention was redirected by the dialogues, almost like hearing a conversation through walls', 'it brings people in somebody's house and metaphorically within the person/the girl who narrates the various stories' and 'the colours and images are very interesting and pleasant, made me feel like expending

time on each corner to see all the details'. Therefore the artefact successfully presented a warm family environment wherein the unhappy days of the girl were distinguished by the visitors. It was described as attractive to children and adults.

On the other hand, a few visitors initially found it difficult to understand the installation; 'it took me a while to work it out and to understand the different rooms and the fact that she had no where to escape to', 'different and didn't know what it was but then I understood after a few minutes the house set up', 'a little confusing hearing all the voices together but when you focus on a particular area the others fade into the background'. The visitors took time to learn about the stories and explored the context of the installation. The visitors also indicated that the installation provided them with opportunities to move at their own pace, reflect on and revisit items they had seen. Reflecting on Ryan's (2001) statement (see chapter 6.2), this can be taken as indicating that they were emotionally immersed in the content.

### 7.3 The visitors' expression of, and reflection on, my childhood stories

As described before, emotional expression is related to talking about, projecting, and transferring one's own feelings and thoughts, in this case through the watching of a movie. This is believed to help to trigger the viewers' to reflect on their own lives, and see others addressing similar situations to those encountered in their own lives. Additionally, people have been shown to be more comfortable revealing their own thoughts through watching and discussing other people's stories, thereby projecting onto the characters in the story. Whether this was experienced in this animation was evaluated by asking visitors to interpret the installation.

Thus, the visitors were asked to write a short story about the girl in the family. 67% of the visitors completed this, focussing on the girl's dreams, aspirations and simple needs, unconditional love from her family and her upset at not having her needs fulfilled. They also portrayed the parents as kind, but lacking empathy and giving up on their daughter, supportive but impatient, the mother who shouted a lot and took too much care.

The family environment was considered as chaotic, unsupportive, controlling and demanding. It gave the visitors the impression that the girl was failing to live up to expectations, feels like an alien in her own home, and was always being told off. Most of the visitors also related to the girl's feeling using expressive such as 'unable to express herself', 'sad', 'confused', 'unloved', 'frustrated and angry', 'lonely', 'lost', 'anxious', 'undervalued', 'quiet', 'introverted', 'independent', 'honest', 'unconfident', 'speaks for her own mind', 'feels small', 'isolated', 'unorthodox', 'misunderstood', 'invisible', 'has little control of her life'. However, the visitors did not comment on the parents' feelings.

Some of the visitors' stories directly referred to particular animations such as mathematics (e.g. the girl is unable to do maths), piano (e.g. 'she loved going to piano lessons to be away from her house and family as it was her escape from trouble'), and the Barbie dolls (e.g. 'she hates their smiles-Barbie doll-, she makes stickers of silly expressions and sticks them on their faces- created angry, sad and mad Barbie', 'why should she play with Barbie, she knows that real life isn't like the way these plastic dolls are). A few more visitors came in person to tell me that they felt a strong connection to the animations; the stories mirror what they experience (e.g. an adult visitor told me about her interaction and expectation on her children relating to education; a young visitor, who had visited the installation and later saw me in the gallery, came to tell me about his feelings towards Barbie Doll).

Some of the visitors went beyond the scope of the animations and created their own stories and resolutions; 'A child that has no communication with her parents. The little girl puts up with various things until one day she decides to confront her parents and tell them that they should not treat her like this. She has grown older and she feels braver and stronger to confront her parents'; 'she had many bad memories and in her childhood grew the seeds for change and hope although she did not know it then'; 'the girl grew up with a lot of shame but she is working through it now'. These stories resonate with what I sought to achieve through this creative production. The installation was seen as an intrinsic part of my personal growth, which I wanted to share with others. It suggests that the artefact embodied aspects of my personal development as the creator. The visitors were aware of the implicit

knowledge in the artefact; my approach to expression and reflection, leading to the development of self-awareness.

The installation was seen as evocative and led the visitors to recall similar events, such as struggles with learning (e.g. mathematics), strained relationships with their parents, emotional aspects of their childhood experiences, themselves as parents, their efforts to impress their parents, their own feelings towards Barbie dolls, the humiliation, confusion, loneliness, isolation they felt when they were punished for things beyond their control, arguments within the family, the feeling of being made to feel stupid for not grasping a topic quick enough, their own parents' childhood experiences and tantrums, the confusion of feeling insecure due to their experiences at school and home and that failure to fulfil parental expectations.

The visitors thought that the installation assisted them in reflecting on issues relating to the culture of the family and the relationship between children and parents, and the relationship of this to adult experience (e.g. 'I can see how it could reflect aspects of childhood', 'the gap between the generations', 'the failing of the parents not through lack of love but through lack of perception'). Therefore the installation stimulated reflection on the confusion and distress of childhood.

Other visitors reflected differently on the girl's situation and future; 'she dreams of the day she can leave'; 'her mother makes her unhappy... at the age of 40 the girl cuts off contact with her family forever which is tough but makes her a lot happier'; 'she glides through each day believing the world is superficially overcomplicated and fake - smiles seem to only exist in things that don't understand feelings'; 'she is confused and finding it difficult to understand problems that people only complicate'. These narratives reflect my own thoughts as a teenager (e.g. leaving the family, stop the contact with the family, not being able to understand the meaning of the world and myself as a human being). In summary some of the visitors stories referred to an optimistic future, whilst others created the stories based on the girls' feelings at the time, which were my thoughts as a child.

This suggested that the visitors responses were from three perspectives;

- (1) some described the story based on what they saw,
- (2) others created stories from the viewpoint of the central character's current position involving her intention in creating the artefact (i.e. working for the path towards personal growth),
- (3) others tended to construct stories from the viewpoint of the character (i.e. the teenage girl) suggesting a future that related to how I used to feel.

This indicates that different visitors were engaged in one or more temporal spaces- the past, present and future. These stories related to my thoughts regarding the chronological order.

Additionally, a couple of fictional stories were told by the visitors; 'one day the pictures came alive, the flat full of dancing images, folding and turning, dancing and talking'; 'A deep black, skilled ball retriever was the girl in our family till she had to be killed. Death is hard. Making the decisions to have the family pet put down even harder. Thanks for parents for these difficult decisions'.

These stories might echo what Scrivener (2002) suggested when he discussed the non-shared knowledge of an artefact. As the viewers have different ways of reading artefacts, their understanding may not resemble what the artist tries to voice. In such cases, intended meaning is not shared (e.g. the visitors created the stories different to my childhood experiences). This may suggest that in some cases the artefact (animation) may fail to entice the visitors' to express childhood experiences.

However, most of the visitors expressed a large amount of empathy towards the childhood experiences depicted. The material also stimulated them to reflect on similar childhood experiences.

Given that viewers are likely to be emotionally engaged when they are able to elaborate or provide a representation (i.e. to retell a story) of the narrative of the visual creation (Komeda and Kusumi 2006), it can be taken that most of the visitors' reconstructed stories demonstrated a great emotional engagement in the visual representations of my childhood experiences.

#### 7.4 The use of multimedia art

I became an artist in my mid 20s and my central practice is animation. I have already described my belief that viewing an animation engenders emotional immersion. Such immersion stimulates the viewers to project their own meaning onto the narrative and reflect on how the characters' journey may resonate with their own experiences. However, I created an installation to further embed the visitor in my emotional world. Thus, I wanted to see whether the visitor felt the installation added to their experience, compared to watching a film, or reading a book depicting similar material.

On the one hand the visitors thought that it would take less effort to understand the narrative if it was shown as a movie, it would be more coherent and structured, but there would be a predetermined narrative flow in a movie that would reduce the level of immersion. The visitors felt that the installation allowed visitors to walk around the space at their own pace so it offered a sense of discovery. They indicated that this increased imagination and facilitated their understanding of the girls' experiences, it provided time to reflect, study one's own memories, and create one's own interpretation from it.

A few visitors indicated that when viewing a film, one could see more and might expect a final resolution of issues. They thought that the installation was more powerful, as the open-ended representation matched the reality of family life, viewing the stories in 2D form would decrease the physical interaction between the audience and the installation; it would be more passive, less engaging and provide less room for personal construction of narrative. The physical immersion kept the visitors' minds working at different levels (e.g. 'I think that it would be less personalised sitting in a cinema, watching at a screen immediately creates a barrier. I personally do get involved with films and they do affect me, however this installation brings you physically within the situation', 'I would be more 'fed' by the idea and thought. It would not give me the time to reflect on my own thoughts and memories or to come back to any of it', 'would be too easy, nothing for you to discover yourself').

The visitors felt that the impact would not be the same in a linear rendition as it prevented multiple aspects from being shown. The effects of the layers of sound (spoken narratives) corresponded to the whole aesthetic style - the layers of the installation and animations. This may suggest that the artefact created a multi-sensory learning opportunity and stimulated Multiple Intelligences such as spatial-visual, kinaesthetic, intra-, and interpersonal.

Contrarily, a few visitors suggested that a movie style presentation would more easily catch the viewer's attention, and would portray the artist's journey from start to finish, rather than giving room for misinterpretation. The short and pinpointed narrative of a movie was seen as a bonus. Additionally, film is more accessible (e.g. DVD) thereby benefiting more viewers.

The visitors' responses showed that they felt that viewing the stories in an installation had a different impact from watching similar material in a movie. A linear form of production offered an organised structure of the plot and more comprehensible concepts. However, the intensity of the audience's interaction within the space, the freedom of receiving the stories (i.e. the way they reconstruct the stories), and the reality of the presentation was recognised to be stronger than in a movie. Thus, it may be concluded that the installation has benefits over a movie in certain ways (50 visitors thought so and 17 did not).

In analysing the feedback from the viewers, I have shown that the expressive method developed has proven useful for the animator and can facilitate stimulate emotional awareness in visitors. This could be taken forward, for example, in therapeutic settings or incorporated into the National Curriculum as part of art education or the PSHE (personal, social, health education) curriculum. The next two parts of the evaluation address whether professionals in these two areas see its potential.

### 7.5 Animation in a therapeutic setting

25 invitations were sent out to art-related therapists based in Coventry, Warwick and Birmingham and three therapists based in Birmingham (a drama therapist, an art therapist and a counsellor) came to visit the installation (figure 58). Twenty-five more interview invitations were posted out after the show, and three (a music therapist based in London, a counsellor and an art therapist based in Birmingham) navigated a documentary DVD of the installation prior conducting the interviews. They were asked to read a participant information letter and sign a consent form prior to private interviews. Each interview last approximately 60 minutes. It was conducted to determine firstly

- (1) whether any form of digital media (or expressive art) was currently being used in their practice, and
- (2) whether they saw potential for animation in therapeutic settings, for example either by showing animations, or in helping people to create their own animations to facilitate expression and awareness of emotional aspects of life experiences.

The therapists stated that individuals responded to different media. In order to reach broader groups of people, various different forms of media (such as painting and music) have to be used. Every technique employed in a therapeutic setting should complement the others in order to work more effectively (e.g. using films in counselling).

Some of the therapists commented on the shouting and auditory confusion in the installation, and that this would resonate with their patients – reminding them of times when they have been shouted at or were in chaotic and noisy environments. A few therapists thought that it might be quite painful to watch the animations, to relive the events when they identified with the girl. They felt that a movie format would reveal more about the girl's innermost thoughts and would present the flow of the stories more immediately to the viewer. Written narrative would be problematic, as it would require literary skills. This could be overcome by more visually based therapies. In conclusion, different media were required to approach different groups.

The therapists went on to describe how people tended to interpret the same visual representations in different ways - often related to their past or current anxieties. Some people, when creating visual works, appeared to associate colours, shapes, lines and sizes with meanings in their own ways. By talking about their feelings when viewing and making of the art, a person's problems can be seen, understood and discussed. Sometimes, a person might find one single art object or expressive art tool inappropriate and he or she would seek another method.

Although the therapists could not say how the processes of animation could facilitate self-expression or reflection, they acknowledged that it could be a useful vehicle for self-expression in therapeutic settings, and would offer an additional opportunity for people to express themselves. The cost of introducing animation practice in the professional area was their major concern.

From these interviews it can be concluded that creating animation can be a useful medium for self-expression in the therapeutic context, where the creation of the animation could become a starting point for reflection and discussion of the emotional significance of experiences.

#### 7.6 Online survey with school teachers

The goals of the Internet survey were to

- (1) ascertain teachers' awareness of EI,
- (2) look at how EI is developed in the schools,
- (3) to determine whether children currently learn about animation in primary and secondary school, and are able to create simple animations,
- (4) to establish whether art is perceived as being useful in helping students to develop self-awareness of emotions,
- (5) to determine whether teachers see potential in using animation as a tool to help create self-expression in mainstream education.

Approximately 800 emails were sent out to the primary and secondary schools based in West Midlands including Coventry, Birmingham, Blackheath, Brownhills, Hampton-in-Adren, Solihull,

Stourbridge and North England including Leeds and Manchester, and 41 replies were received for non-participation. In total, nine head teachers and one performing art teacher from the UK completed the questionnaire.

On average, the teachers possessed 18 years teaching experience; teaching in all subjects in primary schools and Art and Design, History, Sociology, Citizenship, Politics and PSHE at secondary level. They believed that developing the ability of self expression, sharing personal experiences and talking about emotions was an important part of the National Curriculum because general life skills require self-awareness; 'improving awareness of how the other feels can promote greater understanding of differences in thought'; 'it helps to remove barriers to learning by enabling an off loading process, shared experience and also negative feeling such as guilt or anxiety'; 'students need to understand their feelings in order to deal with difficult situations' (e.g. 'in order to calm down, they need to understand why they are angry').

Emotional awareness is currently taught in the schools through the PHSE (personal, health, social and education) and SEAL (social, emotional aspects of learning) agendas, through circle time (assemblies), tutor time in small groups, group/partner work, one-to-one discussion, therapeutic art sessions, making films (e.g. movie maker), discussion of recent events and books and in theme weeks such as Anti Bullying Week. The school found such activities useful though costly in terms of staffing and time.

However, in terms of the activities that involve verbalising emotions, some teachers described that students who have low self-esteem and/or a poor grasp of English lack sufficient verbal skills to gather their thoughts and feelings in words. This often prevents students from self-expression (e.g. 'feel discouraged from talking about their feelings at home') (see the example 4 in appendix 7). In other cases, teachers found it hard to help students to understand what is the empathy (e.g. what to say or how to act to show empathy); or what is repression of excitement, happiness, passion and emotions (i.e. one does not feel comfortable to show positive feelings because of individual reasons. For

instance, in Chinese culture, people are told that it is impolite to open their presents in front of the people, showing emotions such as excitement of receiving their presents is inappropriate or uncomfortable).

The teachers considered that creative/expressive arts enabled students who lack sophisticated vocabularies to learn and express themselves. 'Creativity impacts on self-esteem and confidence.' The students can also distance themselves from the artwork they create so they are more likely to reveal their true thoughts and feelings. It provides an opportunity for students to become more 'comfortable to communicate, articulate thoughts and engage in role-play'; 'it is about giving pupils a starting point and enabling them to feel safe. Often when there are issues at home pupils will talk about them through animation, film or puppets- anything that lets them discuss it without feeling vulnerable'.

The teachers also recognised that animation, as a part of expressive art, would be enjoyable for children and they would be able to make simple animations at a very young age (e.g. 3-5yrs); 'it would be fun, different and naturally inquisitive; 'children find that they can engage in this type of media; 'no chalk and talk, a visual way to learn'; it is 'an up to date method of engaging young people'.

Most of the teachers felt that making one's own animation could

- (1) help students to become aware of their emotional responses to the subject matter of their animations, and that
- (2) creating animation based on the student's own stories would encourage them to reveal their personal issues more openly.

The teachers thought that the making of animation could attract children's attention and give ownership. Although 'not all children would respond positively to this tool, it gives the practitioners an alternative', 'it could also enable the children who lack language skills gain understanding through facial expressions of characters'; 'children can identify with characters and actions'; 'they would be

able to produce a definite form that they recognise at a later date (familiar with computer games and DVDs) so no pre conceptions may be required’.

A few teachers revealed that the barrier to the introduction of such lessons would be (skilled) adult support and the use of technology in this way. Additionally, ‘some children and adults need to be nurtured with the recognition of emotions’ and this can be difficult to achieve ‘when adults are undergoing their own emotional issues’ or lacking understanding of this area.

An IT teacher described animation as a common experience for his students. He found that animation production demanded a more collaborative approach to solving production problems. This led students to share their work, and provided natural opportunities for discussion. A PSHE teacher also stated that making animation involved teamwork and students receive ‘a real sense of achievement from the final product, especially when there is a sense of audience’.

All the teachers agreed that many aspects of students’ learning could benefit from making animation including different learning styles, multiple intelligences, literacy, critical analysis/thinking, refining self-evaluation, motor and ICT skills.

The study also showed that the teachers were aware of the importance of EI in mainstream education. They considered that various expressive arts, including watching and making animation, are vehicles for self-expression that can encourage students to gaining ability in emotional awareness and sensitivity.

## 7.7 Conclusion

Thus the analysis of the visitors’ responses to the installation showed that they were emotionally engaged in the family environment and able to project their own thoughts and feelings onto the characters and stories. They were able to reflect on the artist’s intention and the issues presented in the installation. This indicated that viewing such an artefact could help to stimulate the visitors’

awareness of the emotional aspects of childhood experiences. This also echoed the words of the teachers from the online survey that students could talk about their true emotions through animation characters- especially regarding their feelings about home (see example 4 in appendix 7). Thus, viewing animation may prompt individuals to increasing self-awareness. The analyses of the expressive arts therapist's feedback on the installation, experimental animation class and online survey indicated that animation practice might benefit the practitioners' and students' personal, social, emotional aspects of learning. Hence, it could be included as part of expressive arts practice in therapeutic settings and form part of the EI curriculum in schools. However, the statement lacks of illustrative descriptions of how the production of animation can assist students in developing emotional awareness. Therefore, the production of the animation installation is presented as an example (see chapter 6) with an indepth description to evidence the value of animation practice in the domain of emotional intelligence.

**Figure 55: Some photos of the opening of the animation installation.**

This figure has been removed for data protection reasons. The unabridged thesis can be consulted in the Lanchester library, Coventry University.

**Figure 56: A photo of the questionnaire area, which was displayed opposite the animation installation**

This figure has been removed for data protection reasons. The unabridged thesis can be consulted in the Lanchester library, Coventry University.



Figure 57 The illustration on the participation information envelop enclosed a questionnaire form, and a statement of the installation installation

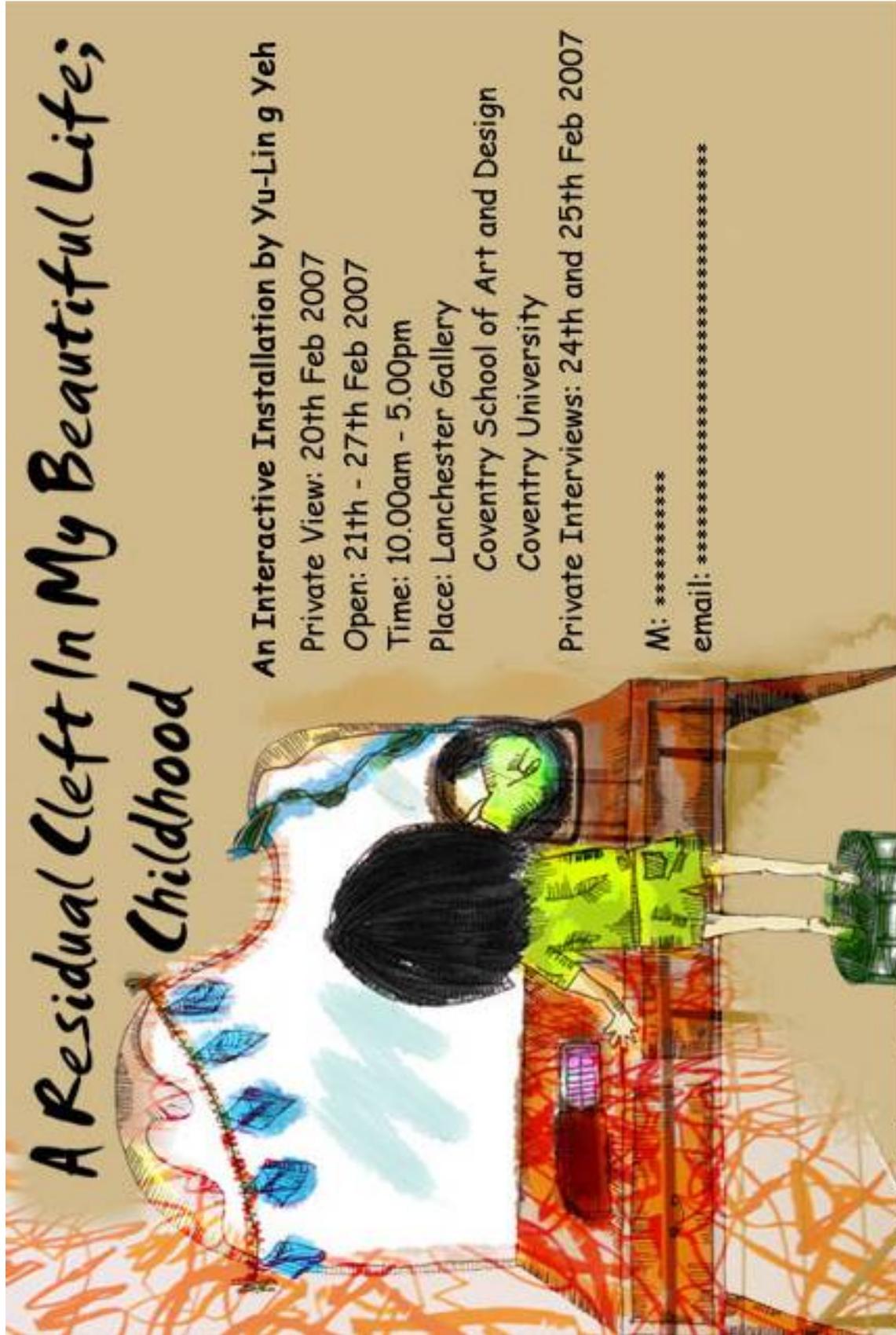


Figure 58 The invitation card to the show

## Discussion and Conclusion

### 8.1 Introduction

The research has considered the potential of multimedia art (in particular animation and installation) to stimulate personal expression of, and reflection on childhood experience. It has been argued that producing and viewing animation can impact on individuals' self-awareness and hence contribute to greater emotional intelligence. This has been discussed in relation to therapeutic experiences, emotional insights and educational settings. Reflections on the thoughts and feelings that occurred during the development of the animation have been used to provide evidence of how the production of an artefact may enhance self-awareness. It is hoped that, when considered in their entirety, the results may lead professionals (in the fields of education and health) to incorporate animation in their activities.

I have argued that many researchers have reported that 'self-awareness' is the keystone to Emotional Intelligence (for example Cook 1999, Slaski & Cartwright 2003, Zeidner *et al.* 2003), and that this is a fundamental part of our lives, correlating with academic achievement, workplace success, personal goal-attainment, interpersonal relationships, greater self-esteem and emotional well-being (for example, Schutte *et al.* 2007, Extremera and Fernandez-Berrocal 2005).

Radford (2002, 2003) and Gardner (2006) suggested that self-awareness could be approached both through verbal expression and expressive arts. Following this assertion, I propose that some aspects of animation as an expressive approach may assist students and artists in improving awareness of emotions (see Chapters 6 and 7).

Some expressive arts (such as movie therapy and 'make-your-own movie programmes') show that individuals can learn to discover themselves through various forms of visual presentation. Little research has considered the potential of animation in this respect. However, the usefulness of

animations has been recognised by psychologists (Foreman, Pedly and Camfield 2003) in encouraging disadvantaged people to improve their understanding of time and space, and has also been promoted in schools to facilitate media literacy (Burn and Parker 2001) and skills in problem-solving, decision-making and interpersonal communication (Marsh 2006). These studies have not examined how the processes of animation may help the exploration of feelings and thoughts about the subject matter of the animator thereby leading to personal growth and emotional development. Thus, the subject was addressed in this practice-led research.

The research adopted a reflective practice method throughout. The initial aim was that viewing animation might help the audience to identify with issues and facilitate the perception of their own feelings. This was later augmented by a second, but more fundamental aim, to explore whether creating autobiographical animation can assist the animator to express and reflect on emotional aspects of childhood experiences, thereby leading to increased self-awareness. This is further evidenced by demonstrating that the interactive animation installation triggers some visitors to relate the content of animation to their own experience, and to reflect on what they have seen in the context of their own lives. In response to the feedback from the interviews with expressive art therapists and school educators, the evidence indicates how the production of animations may help to facilitate self-awareness in a therapeutic or school setting.

Initially a biographical approach was adopted with a view to creating a 'generic' family storyline using semi-structured interviews conducted in Taiwan as a means of sourcing stories. However, the outcomes of the interviews were unsatisfying, leading to a cycle of reflection in which I started to understand the emotional barriers (of myself and my respondents) which discouraged personal disclosure (see Chapter 4). This led me to search for other existent stories that tackled the deeper emotional aspects of childhood experiences. Thus, the animation 'Are you Terry' was completed based on a published art therapy case study.

My reflection on these experiences resulted in the reframing of the research aim to address how the production of an animation might help the animator to improve her emotional skills, which has always been of interest to me. If I could demonstrate the benefits I derived from constructing and reflecting on my animations, I felt that using myself as an example, would show how I developed self-awareness of emotions during the creative processes, and that this could provide art-related therapists and school educators with insight in how to assist the artists or students in advancing their skill of self-monitoring, self-knowledge, leading to personal growth.

Hence, an autobiographical narrative approach was adopted to produce the animation installation 'A residual cleft in my beautiful life; childhood'. The sequence of tasks responded to the knowledge arising from reflections on the studies (the two biographical approaches).

## 8.2 Summary of main findings

It was found that my engagement with the therapeutic processes of production for the animation installation 'A Residual Cleft in My Beautiful Life' facilitated my own self-awareness of emotional aspects of life. I was prompted to recollect my own childhood memories and comprehend the relationship between my personal experiences and emotions. I was able to feel free and safe to express my stories by projecting body language (movement) onto animated characters. In doing this I began to unravel my most unhappy childhood memories, and the negative effects these had had on me. As the animation progressed it gave me the space, distance and opportunities to present, reflect on and learn from events which had been too difficult to consider by other means.

The visitors' feedback on the creative production was overwhelmingly positive. It showed that most of the audience were able to project their thoughts on to the girl and that they related to aspects of her family life. This was evident in the stories they produced which were consistent with the artists' intention. Thus, the viewing of such an artefact can provide the audience with insights engaging in meaning making and reflection.

The art therapy practitioners and school educators were optimistic that an animation programme may have a valuable impact on the ability in self-expression and understanding of emotions. Both sets of professionals suggested that making animation could provide a psychological safe space (e.g. 'like using masks') and would therefore be more likely to encourage one to express true thoughts and feelings. As such it could meet the needs of learners who may learn best in non-traditional routes (digital productions) or who lean towards expressing issues in a visual form.

Both sets of professionals suggested that it would be valuable to embed animation programmes to supplement therapeutic methods and formal schooling. It could facilitate ability in the expression and understanding of emotions through the production of animated representations. Nevertheless, there is a lack of real experience to explain how the artists' and students' learning of, thinking of, and reflection on emotions occur during animation making.

Together, the investigations of my reflection on the creative production, the visitors' responses to the context of the artefact, the feedback from expressive arts therapists and school teachers evidence that the aims of the research have been met. They have shown that the process and viewing of animation could be useful to facilitate the creator's and viewers' expression and reflection on emotions.

### 8.3 Limitations of the research

This research rests on my own evaluation of the opportunities the creation of animation provided as the central means of demonstrating how the practice of animation could benefit self-awareness; although I feel that I have demonstrated how various parts of animation practice have contributed to my own personal development, this may not be considered objective enough to convince others that animation can lead to an improvement in the animator's emotional skills. As such the findings of the research may be arguable. However, the case studies provided in Chapter 2 show how other artists have used their practice to reflect on painful events.

There was a limitation in showing the work to a large, representative audience; the physicality of installation art is problematic. The feedback from the audience might, therefore have been skewed i.e. people who might be interested in the production, or benefit from it, might not be able to attend because of conflicting appointments or the travelling required. Whilst some web-based animations could reach a wider audience on-line, a solely screen based experience is different as it does not engender the same levels of immersion and physical interaction.

The online survey with the school educators, and face-to-face interviews with therapists was used to supplement the feedback from those who visited the installation, and to provide focussed feedback from potential end users. Although the feedback provided is positive, the results in both cases are based on small samples.

#### 8.3-1 Research to overcome the limitations

Evaluating the effectiveness of a visual presentation is difficult. Since one of my goals was to encourage the visitors to express and reflect, I felt that it was essential to evaluate the usefulness of the artefact, even though I personally believed the process I had undertaken would lead to increased emotional awareness. However, just relying on my own evaluation is not always sufficient. Evidence needs to be collected to illustrate, prove or justify statements.

This seems to be a major concern relating to practice-led research - that academic study requires justified statements and history (Scrivener 2002). A more in depth, objective, follow up study could be undertaken through a collaborative approach (with creative practitioners, psychologists, educators and therapists) investigating how different animators (or artists) develop autobiographical artefacts – what opportunities this provides, and how the artefacts ‘talk back’ to the creator that engenders reflection.

Such collaborations may enable practice-led research to be more grounded in established theories, to develop and integrate new shared vocabularies and understandings and to apply theories outside the

laboratory. Results from such collaborative studies would also have more impact on the domains they seek to inform (in this case art therapy and curriculum development).

Future research to overcome the limitation of physical display of the creative production may be that the installation can be produced in a smaller scale advancing mobility; or that it can be created in a form of 3D virtual installation. Similar alterations may enable the production to travel to different places (e.g. schools) in order to reach a broader group of the visitors.

#### 8.4 Implications for further research

Animation per se does not necessarily generate emotions. The research specifically addresses the benefits/aspects that animation brings to the telling of a story and how it can help to generate natural engagement. This assists the creator and the viewers in the awareness and understanding of emotions. Animation is a time, space and movement based entity that may engage many perceptual and psychological systems and consequently is capable of registering a fuller sense of reality.

However, there is little evidence of how the expressive autobiographical productions can stimulate therapeutic experience, thereby leading to emotional awareness and personal development, neither of how the creative processes may benefit other forms of expression (e.g. linguistic).

Additionally, since art therapy practitioners and school educators (also see appendix 8) are optimistic that creating animations based on issues of current concern might encourage discussion of feelings, further studies are required on this.

##### 8.4-1 My current position as an animator

I have shown that “making-your-own animation” may lead to greater self-awareness if, at the outset, one is willing and able to open oneself up to this potential. However, the artefact did not present ‘this process’ but the outcome of my expression and reflection, even though there were some potential substantive impacts of the artefact produced.

Given that I am arguing that it is the creative practice itself that leads to personal growth (in which I also include a reflection on the audience's response to the artefact), it is important that this process is externalised, document and offered up for discussion through visual-audio recording.

Providing such an example, may also encourage people to consider modern ways of learning, self-expression e.g. through visuals (motion picture), music, kinaesthetic (body language; movement) and understanding self-awareness. Thus, my future practice will include producing multimedia artefacts (including animations) and documenting (in some way) how these are created and the opportunities they provide for promoting reflection and self-awareness.

### 8.5 Contributions to knowledge

This research has contributed to knowledge in three areas, by

1. providing an in depth autobiographical study of the relationship between animation practice, reflection and personal growth
2. demonstrating that animation can facilitate self emotional insights in the practitioner and audience
3. evidencing the value of using animation in art therapy and educational settings.

Addressing each of these in turn, the literature review showed that few studies had been conducted on the way in which animation could be used to facilitate emotional awareness. This research considers animation as a form of expressive art, and provides a detailed case study and a set of artefacts that document the way in which it can be used for this purpose. In doing so, the affordances that animation provides have been explored. For example, the way the image can talk back to the developer, the psychological spaces between the creator, the artefact and the events, that provide opportunities for reflection. Therefore this work has extended research on the benefits of animation in encouraging self-expression and reflection on emotion-related feelings and thoughts as a result of the therapeutic study.

I always intended that my artwork should lead others (from Taiwan and other countries) to understand the childhood events that shape the person I am today and to reconsider the impact of childhood experiences or their own lives. The feedback from the viewers of the animation (*Are You Terry*), visitors to the installation, and my reflections on my personal growth during the course of the PhD, all point to the possibility that animation can be used to facilitate self-awareness and increase emotional intelligence. This also suggested that animation could be used to deliver autobiographical stories and that when presented in installations offer levels of engagement not provided in other formats.

Although, as an artist, I am interested in developing excellence in my practice, and using it for my own personal growth, I am equally interested in providing practical approaches that others can use to increase their own emotional intelligence. Having come to understand the effects of my own childhood experiences on my ability to communicate emotions, I was especially interested in demonstrating the benefits of animation in therapeutic and educational settings. The final contribution to knowledge has been to demonstrate that, animation programmes could be integrated in to the main stream curriculum and therapeutic practice. This was further explored through a small case study in which I taught animation classes to teenagers in Taiwan (appendix 8).

## 8.6 Conclusion

The assumptions of this research were that the processes of animation and the viewing of such digital art might facilitate the creator and the viewers' personal expression and reflection on childhood experiences. The study found that the animator's engagement in the processes of animation offered her an opportunity to recollect her own childhood memories, reconsider the recalled stories and organise these materials to create animations that could be reflected upon. It was evidenced that the animator's ability of self-awareness of emotions was improved through the practice of animation.

The study also found that the visitors to the animation installation were emotionally immersed and to an extent engaged in the virtual family environment, presented in a physical space, that gave them the experience of being able to navigate the other person's childhood stories and construct a narrative at

their own pace. They were able to create their own version of the stories (or project their own understanding of emotions onto each character), reflect on the issues that they learned about from the visual representations of the relationship between the characters, and recognise the artist's purposes in the creation. There was evidence that the viewing of the artefact prompted the visitors to reconsider the subject of childhood experiences such that they were prompted to engage in emotional awareness. The research hopes to invite further creative production studies to discuss the value of multimedia art in relation to encouraging people to improve their emotional skills.

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**Appendix 1:** A CD of the animation 'Give up the world'. It requires flash player 7.0 to be installed on your computer in order to view this work

**Appendix 2:** An interactive DVD of the animations 'The one you never get' and 'Are You Terry?'

**Appendix 3:** An interactive DVD of the animation installation 'A residual cleft in my beautiful life: childhood'

These appendices have been removed for copyright reasons. The unabridged thesis can be consulted in the Lanchester library, Coventry University.

## Appendices

**Appendix 1, 2 and 3: The digital copies are supplied with the thesis.**

**Appendix 4: The questionnaire design for the semi-structured interviews in Taiwan.**

Aim

1. to understand the relationship between childhood experiences and their effect on personal development

Objectives

1. to gather information on childhood experiences in Taiwan
2. to provide information that can be translated into content for the installation.

Introduction

Interview will last for about 75 minutes. Will be in 3 parts- start with talking about yourself, then childhood, family and finish with story session.

Section 1- personality

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. What features of your personality do you think are most important? (Could be either positive or negative)
  - Why do you think this?
  - Can you give some examples of what happened made you think this?
  - Why do you think have been the major shapers of your personality? (Think of some prompts-could be work, partner, parents)
  - Why do you think this?
  - Can you give some examples?

Section 2- Family and Childhood

3. I'd now like you to think back to your childhood. Can you describe your family to me- prompts- parents, brothers and sisters, type of house, did the parents work, age of parents and kids, what did they do in the holidays, what were their hobbies.
4. Were you happy as a child along with your family or what were you like as a child?
  - Why do you think this?
  - Give some examples of what happened made you think this?
5. Can you describe for me any childhood memories that are important to you? Please take your time; every tiny bit of your description could be very useful for the study. I am especially interested in memories that are associated with your family and parents, and that you think they have influenced you?

6. Why are these memories (or is this) important?
7. How do you think they have influenced you?
8. Have you ever discussed these with your family?
  - If not, why not
  - If you did what was the reaction
    - was it what you expected
    - did it have any effect etc
9. How do you deal/did you deal with family-emotional issues with your parents?
10. What do you think is the role of parents?
11. What do you think are the most important qualities parents should have?
12. What sort of parent would you think you would be?
13. Do you think that your parents have the same attitudes to/beliefs about parenting as you?

#### Section 4- Narratives

I am interested in narratives about parenting and childhood; about whether they capture childhood experiences, help you to reflect you on/sort out issues.

14. Can you think of any stories within TV programmes, magazines, films, books, music, theatre etc. that remind you of your relationship with your parents during your childhood?
15. Do you think that the director/writer handled the storyline accurately?
16. If you were the director or writer, what more/what else would you like to add/talk in the story?
17. How would you describe your emotions after experiencing the story?
18. Did the story remind you of any conflicts or issues within your own family life that
  - you feel still haven't been revealed?
  - or
  - you feel still have been resolved?
19. How do you think that other members of your family, in particular your parents, would feel about the story?

**Appendix 5 Examples of the visitors' feedback on the animation installation 'A residual cleft in my beautiful life: Childhood'**

Handwritten questionnaire responses (pages 220- 225) been removed for data protection reasons. The unabridged thesis can be consulted in the Lanchester library, Coventry University.

**Appendix 6 Examples of the visitors' feedback on the animation installation 'A residual cleft in my beautiful life: Childhood'**

Handwritten questionnaire responses (pages 226-236) have been removed for data protection reasons. The unabridged thesis can be consulted in the Lanchester library, Coventry University.

## Appendix 7: Examples of the online survey with school teachers

### Example 1

#### Facilitating self-awareness through the making and viewing of animations in schools

Thank you for helping me with my research. The questionnaire will be used solely for the purposes of my research, i.e. to establish whether you and other teachers see potential in using or teaching animation as way of increasing students' emotional awareness. The questionnaire contains 17 items. It should take about 15 minutes to complete. All answers will remain completely confidential.

*Firstly, I would like you to answer some questions about yourself*

- (1) What is your gender? male  female x
- (2) What is your age? < 25  26-35  36-45  46-55 x 56+
- (3) What is the age range of the students you teach? \_3 - 11\_\_ years
- (4) In which country do you teach? UK
- (5) How long have you been teaching? \_\_15\_\_ years
- (6) What subjects do you teach? Primary

*I would now like your opinions about teaching emotional awareness or intelligence as part of the formal curriculum.*

*Please give reasons for your answers if possible*

- (7) Do you think being capable of talking about emotions, sharing personal issues should be a part of the mainstream curriculum?  
Yes X No

*And your reasons for saying this.....*

Improves awareness of how others feel, promotes greater understanding of differences in thought, opinion etc. Helps to remove barriers to learning by enabling an off loading process, shared experience, removes feelings of guilt or anxiety.

(8) Is this currently taught in the curriculum in your school? Yes x No

*If yes, how is it taught (e.g. as part of PSHE, through discussion of recent events, books).....*

*PSHCE, SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning), circle time, one to one, feeling good group, nurture group sessions, therapeutic art and therapeutic dance sessions once a week*

(9) Are children able to talk about, or encouraged to discuss their thoughts and feelings? Yes x No

a. How is this achieved? As above

b. And/or what are the barriers to this? Staffing, cost

*Considering the role of animations,*

(10) Do you think creative or expressive art can play a part in helping children to become aware of their emotional responses to events? Yes x No

*And your reasons for saying this.....many children feel they can engage with this type of media*

(11) Do you think animation could play a part in this? Yes x No  Unable to say

a. Through creating their own simple animations Yes x No  Unable to say

b. Through discussing the subject matter of animations Yes x No Unable to say

*Please give reasons.....doing something gives ownership – this becomes another tool – not all children would respond positively to this route but it gives the practitioner an alternative for children who may be disengaged with more traditional routes*

(12) At what age do you think children could create simple animations? \_\_3\_ years

(13) Do you think they will enjoy doing this? Yes X No  Unable to say

*Please give reasons.....*

*naturally inquisitive, able to produce a definite form that they recognise at a later date, familiar with computer games, DVD's, etc. no pre conceptions*

- (14) Do you think spending time creating animations based on issues that concern them would give children the opportunity to open up/talk more freely about issues that worry them?    Yes x No  Unable to say

*Please give reasons.....*

*another avenue to engage, barriers are use of technology, time of adult support etc*

- (15) Do you think animation (creating and viewing) can benefit students in other ways? (e.g. helping to develop different learning styles, multiple intelligences)        Yes x No  Unable to say

*Areas it could be benefit.....*

*An up to date method of engaging young people*

### Example 2

*Firstly, I would like you to answer some questions about yourself*

- (1) What is your gender? male  female x
- (2) What is your age?    < 25  26-35         36-45         46-55 x        56+
- (3) What is the age range of the students you teach? \_3- 11\_\_\_ years
- (4) In which country do you teach? England
- (5) How long have you been teaching? \_30 years\_\_\_ years
- (6) What subjects do you teach? None – Primary Headteacher

*I would now like your opinions about teaching emotional awareness or intelligence as part of the formal curriculum. Please give reasons for your answers if possible*

- (7) Do you think being capable of talking about emotions, sharing personal issues should be a part of the mainstream curriculum? Yes x No

*And your reasons for saying this.....*

Only when children feel comfortable with their emotions and relationships will they be ready to learn

- (8) Is this currently taught in the curriculum in your school? Yes x No

*If yes, how is it taught (eg as part of PSHE, through discussion of recent events, books).....*

*PSHE - Circle Time – Theme Weeks such as Health week & Anti Bullying Week*

- (9) Are children able to talk about, or encouraged to discuss their thoughts and feelings? Yes x No

*a. How is this achieved?*

*Through above and recognition that whole school ethos is built around being open and honest and caring – about ourselves and each other*

*b. And/or what are the barriers to this?*

*Some children and adults needing to be nurtured/recognition that this is an important aspect of learning/resources/pressures of “National Curriculum”.*

*Considering the role of animations,*

- (10) Do you think creative or expressive art can play a part in helping children to become aware of their emotional responses to events? Yes x No

*And your reasons for saying this.....*

*Creative/expressive art is very personal*

- (11) Do you think animation could play a part in this? Yes  No  Unable to say   
 a. Through creating their own simple animations Yes  No  Unable to say   
 b. Through discussing the subject matter of animations Yes  No  Unable to say   
 Please give reasons.....
- (12) At what age do you think children could create simple animations? \_4/5\_ years
- (13) Do you think they will enjoy doing this? Yes  No  Unable to say   
 Please give reasons.....Children love animations and can identify with characters and actions
- (14) Do you think spending time creating animations based on issues that concern them would give children the opportunity to open up/talk more freely about issues that worry them? Yes  No  Unable to say   
 Please give reasons.....  
 Would perhaps create an environment that children feel comfortable with and would give them a vehicle for expression
- (15) Do you think animation (creating and viewing) can benefit students in other ways? (eg helping to develop different learning styles, multiple intelligences) Yes  No  Unable to say   
 Areas it could be benefit

### Example 3

Firstly, I would like you to answer some questions about yourself

- (1) What is your gender? female
- (2) What is your age? 46-55
- (3) What is the age range of the students you teach? \_11-18\_ years
- (4) In which country do you teach? UK

(5) How long have you been teaching? \_20\_\_\_ years

(6) What subjects do you teach? ART and Design

*I would now like your opinions about teaching emotional awareness or intelligence as part of the formal curriculum.*

*Please give reasons for your answers if possible*

(7) Do you think being capable of talking about emotions, sharing personal issues should be a part of the mainstream curriculum?

Yes

*And your reasons for saying this.....*

Education for the 21C and general life skills demands this

(8) Is this currently taught in the curriculum in your school ?

Yes

*If yes, how is it taught (eg as part of PSHE, through discussion of recent events, books)....*

*PHSE and Character Development*

(9) Are children able to talk about, or encouraged to discuss their thoughts and feelings?

Yes

a. *How is this achieved?*

*Tutor time – small group size*

b. *And/or what are the barriers to this?*

*Getting new students to understand and the general apathy which hits Yr 9's*

*Considering the role of animations,*

(10) Do you think creative or expressive art can play a part in helping children to become aware of their emotional responses to events?

Yes

*And your reasons for saying this.....I have experienced this personally and through teaching art*

- 
- (11) Do you think animation could play a part in this? Yes
- a. Through creating their own simple animations Yes
- b. Through discussing the subject matter of animations Yes

*Please give reasons.....*

*It would address issues in a visual form; animation is a common experience for students these days and we are an IT school*

- (12) At what age do you think children could create simple animations? 11\_\_ years

- (13) Do you think they will enjoy doing this ? Yes

*Please give reasons.....*

*We do it in Yr 7 using Photoshop and movie maker and they love it*

- (14) Do you think spending time creating animations based on issues that concern them would give children the opportunity to open up/talk more freely about issues that worry them? Yes

*Please give reasons.....I have found that this work demands a more collaborative approach to solve problems with the programmes as they arise and they share their work more naturally. Somehow being on screen puts a different edge to the work*

- (15) Do you think animation (creating and viewing) can benefit students in other ways? (e.gg helping to develop different learning styles, multiple intelligences) Yes

**Example 4**

*Firstly, I would like you to answer some questions about yourself*

- (1) What is your gender? male  female
- (2) What is your age? < 25  26-35  36-45  46-55  56+
- (3) What is the age range of the students you teach? 11-16years
- (4) In which country do you teach? England
- (5) How long have you been teaching? 3 years
- (6) What subjects do you teach? Citizenship and PSHE

*I would now like your opinions about teaching emotional awareness or intelligence as part of the formal curriculum.*

*Please give reasons for your answers if possible*

- (7) Do you think being capable of talking about emotions, sharing personal issues should be a part of the mainstream curriculum? Yes  No

*And your reasons for saying this ?*

I think that PSHE is a very important aspect of the school curriculum which is often overlooked. At school we are responsible for helping to develop students as WHOLE people, and lifelong learners, not just to fill them with knowledge and content. It is particularly important however, when pupils are from poor social backgrounds or where parents may not have the time or abilities to help them with their emotional awareness. At school, we can help pupils work through feelings and show them how to manage them, so they can become a positive part of society – we can, in many cases, stop problems before they start!!

(8) Is this currently taught in the curriculum in your school? Yes  No

*If yes, how is it taught (eg as part of PSHE, through discussion of recent events, books PSHE is a discrete lesson. It is taught once a week and we use a variety of methods to deliver it: making films to teach others, discussions, circle time, activities, role-play, essays, topical events, books pupils are studying etc etc.*

(9) Are children able to talk about, or encouraged to discuss their thoughts and feelings? Yes  No

a. *How is this achieved?*

Circle time, Class discussions, using topical issues as a starting point, in tutor time etc

b. *And/or what are the barriers to this.....*

Tutor time: not all tutors are good at this. In lessons, sometimes they need to be in single sex groups, and as each child is an individual, some discuss things better in small groups, some in large groups, some through written pieces, some through role play etc. So we try to offer different methods in PSHE lessons.

*Considering the role of animations,*

(10) Do you think creative or expressive art can play a part in helping children to become aware of their emotional responses to events? Yes  No

*And your reasons for saying this.....*

For some pupils it is a much easier way to talk about their emotions without feeling they are 'putting themselves on the line'. It makes it easier to discuss them and not feel so vulnerable, especially those pupils who are not used to these discussions at home!

(11) Do you think animation could play a part in this? Yes  No  Unable to say

a. Through creating their own simple animations Yes  No  Unable to say

b. Through discussing the subject matter of animations Yes  No  Unable to say

*Please give reasons.....*

as above. It's about giving pupils a starting point and enabling them to feel safe!

(12) At what age do you think children could create simple animations? 7 years

(13) Do you think they will enjoy doing this ? Yes  No  Unable to say

*Please give reasons.....*

I have seen amazing animations produced by primary and secondary school pupils! They love it, its something different, exciting, and they get a real sense of achievement from the final product, especially when there is a sense of audience!

(14) Do you think spending time creating animations based on issues that concern them would give children the opportunity to open up/talk more freely about issues that worry them? Yes  No  Unable to say

*Please give reasons.....*

For some pupils, as I stated before, it's a way of making it seem less personal as a starting point. Often when there are issues at home pupils will talk about them through role-play or animation, film or puppets – anything that lets them discuss it without feeling so vulnerable.

(15) Do you think animation (creating and viewing) can benefit students in other ways? (e.g. helping to develop different learning styles, multiple intelligences) Yes  No  Unable to say

*Areas it could be benefit.....*

What doesn't it? Its engaging and fun. It develops team work, critical thinking, enquiry, ICT skills, literacy (particularly oracy)

**Example 5**

Firstly, I would like you to answer some questions about yourself

- (1) What is your gender? male  female  1
- (2) What is your age? < 25  26-35  36-45  46-55  56+
- (3) What is the age range of the students you teach? \_\_\_PRIMARY\_ years
- (4) In which country do you teach? ENGLAND
- (5) How long have you been teaching? \_\_\_1997\_ years
- (6) What subjects do you teach? PRIMARY

I would now like your opinions about teaching emotional awareness or intelligence as part of the formal curriculum. Please give reasons for your answers if possible

- (7) Do you think being capable of talking about emotions, sharing personal issues should be a part of the mainstream curriculum?

Yes  1 No

And your reasons for saying this.....

- (8) Is this currently taught in the curriculum in your school ?

Yes  1 No

If yes, how is it taught (eg as part of PSHE, through discussion of recent events, books)...

Through PHSE, Circle time and SEAL..

- (9) Are children able to talk about, or encouraged to discuss their thoughts and feelings?

Yes  1 No

a. How is this achieved? Interwoven in all aspects of the curriculum

b. And/or what are the barriers to this? TIME

Considering the role of animations,

(10) Do you think creative or expressive art can play a part in helping children to become aware of their emotional responses to events? Yes  1 No

*And your reasons for saying this.....*

CHILDREN LEARN AND EXPRESS THEMSELVES IN DIFFERENT WAYS

(11) Do you think animation could play a part in this? Yes  1 No  Unable to say

a. Through creating their own simple animations Yes  1 No  Unable to say

b. Through discussing the subject matter of animations Yes  No  Unable to say  1

*Please give reasons.....*

*DON'T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT TECHNICAL DETAILS*

(12) At what age do you think children could create simple animations?   KS2   years

(13) Do you think they will enjoy doing this? Yes  1 No  Unable to say

*Please give reasons.....*

*NOT CHALK AND TALK A VISUAL WAY TO LEARN*

(14) Do you think spending time creating animations based on issues that concern them would give children the opportunity to open up/talk more freely about issues that worry them? Yes  1 No  Unable to say

*Please give reasons.....*

(15) Do you think animation (creating and viewing) can benefit students in other ways? (e.g. helping to develop different learning styles, multiple intelligences) Yes  1 No  Unable to say

*Areas it could be benefit.....*

## Appendix 8: A case study of teaching animation in schools

As mentioned previously (see chapter 2 for further details), self-awareness is an essential skill in interpersonal interaction and communication and as such it should be developed early in life (Zeidner *et al.* 2003), as part of mainstream education. It has been recently shown that students can develop this ability through verbal and non-verbal expression (expressive arts) (Radford 2002, 2003).

Accordingly, teachers have been encouraged to develop educational devices that can help students to help students improve their emotional awareness (Zeidner *et al.* 2003). Gardner (2002) also states that there is a need to change schooling systems, which privilege some types of human intelligence (i.e. those involving language and logic) to the neglect of others (i.e. the visual, kinaesthetic and musical). Children need to be given opportunities to develop all aspects of their intelligence, and tuition in the manner best suited for them, contrary to the prevalent “one-size-fits all” approach (Gardner 1996).

This proposal that making an animation will facilitate students’ ability in self-expression and heighten self-awareness through the construction of visual representations was investigated by delivering an experimental animation class in Taiwan. The potential of animation to be taught or used in educational settings was evaluated through an online survey with school teachers. Together, the studies show how students can achieve personal and emotional aspects of learning through animation practice in schools.

### 8.1 The experimental animation class

During the course of my research, I was invited to teach at a rural Junior High School in Taiwan. The idea behind this was to provide students with different learning opportunities that might meet needs not covered by the formal curriculum. The invitation provided an opportunity to teach animation skills as a different form of creative expression and also as a means of fostering emotional awareness.

- The background of the animation class is as follows:

Chin Shien Junior High School is situated in Ruie Fang of Taipei Province, surrounded by the mountains and sea. The school was built on two small sites - one at the top of the mountains and the other near the coast. There were approximately 45 students in each of the Schools. I taught at the school located at the coast. Ruie Fang had been a rich, gold mining region in the 1930s. However, when the industry collapsed, workers moved to bigger cities such as Taipei. Consequently, the school served families in difficult circumstances (i.e. low incomes) or where the children are being raised by grandparents, whilst parents work elsewhere). As in most deprived rural areas, transportation is problematic, with buses running irregularly and infrequently (once every 90 minutes).

The teachers try to provide students with a rich and varied curriculum, including traditional music, handicrafts and IT. As most of the students are without parental supervision, the school encouraged

students to stay at school in the evening by providing extra lessons such as martial art or conversational English.

The animation class was arranged as a short-term (three months) regular class for students selected by the head teacher, who were offered the chance to attend the class. In total, four children agreed to take part, who were also the members of the group who received one-to-one talk with their class teacher once every week. One student had been tested as dyslexic and I have omitted descriptions of his performance in this thesis in order to decrease the complexion of the study. The three students, whose work is described here, were 13-year-old student Jason, and third year students, Jimmy and Paul, both 14 years old. Personal details were provided by the teachers, to provide a richer account of the case study, observing the relationship between the students' artwork and their personal concerns in their adolescence, and additional information concerning children's lives in Taiwan.

- Jason comes from a fishing family that sells fish in the morning market to retail outlets. He therefore has great knowledge about the various types of fish and how to catch them. He also teaches people how to catch the shrimps and crabs that hide under the seashore rocks. Jason accompanies his grandfather on fishing trips most weekends, and helps to deliver the fresh fish to the morning market with other members of his family. Sometimes, the teachers order fish from him. In the school, Jason was a very cheerful and athletic boy who loved playing basketball with the teachers and students.
- Jimmy comes from a family that has had difficulties in raising him and his older sister. Due to a business failure, Jimmy's father has been in China since Jimmy was very little. His mother, who tried to improve the family's financial situation, was killed in a car accident when Jimmy had just started his second year in a school in Taipei. After his mother's death, he was sent to live with his grandmother and uncles. His older sister, who is addicted to drugs remains in Taipei. Jimmy was felt to need more attention and care than other students. He would read books that involved violence or crimes and would reveal suicidal thoughts to attract the teachers' attention. Nevertheless, he was on the whole a very talkative boy, although sometimes silence.
- Paul is the only male child in his family. He has an older sister studying in Keeg Long, a 40 minutes drive from their home. In the past, people preferred male children in Taiwan and was the case in Paul's family. As the only male child in the family, Paul is spoilt. He often uses bad language, is extrovert, behaves rudely and offends other children. This and his lack of academic progress concern Paul's teacher. Friendship and relationships appeared to be the major concerns in Paul's school life.

I was informed that the students had been selected for the animation class because they had difficulty concentrating in lessons and were less motivated or interested in academic subjects. They had shown interest in practical lessons and had been encouraged to participate in the animation class in the hope that it might better suit learning (see section 2.6 for details about the Learning Style and Multiple

Intelligences). The students were given sometime out of their academic lessons to attend the animation class for up to 8 hours a week.

The animation classes were specifically designed to provide opportunities to discover whether children could be taught animation skills, and whether they could use these skills to develop animations that helped them to express their emotions. Therefore, I wanted to use the animation class to examine the potential value of animation practice in increasing self-awareness and present a case to the school authorities for including this in the curriculum.

## **8.2 The animation class**

The design of the animation class and observations undertaken relating to the students' emotional responses whilst developing an animation are discussed in this section. Observations were recorded in written form, with important themes documented during and after each lesson.

As the students had no previous experience of computer art, I decided to teach them graphic design skills using Photoshop, which is a popular software package for animation. I did not plan to use any other software as I wanted to focus on the animation process and not on teaching how to use the software.

## **8.3 Discussion of students' expression whilst learning of digital graphics**

At the start of the three-month period, I provided images that the students were asked to duplicate. In this way they learnt to use basic Photoshop tools such as cutting, adding colours, creating text, using the pen tools and filters. When the students had gained some mastery of these processes, I provided them with my own photo albums, in which they could manipulate to or create their own images (Figures 40 to 42).

The next stage was to teach students how to create simple animation from separate stills presented in sequence. I divided the students into two parts; Jimmy paired worked with me, and Jason with Paul. I provided them with two pairs of female sandals accompanied by two digital cameras. They were asked to take photos of the sandals to express a story about a person. The sandals left the gender of the character, allowing the students to develop a character of their own choosing onto which they could project their thoughts and feelings.

I received permission to take the students to the coast where we took photos. I did not provide any additional instruction on how to produce digital narrative, although I advised them on how to take the photographs and encouraged them to construct the photos from a story-telling rather than an aesthetic perspective.

Once the photo session ad finished, the students were requested to write brief account about their images. One team provided the title 'Feeling bad' (Figures 43 & 46); 'a girl who is in a bad mood and wants to go out for a walk'. The initial idea had been about a person who planned to commit suicide by walking into

the sea. The other team outlined a story about 'The disappointment of love' (Figures 47 & 50); 'A boy who wants to break up with a girl because he has a new girlfriend'.

Reflecting on the teachers' account of the students' backgrounds, I felt that these stories were ones of current interest to the teenage students, which such indicated that material as simple as a pair of sandals, - was sufficient to develop narratives of personal concerns.

Soon after this, I was asked to invite the students to design a series of bookmarks which the Cultural Affairs Department in Chin Zhu could give as gifts of the Reading Festival. This opportunity provided an additional motivation to practice graphic design on Photoshop. I asked each student to design four bookmarks accompanied by a short explanatory narrative. Some of these were a combination of their own drawings and found digital images, whilst others were digitally colour-modified photos (Figure 51).

The students' rationale behind their designs was interesting:

- Jimmy suggested that students should take a rest from their studies. This was depicted through his drawing of a monster holding a book, that sufficiently referred to the subject of the Reading Festival in Chin Zhu;
- Jason drew different fish swimming in coral. He wanted his bookmarks to raise awareness of sea pollution
- Paul merely altered the colour palette of the digital images I had provided.

The results of this exercise showed that the students were able to use digital art to express their concerns about health, social/political issues as well as their personal thoughts.

#### 8.4 The students' responses whilst learning animation

The way in which animation can be used to understand more about a person is shown (in this case attitudes to learning) in the following example.

- Jimmy was a fast learner compared to his peers and this speed was reflected in his work rate and boredom threshold. The way he moved his mouse resembled a fast piano player moving his hands on the keyboard. The speed did not appear to help Jimmy achieve more or better outcomes as he either gave up working on almost completed images without saving them or made mistakes which ruined the image he was trying to create. Otherwise, he kept using the same tool, even though he knew it would not give him the effect he needed. The history window of Photoshop only allows so much to be retrieved, so Jimmy was not able to return to former images once he used a different tool.

Jimmy showed frustration, disappointment or upset when he made unexpected mistakes. When I spoke to him of this he replied that he could make new images very quickly and did not want to save images he was not pleased with. His persistent neglect to save his previous work meant that he fell behind schedule. I tried to explain that saving work might be important as that although he might not like the images now, he would probably change his mind when he came back to look at the images. After a few reminders, he

began to save his files before using other tools to experiment in his images. He learnt a new skill (saving work in progress) that may be transferable to other situations.

### 8.5 The students' expression during the process of animation

To create animations I taught the students how to use AfterEffects. I asked them to use this package to reproduce the animated Moon Festival card I had made. As AfterEffects is hard to learn I started with basic operations such as changing size, position, the level of transparency and rotation of an object to complete the animated Moon Festival card. The students also needed to understand how to use a timeline to decide the duration of the images. Once the students were familiar with the animation tools, they were asked to produce their own Moon Festival e-cards (Figure 52). All students learnt how to use these elements and were then ready to produce their own stories through motion pictures.

However, spending 2 hours every day in the computer room was difficult for the students. Paul lost interest in the lessons after requiring him to keep practicing the same visual techniques, and left the group. Therefore, the following observations are based on just two students.

The Head of the Schools had invited all the primary school teachers in the district to join us on the Christmas party. I suggested that we could make animated Christmas cards that could be projected onto the wall as part of the Christmas party displays.

I provided the students with individual tuition as required. We spent one hour producing the content of the stories.

- Jimmy decided to create a traditional story about Santa Claus delivering presents to houses (complete with a Happy Merry Christmas message).
- Jason wanted to produce an animation of an underwater Christmas celebration with fish wearing Christmas hats and swimming around coral in falling snowflakes.

Although the two students had to use the same software (Photoshop and AfterEffects) to create their work, they approached the task differently. Jimmy was excited at making Santa Claus and the reindeer leap around realistically. Jason's excitement was expressed through the dramatic changes in the size and movement of the fish.

### 8.6 Feedback from the students

In the last lesson of the animation class, I talked to the students about their experiences in the class. They thought that

- the class was enjoyable and more exciting than other lessons,
- they had learnt skills not usually taught in the School.
- they had been encouraged and excited by the opportunities to publish the bookmarks,

- Jason thought that digital art was more interesting than conventional art education. It had enabled him to combine and recombine, fix and re-fix, animate and re-animate his images.
- Although it was quite intensive, the students felt that they would like the class to be continued out of school.

### **8.7 Feedback from teachers**

Through the lessons, the students used the digital art tool to express issues of personal significance (e.g. breaking up with girlfriends) and societal issues (such as pollution). There was also some evidence to suggest that the practice of animation might encourage students to reflect and address learning difficulties. The head and class teachers agreed that the class had the potential to increase students' motivation to learn. However, the duration of the class was not long enough to help students discover whether they had an interest in digital art and the complexity of the software meant that they had to undergo a steep learning curve before they could create meaningful work. The teachers suggested a more simple software application be developed so that animations could be made more quickly and easily, to facilitate reinforcement.

Through the one-to-one talk with the students, one teacher also revealed that the animation class had helped one student to become more aware of how he studied at school. Compared to his previous class behaviour (e.g. lack of interaction), the student started to show happiness, excitement and frustration relating to his learning progress in the classes, and also began to reflect on his own thoughts and approach to learning. This may suggest that the use of the digital art lessons can help students to become more active in their learning and school life.

### **8.8 The limitations of the study**

In terms of quantitative evaluation, there were two elements that might have affected the result of the study. Firstly, the animation class was only a three months placement in the school and secondly, the scale of the participated students was small. Additionally, the result of producing animation class in a one-to-one setting might have been different from in a usual size of a class. Another factor that might have had an impact on the students' learning was that the students were learning to use professional computer graphics software. If the students were to learn to use a designed-for-student-use animation software, it might produce a different outcome of the study. These variations and limitations will need to be considered in future study.

Appendix 8.

Copies of students' work (pages 255-265) have been removed for copyright reasons. The unabridged thesis can be consulted in the Lanchester library, Coventry University.