RETHINKING VISUAL JOURNALING IN THE CREATIVE PROCESS: EXPLORING PEDAGOGIC IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

I lecture jewellery design at a university of technology in South Africa. Through this study, I wish to arrive at a deeper understanding of my own creative process, so that I can facilitate the creative development of my students. The focus of this article is the visual journal, or reflective sketchbook, which I require my students to keep. To establish the relationship between my creative practice and visual journaling, I analysed a creative poetic performance I delivered at the South African Educational Research Association's (SAERA) 2016 conference. Using the little-c definition of creativity, I analyse the threads that constituted and contributed to my performance, to see how aspects of self manifested within this creative process. I did the analysis by conducting an autoethnographic self-interview, and then examining the responses. To my surprise, I discovered that the inspiration for my own creative work does not necessarily originate in my visual journal and that the visual journal could play a more useful role, if used as a prompt for reflective conversations.

Keywords: visual journal, creative design process, autoethnography, poetic performance, self-interview

BACKGROUND

As a practising artist, lecturing jewellery design at a university of technology requires me to teach my students how to design and make conventional jewellery, as well as producing more creative contemporary jewellery that connects with a 'diverse range of contemporary social, environmental, technical or artistic trends' (Quickenden 2000).

In my experience, this requires more creativity than would be required should the jewellery have been designed according to well-established norms and standards. I have learned that this type of innovation requires deliberate incorporation and inter-weaving of personal beliefs, approaches, attitudes, practices and subject matter. It is a proficiency developed over a

number of years and, until now, I have been under the impression that keeping a visual journal can facilitate such creative development. By ‘visual journal’, I mean something such as an artist or designer’s sketchbook (Holtham, Owens and Bogdanova 2008), which is a combination of text and images, and more; as shall be explained in the next section of this article.

The objective of my research, therefore, was to gain an understanding of the complexities surrounding the contents and use of a visual journal, and to explore the pedagogical implications inherent in this understanding. I examine my creative process using an autoethnographic approach as it enables me to use ‘personal experience to examine and/or critique cultural experience’ (Holman Jones, Adams and Ellis 2016, 7).

CREATIVE DESIGN JOURNALING AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

In dealing with the creative processes of my students, I see creativity as a little-c (everyday) activity, and not as a big-C (legendary) endeavour (Beghetto and Kaufman 2010). The result is that I value the personal, commonplace experiences that my students and I encounter in our creative practice. These experiences are ubiquitous and readily accessible, when one is able to shift one’s focus from the ‘other side of the fence’.

Fine artists and professionals involved in creative design work tend to make extensive use of sketchbooks to record their creative process (Holtham et al. 2008). Messenger (2016) uses the term ‘visual journal’ to refer to these notebooks, which are a combination of images and text, and are used to document research processes. The visual journals are sometimes used for archival purposes and at other times, they can play a role in the improvement of creative practice, by providing material for inspiration and reflection (New 2005).

A creative designer’s visual journal is more than documentation of what has transpired. It is a way of record keeping that allows the designers to examine their thinking, which then can lead to them becoming aware of the bigger picture (Grauer and Naths, quoted in Scott Shields 2016). Scott Shields (2016) feels that the primary goal of a visual journal is to explore experience; one’s own experience. Because experiences take multiple sensory forms, it is necessary, as a creative designer, to be aware of Olver’s (2001) reminder that a visual journal need not necessarily take the form of a book, which would exclude three dimensional forms that include movement (such as dangly earrings), or emphasise texture, or the play of light on a surface. Incorporating a wider range of material in a visual journal would allow the development of a personal design philosophy that takes cognisance of more than just visual senses, thereby establishing a foundation for future work. It would facilitate the development of a personal design language that draws on emotions and intellect as well. From this point of

view, visual journaling can be seen as creative self-study, 'using the visual journal to turn inward and engage in a creative practice focused on ... the development of a [design] identity' (Scott Shields 2016, 5).

The requirements for the visual journals that my students need to produce are equivocal. They have the freedom to choose their own themes or areas that interest them. They then have to collect the necessary visual imagery or artefacts that inspire them, develop ideas for manufacture by producing drawings and/or prototypes, and then manufacture the final pieces after consultation with the lecturer.

My intention, in requiring my students to keep such a journal, was to provide the students with a space in which to document the work they do, record the process of developing their creative designs and collate the material they draw on when developing their designs. My intention was also that it would enable personal reflection; or, what Schön (2008, 79) calls, a 'conversation with the situation' and facilitate conversations between my students, and with me.

USING AN ART EXHIBITION TO TEACH/LEARN VISUAL JOURNALING

I thought that I would be able to improve my students' ability to keep a visual journal if we staged a collaborative art exhibition of our jewellery and then shared our experiences of the process, by examining and discussing our journals. I intended using this work, with my students' permission, as the foundation for a conference presentation or journal article.

I had worked out how to keep an online visual journal, a blog, and how to use the online capabilities to categorise the various posts by creating a tag cloud.[1] This categorisation would then facilitate the compilation of a research report and it seemed a clear-cut mechanism for reflecting on the creative design process and producing a written account thereof at the same time.

The exhibition was staged, and some journaling took place, but not enough to do a presentation. My journaling consisted of two blogposts: one showing the work ready for exhibiting and the other of the gallery in disarray, as we were busy setting up. I did have numerous photos, tracking the development of my creative work, on my phone. My students had preparatory sketches in their journals, and photos of the exhibition on their phones. In discussing the journaling process with my students after the exhibition, it transpired that there seemed to be no clear goal that directed this supposedly reflective process. I perceived their journaling as a mechanical chronologous documentation of occurrences, with no focus for reflection. During our conversation about the journaling, and perusing their visual journals, I

realised that the aim of the journal, as I saw it, was to provide material that would act as an aid for reflection on our development as designers. I had a feeling that my students did not share my enthusiasm, and just saw this as more work to do.

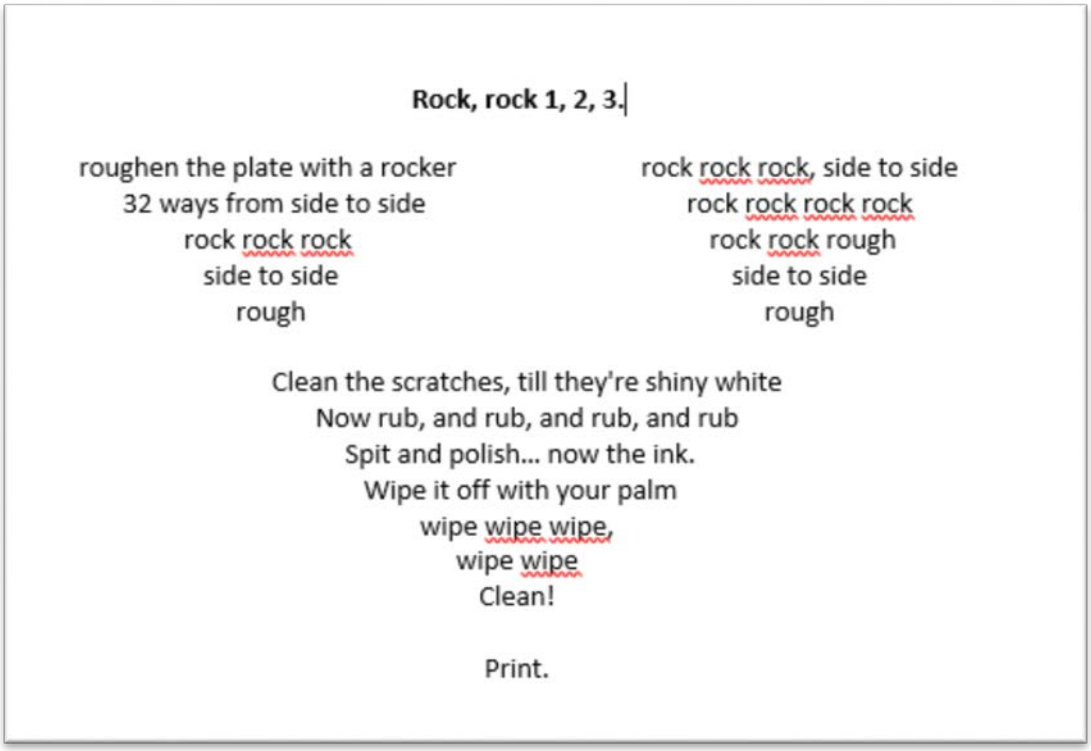
MY PRESENTATIONS

I made two presentations at the recent SAERA conference. The key presentation, or so I thought at the time, dealt with insights I arrived at regarding the journaling activities of my students. The other presentation was incidental (or so I thought), and was a poetic performance I staged at the Special Interest Group for Self-Reflexive Methodologies, titled 'Reimagining Education through Poetic Inquiry'.

'Reimagining education through poetic inquiry ...'

When I reflected on the presentations, I realised that the poetic performance contained information that could assist with my research regarding the relationship between the creative process and visual journaling. It has therefore become the focus of this article.

My performance can be seen online at https://youtu.be/nqYvhfJmm9E and the poem is shown in Figure 1.



Rock, rock 1, 2, 3.

roughen the plate with a rocker
32 ways from side to side
rock rock rock
side to side
rough

rock rock rock, side to side
rock rock rock rock
rock rock rough
side to side
rough

Clean the scratches, till they're shiny white
Now rub, and rub, and rub, and rub
Spit and polish... now the ink.
Wipe it off with your palm
wipe wipe wipe,
wipe wipe
Clean!

Print.

Figure 1: Rock, rock 1, 2, 3

The explanation that I provided for the Special Interest Group programme stated:

> This poem illustrates the mezzotint printing process, and reveals similarities to the teaching and learning process that I have come to notice. The title of the poem refers to the steps one does in the jive, which is the dance my wife and I are currently learning in our ballroom dancing classes. I have become aware that several aspects of my life seem to be converging and becoming integrated with each other.

The poem I performed was based on a mezzotint[2] print I had done previously (Figure 7), and the process whereby the print was produced. The stanzas of the poem were arranged into three triangles with a triangular space between them, similar to the patterns I use for the mezzotint prints. According to Higgins (quoted in Wyatt 2016) pattern poems, which are composed in particular visual patterns, 'combine the visual and literary impulses, to tie together the experience of these two areas into an aesthetic whole'. My poetic performance mirrored the pattern of the process used for the production of a mezzotint print. I went through the rocking motions of producing the print and then, for effect, showed a print that I had supposedly made as part of the performance; almost like magic.

The process for producing a mezzotint is very labour intensive and requires specialised tools and materials. One needs copper plate and a rocker for roughing the plate. I made some of the tools, and the copper plate used for printing, by hand. (I could have bought these, but wanted to instil some significance into the print). I made the rocker from an old file that was re-purposed.

The pattern in which I arranged the words of the poem was similar to the geometric patterns used by Zulu craftsmen for the straps they utilise when making their sandals. These straps are carved from whitewall car tires that are recycled. The tires have white inlays on their sides. The white substrate is exposed in geometric patterns by carving the black top layer away. I encountered this process as part of a research project I undertook, which was aimed at producing jewellery made by incorporating indigenous techniques and materials, and uses traditional Zulu sandals as inspiration.

As I was busy writing a description of my poem for this article, I became more and more entangled in the difficulties of using words to describe a visual image. I realised there were nuances that were not being conveyed and that I was unable to show the richness of the poem and how various aspects of my life unwittingly culminated in this poem.

It became clear to me that the creative product I was trying to describe was the result of a complex creative process that defied easy documentation and classification. The pattern poem was the result of various modalities that were interwoven and would require a different approach if I wished to capture it in a journal. It made me realise that I should pay closer

attention to what I expect from my students; I became conscious that journaling was not as easy as I had thought.

METHODOLOGY

To examine my creative practice, I used an autoethnographic methodology aimed at exploring the various aspects of self that manifested during this process of creating and performing a poem. I wished to understand the larger context, my creative practice and my pedagogy, by examining my own experiences within it. I examined the various cultures inherent in my 'multiple, shifting identities' (Reed-Danahay 1997, 4) by writing personal narratives that were prompted by the contemplation of objects. I examined the denotative meanings of these objects and related things and then allowed the connotative meanings to surface, going from, what Riggins (1994) calls referencing, to mapping. An inward and outward shift of focus, with the intention 'to deepen an understanding of [my selves] and [my] work ... in a broader cultural context of making [and designing, and teaching]' (Mitchell 2016, 180). This aligns with the definition provided by Ellis and Holman Jones, which states: 'Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze ... personal experience ... in order to understand cultural experience' (quoted in Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011, 1).

I used objects to provide me with access to memories so I could tell stories about myself to myself, to access the network of connections between these and the links to my creative practice, and other. I wanted to examine the 'webs of significance [I have] spun' (Geertz 2003, 145), and I did this by conducting a semi-structured autoethnographic self-interview.

To explore my pedagogic practice, I wrote 'a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context' (Reed-Danahay 1997, 9). A part of my social context is the programme where I lecture jewellery design, and my students collaborate in this investigation. According to Chang, Ngunjiri and Hernandez (2016) this is a partial collaboration, which Coia and Taylor (2010) refer to as a 'co/autoethnography', as my students shared autobiographical narratives, in the form of blogposts, that guided our discussions regarding the purpose of journaling.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Reliability and validity are interconnected when doing autoethnography. The more credible the account, the more reliable it is deemed to be (Ellis et al. 2011). To make my account more credible I have, therefore, detailed the process as it transpired, with personal insights as they occurred. I have also included images of relevant objects and places to enhance trustworthiness. This is in keeping with Mishler's (1990) view that 'visibility of the work' (429) strengthens

trustworthiness. A specific example is the screen clipping (Figure 2), which shows how I conducted my self-interview. It shows comments on the right and insertions in capital letters. I also make the link between my occupation and my own creative practice explicit, with the aim of enhancing the trustworthiness of this study.

Autoethnographic self-interview and multivocality

When I tried to unravel what my pattern poem entailed, I became entangled in the various threads of thought my mind was taking. I was feeling quite overwhelmed, took a deep breath, and started to write a note to myself:

> It is so difficult to untangle all these threads that go into the making of this text ... even just finding the beginning of the thread is difficult. I might just end up with one long thread as opposed to a woven cloth .... Look for lots of short threads to weave together.

I then made a list of all the threads I recognised as contributing to and manifesting in the poem and the performance. The list of threads, which is detailed further in the Analysis section of this article, were used as prompts to elicit connotative responses. It was similar to a brainstorming session, where I produced a list of prompts without necessarily evaluating their relevance; this happened afterwards.

Reflecting on the note to self, I realised I had adopted two distinctly different voices: that of a *Guiding self* and that of a *Seeking self*.[3] I was having a conversation with myself. This conforms to Anderson and Glass-Coffin's (2013, 69) notion of an autoethnographic self-interview which 'involv[es] dialogue between one's past and present selves', and is similar to Mizzi's (2010) notion of multivocality. Mizzi states there are 'plural and sometimes contradictory *narrative voices* located within the researcher' that would 'expand the ways we can perceive and inquire into an encounter' (M3).

The type of self-interview I conducted differed from those of Singh (2012), and Meskin, Singh, and van der Walt (2014). Singh (2012) examined 'critical events' (Webster and Mertova 2007, quoted in Singh 2012, 86) in her journey as educator and used a set of prepared questions to maintain her focus. She responded to her questions in writing as she examined the impact that specific 'people, events and places' had on her 'educational persona'. When Meskin et al. (2014) scrutinised their professional practice, a critical friend reviewed and asked them a set of questions they had determined in advance. They labelled it a 'reciprocal self-interview' (RSI).

My questions arose when I searched for similarities between my two presentations at the conference. I wanted to see what the underlying issues were that connected my creative practice (the poetic performance) and the journaling process I expected from my students.

ANALYSIS

According to Riggins (1994), the responses that an informant (one of my selves) provides to an interviewer (my other self) could be either referencing (denotative) or mapping (connotative). When the information that is provided deals with 'the history, aesthetic or customary uses of an object' (1994, 109), it is considered a referencing response, and where it reveals the ideology, or social world, of the informant it is considered a mapping response.

The threads I had identified started as denotative (referencing) and then became more personal and connotative (mapping). When I realised they were becoming connotative, I stopped listing them, instead focusing on the denotative threads, which I used as prompts to elicit the connotations that came to mind. These I examined in terms of their relevance to my social world, which included my creative and pedagogical practice.

I then reflected on these connotations to reveal further significances, to see how I felt about each thread. I was extracting information with the aim of recognising underlying patterns that would possibly explain what was going on here.

The two questions I asked myself were: 'What comes to mind when you think about this thread?', and secondly, 'What type of material did this thread provide for my creative practice? Where is the material located?' I captured my answers as comments in a word processed document and inserted text in CAPITAL LETTERS (see Figure 2).

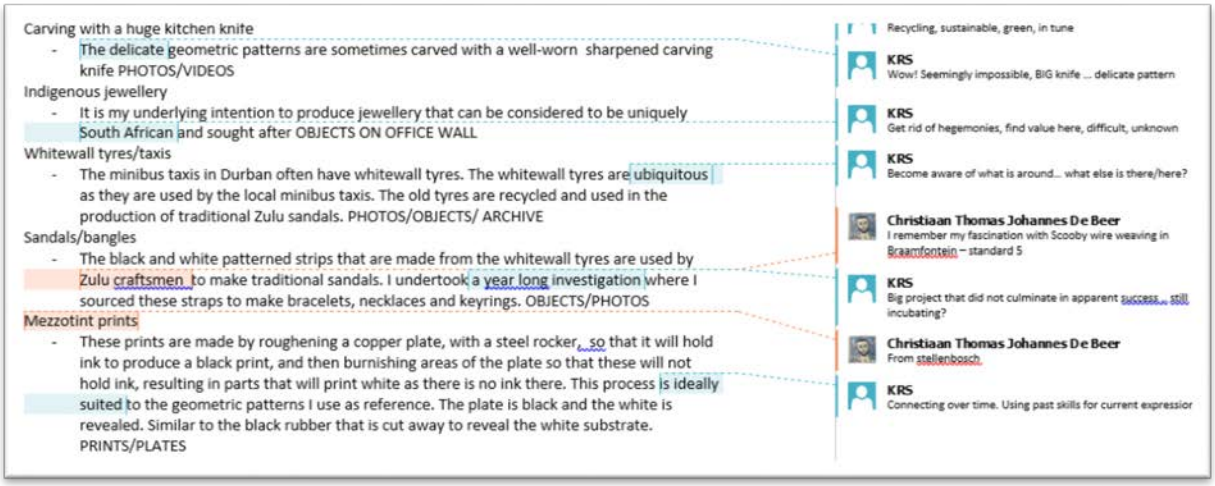


Figure 2: Screengrab of self-interview

I regarded my self-interview as a narrative, so I could analyse it by looking for patterns that made some sort of sense to me (Bernard 2011). I saw that the information could be separated into categories that Riggins (1994) calls referencing (denotative) and mapping (connotative).

The prompts I used as *Guiding self* were denotative and my responses as *Seeking self* were connotative. On coding the responses, I noticed areas where the connotative information revealed aspects of the self and other areas that caused insights and realisations – sometimes with pedagogical implications.

The *Guiding self's* denotative prompts that I developed, and respond to in the next section, were as follows:

- Rubber from old car tyres
- Carving with a huge kitchen knife
- Indigenous jewellery
- Whitewall tyres/taxis
- Sandals/bangles
- Mezzotint prints
- Silwerstroomstrandskulp
- Maspala / samples
- Kitchen knife/Dlamini/Dominic/Thembenkosi

- Rock rock 123 123 / or 12 rock rock rock back side close
- Nadene smiling/Hein
- Jive/tango
- Ballroom
- Relationship
- Weekly routine
- Doing things together

- Mezzotint
- Rocker/rocking
- Old file
- Punches with students
- Scraper/burnish
- Plate with natural edges / what it looks like is what it looks like

I examined all the threads, however, in this article I only discuss the ones that are most relevant in terms of creative journaling, and that have significant pedagogical implications. I discuss my most important discoveries regarding the relationship between my creative practice and visual journaling, and the pedagogical implications thereof, in the Discoveries section at the end.

Rock, rock, 1, 2, 3 – Unravelling the threads

The poem I performed was based on a mezzotint print I had done earlier, and the process whereby the print was produced. The stanzas of the poem were arranged into three triangles, with a triangular space between them, similar to the patterns I use for the mezzotint prints. The poem I performed was based on a mezzotint print I had done earlier, and the process whereby the print was produced. The stanzas of the poem were arranged into three triangles, with a triangular space between them, similar to the patterns I use for the mezzotint prints. The title of the poem refers to the steps one does in the jive, which is the dance my wife and I are currently learning in our ballroom dancing lessons.

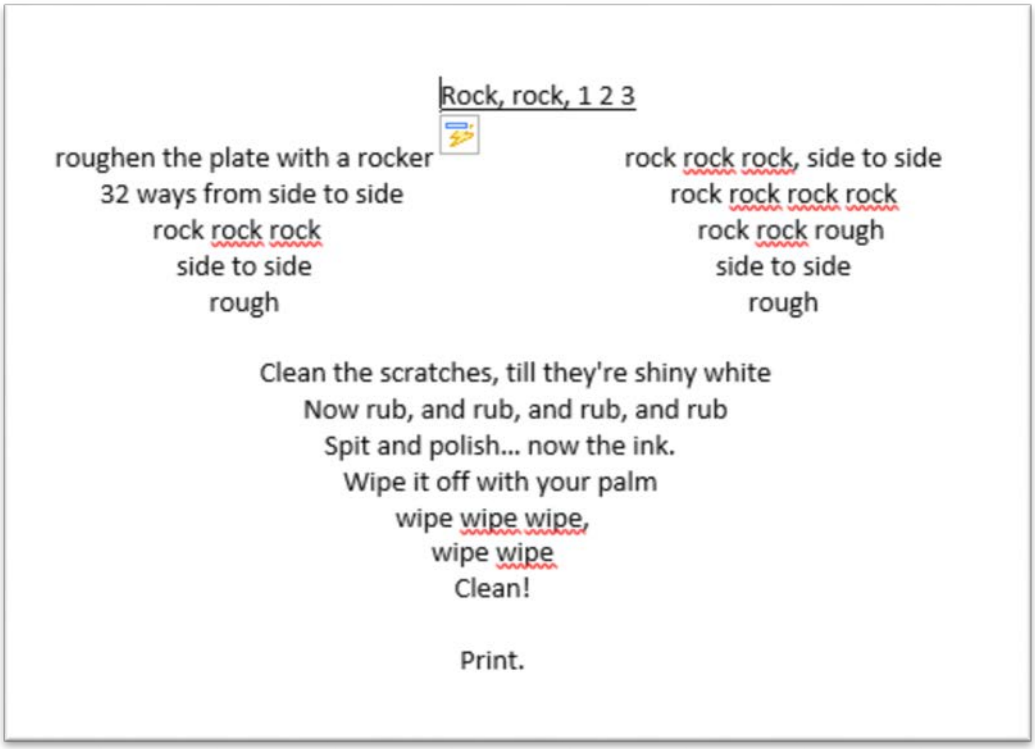


Figure 3: The poem

What follows are my responses to the prompts. The responses consist of referencing (denotative) observations, followed by mapping (connotative) reflections. I inserted images as well, to show the visual aspects of my research.

Indigenous jewellery

I started studying jewellery design under the impression I would become rich from making precious jewellery from gold and gems. I was not exposed to that type of jewellery as a child, and found it difficult to engage wholeheartedly with this kind of design. Sometime during my first year of study, I inadvertently made a brooch that contrasted brass and nickel silver, both base metals, and I became totally consumed by this subtle colour juxtaposition. It was in complete contrast to the shiny precious metals we were taught to work with. In fact, I had a 'Damascus Road' type of aesthetic experience which has, since then, influenced my development as a designer. I think it was then I realised there were other types of beauty lying in wait for me. I started finding pleasing aesthetic arrangements, textures, colours and formations in the world around me. I collected shells, twigs, leaves, stones and seeds, and surrounded myself with these inspirational materials (see Figure 4 and 5). I also discovered the world of 'found' objects. Objects that are found serendipitously and that have an aesthetic impact on the senses of the beholder. I became aware of the richness of the world that lay just on the other side of what I was used to, or taught to expect.

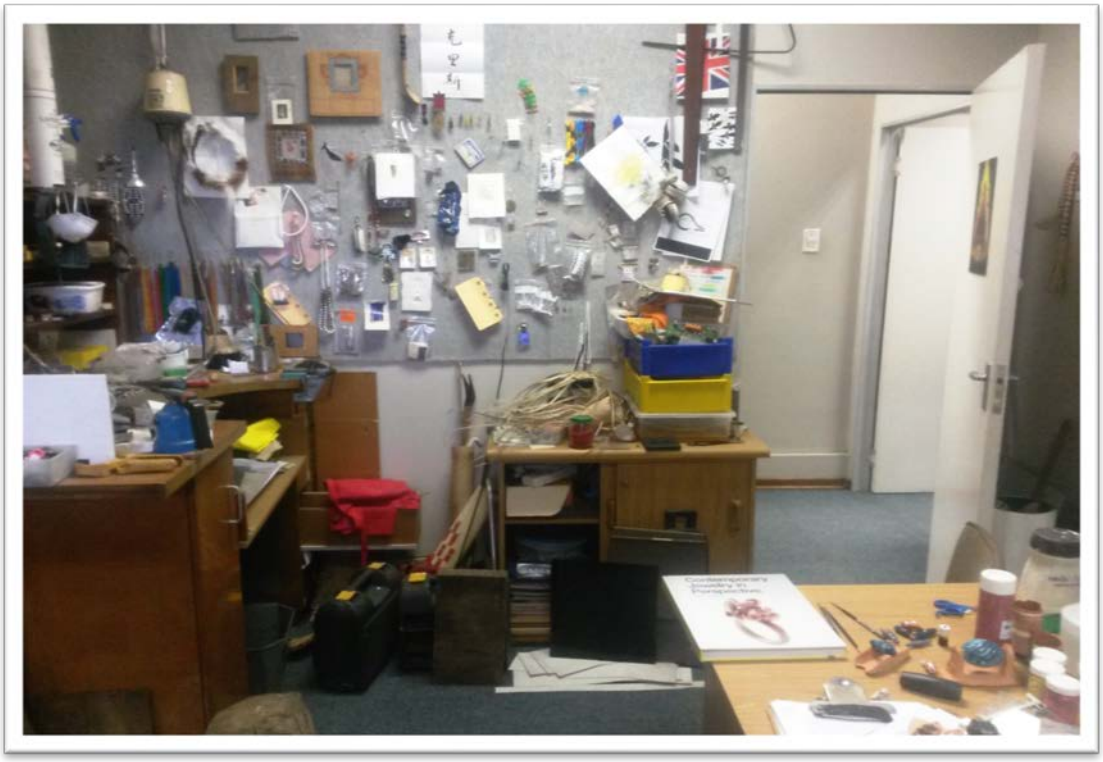


Figure 4: A collection of design reference materials on my office wall

Being in Durban, I am surrounded by traditional Zulu craft, such as beadwork, grass weaving, ceramics, woodcarving and tyre sandals. At the University of Technology where I lecture, the

aim is to develop jewellery designers that can produce uniquely South African jewellery. I try to achieve this by drawing on this craft heritage and encouraging a personal aesthetic sensibility within my students; one that is aware of the hegemony of Eurocentric values.

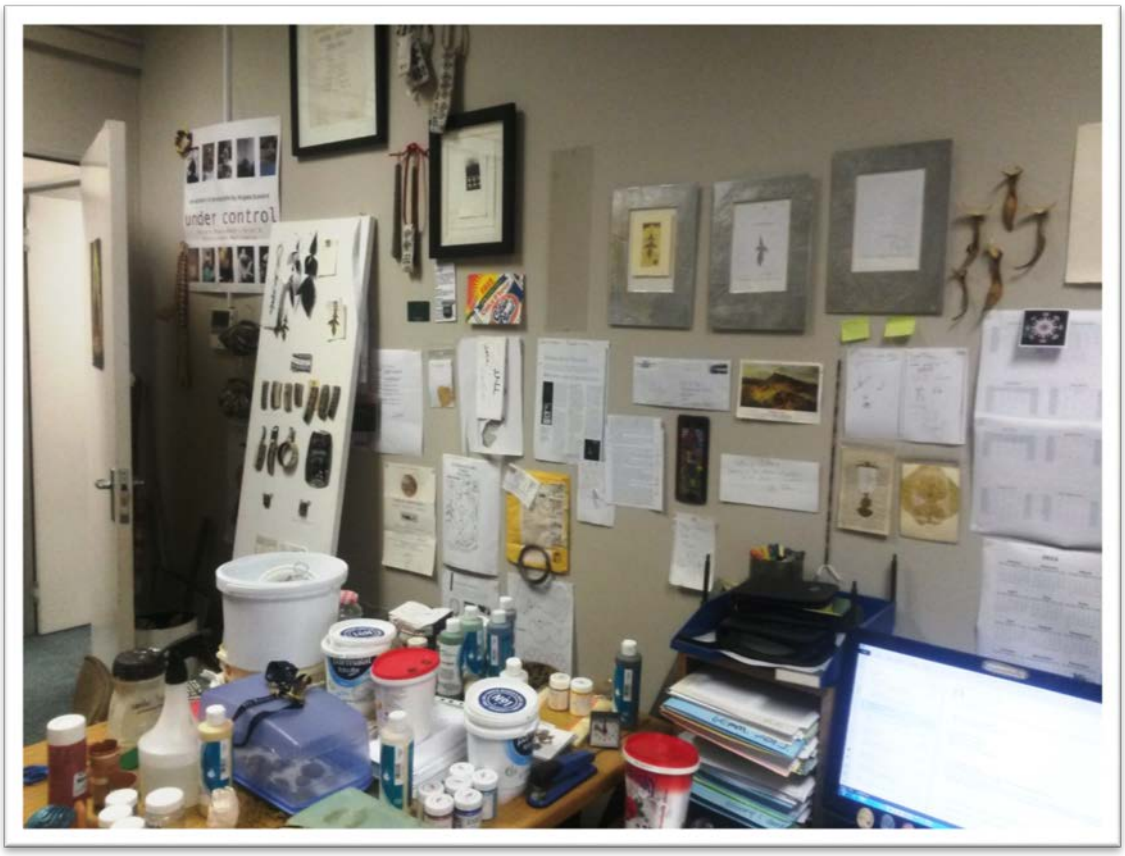


Figure 5: Another wall, showing artworks and reference materials

Mezzotint

Figure 7 shows one of my mezzotint prints which depicts a black and white pattern derived from one of the sandal strap patterns. The embossed chequerboard pattern underneath is based on the 'Maspala' pattern, which is discussed next. These prints are made by roughening a copper plate, with a steel rocker, so that it will hold ink to produce a black print, and then burnishing areas of the plate so that these will not hold ink, resulting in parts that will print white, as there is no ink there. This process is ideally suited to the geometric patterns I use as reference for my creative work. The printing plate is made to print black and the white is then 'revealed'; similar to the black rubber that is cut away in the sandal-making to reveal the white substrate.

I encountered the mezzotint process when I was a student and did not think that I would implement it one day. It was when I started looking for a way to use the black and white patterns, and focused on the way the white is 'revealed' that I remembered about mezzotints. It provided me with a way of utilising my metalworking and toolmaking skills in a non-jewellery

way. I sometimes get stuck creatively, because I cannot think of a piece of jewellery to make, even though I would like to. Pursuing the printmaking process provides me with another creative outlet.

Figure 6: The mezzotint print in situ on my office wall

I intend using the printing plates, after I have printed a numbered edition of about 10, to make brooches or pendants. To this end I have a number of plates that are in the process of being prepared for patterning and printing. But I have not made any jewellery from these plates yet.

The print is one of numerous objects on display on my office walls, and that I refer to during my creative work, see Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 7: The mezzotint close up

Maspala / samples

Maspala is a Zulu term for 'Municipal', referring to the chequerboard pattern on the caps of Municipal police. It is one of the patterns that Zulu craftsmen carve into the whitewall tyre straps that they use for making sandals (Figure 8) from recycled tyres.

I encountered the Zulu sandals during my explorations of the area around the University. A few blocks down the road is a complex where cattle hides are tanned and traditional Zulu craftsmen, all involved with the design and manufacture of traditional Zulu dress, have stalls from which they trade. With one of my Zulu students to act as interpreter I would go from stall to stall to see what the craftsmen are making and how they do it. One morning, when I collected

a tanned hide I had commissioned, I saw two young Zulu men carving patterns on long rubber strips. I recognised what they were doing; they were making the rubber straps from which the sandal straps are made. I ordered two straps from them, which I collected the following weekend. I realised these long patterned straps could be made into bangles quite easily and would be a step along the way towards making indigenous jewellery.

Figure 8: A traditional Zulu sandal made from recycled car tyres

I made a number of bangles, which I sold at a local craft market. A few weeks later an overseas buyer approached me, wanting to know how big an order of bangles I could guarantee. I went back to the complex where I had ordered the two straps, but the young men had gone 'back to the farm'. I started searching for white wall tyre to recycle and other Zulu sandal makers. After a few weeks of searching I had to let the buyer know that, in fact, I could not guarantee any bangles.

A few months later, I became involved in a craft research project, and my newly appointed research assistant, on hearing about my interest in the sandals, introduced me to Mr Dlamini, a sandal maker that lived a few hundred yards away from him. I could not revive the bangle order, but was introduced to the world of the 'izimbadada', which is what the sandals are called, after the sound that that they make when walking.

I collected numerous off-cuts of the various patterns whenever I visited Mr Dlamini, the traditional sandal maker, which I then displayed in my office as inspiration for future work (figure 9). This is amongst all the other design reference material on display.

Figure 9: Off cuts from the patterned rubber strips, amongst other reference material

Rock rock, 123, 123. / or 1 ... 2, rock rock rock, back side close

These rhymes arose in my mind when I contemplated the mezzotint rocker, and the need to perform the poem. I am starting to realise that the various aspects of my life; my interests and activities, are all intertwined, as I suppose, they should be.

These are the rhythms of the Jive and the Tango as called out by my ballroom teacher during our dancing lessons. The Jive has become our favourite dance; it was too fast for us, but now, having mastered the basic steps, we find it a dance that allows us to get carried away by the music. The Tango intrigues us; we saw the Argentinian tango being danced and it feels like the dance I wish to master. *It is my ballroom goal.*

We started dancing as an activity to enrich our relationship and it is not always easy, but helps with revealing dynamics within our relationship. It is as if I have become aware of the dance-of-life that we are negotiating. Part of the negotiation is to make sure that our weekly routines are coordinated, and I realise that, now that I am older, I have a need for certain anchors in my week, around which I organise the rest of my life. I feel the need to have certainties around which I live. *Maybe I'm just feeling old.*

Rocker/rocking

The rocker was made from an old file (see Figure 10). I cut the bottom section with the tang (the bit that goes into the handle) off, forged it flat and sharp, filed the little teeth in, and then hardened and tempered it so it would be a tool that lasts several years. It is an intriguing object to hold, with a comfortable weight and an interesting twist on the handle, which serves no purpose. Then again, the whole object's purpose is obscure to someone that is not familiar with the mezzotint process.

Figure 10: A mezzotint rocker, made from an old file

I collect old tools made from carbon steel, so that I can use the steel to make punches, chisels and, in this case, a rocker. Having said that, I collect all sorts of materials that might come in handy in the creative production of jewellery and other artefacts. I collect foil chocolate wrappers, interesting and useful bits of wood, glass beads, empty flour packets, empty

aluminium cans, and lately, empty plastic milk bottles, as they are made from high-density polyethylene (HDPE), which seems relatively easy to recycle and has interesting tactile qualities, *and might be useful for making jewellery?*

The rocking motion used to raise the burr is quite tiring and meditative. According to the lecturer that taught me, the plate has to be rocked in 32 directions to produce a solid deep black print. The number 32 has stuck with me, and sounds quite professional, which I suppose, is what an aspiring art student wants to sound like. When rocking the plate, 32 directions become a muddle, and about 20 directions cause the right amount of burr anyway.

I seem to appreciate this amount of work, and the effect it achieves, *now that I am older*. I wonder whether I should bother with imparting this appreciation to my students. I sometimes get the feeling they are bemused by my willingness to do all that extra work for an effect that is not quite so noticeable.

Scraper/burnish

The burrs that were raised by the rocker are removed with a triangular scraper, and the scraped areas are then polished smooth with a burnisher. I make my own scrapers and burnishers from broken drill bits (all the old, broken tools I collect, remember?) If I could encourage the students to make and use burnishers, we might be able to address the hegemony of a polished and clean surface. It seems to be one of the aims of current commercial jewellery; to be as shiny as possible. This shininess obscures the fact that the design is very similar to most of the other pieces of jewellery in the same showcase.

Such a shiny and polished surface on a jewel is not natural: it starts showing wear as soon as it is worn and then acquires the patina of use. *But maybe that is what a piece of jewellery offers – a new beginning.*

Jewellery that is handmade is often characterised by slight imperfections; it shows another person was involved in the making of the piece. There are so many other types of surface finishes that can be imparted to a piece of jewellery, *once the hegemony of the polished surface is tackled.*

Plate with natural edges / what it looks like is what it looks like

I made the copper plate used for the mezzotints. This required me to melt copper scraps into an ingot that I then rolled flat to produce the sheet. The edges of this sheet are not perfectly straight (Figure 11), but it suits me. At the beginning of a jewellery manufacture programme the emphasis is on becoming skilled at using the various jewellery tools and techniques. The

technical exercises are aimed at developing goldsmithing skills, and usually culminate in objects that are straight or square or ‘perfect’ in a technical way.

When I was an undergraduate jewellery design student I continually clashed with my lecturers regarding their insistence on ‘perfection’. I became aware of the hegemony of this quest for apparent flawlessness. I found it impeded playfulness and exploration and I therefore started gravitating towards a more natural and organic aesthetic. I began searching for ways to encourage apparent imperfection in my creative work. After a number of years, I feel I have acquired the mind-set and level of skills that allows me to work spontaneously and to acknowledge serendipity in its many guises.

My performance of the poem at SAERA followed this approach. I gave it some thought and established a general outline of what I would do, but then I performed it off the cuff and made things up as I progressed; I improvised, knowing that what was going to happen would turn out to be fine.

Figure 11: Copper plates, on either side of a silver plate, all with 'natural' edges

DISCOVERIES AND CONCLUSION

It has become apparent to me that I have misjudged what constitutes a ‘useful’ visual journal. I

was under the impression that the visual journal (or reflective sketchbook) plays a crucial role in the creative design process. However, on examining the circumstances that surrounded the generation of my creative poetic performance, I realised that the idea for the poem was generated while I was seated in my office, surrounded by the various artefacts on my office walls, not from my visual journal. These artefacts included the mezzotints and patterned strips of rubber that the form of the poem and the nature of the performance was based on.

The types of material that played a role in the development of my creative practice were of an explicit, and of a tacit nature. The explicit materials included objects I had made and found, and digital images on my phone and computer. The tacit materials were memories, attitudes I had developed over a number of years, and proficiencies I had acquired through practice.

I have become aware that I do not reflect in my visual journal; I use it to capture ideas I have and plans I make. If there are reflections, they deal with pedagogical implications, not my creative work. I do, however, use my journal to facilitate discussions with colleagues and students.

When I examined my own creative process, I noticed I had relied on a visual journal only when I planned the shape of the poem for my poetic performance. The inspiration for the poem and its performance came from the collection of artefacts in my office/studio, and tacit knowledge that related to my technical skills, social life and aesthetic philosophy. I now realise it is not possible to capture all these sources of inspiration in a visual journal.

The visual journal I expect from my students does have a role to play, albeit a pedagogical role, not a creative role as such. In future, I would still require students to document their process and record sources of interest that might inspire and develop ideas, but the journal would primarily function as a prompt for conversations that reflect on their development as creative designers.

I made sense of my creative journaling practice in two ways; by doing it with my students in a manufactured situation and doing it by myself for myself. It was only after the second incident that the true nature of my creative journaling made itself manifest. During the initial journaling activity; the art exhibition and the associated expected journaling, I was focused on what the students were doing. After the second creative activity; the poetic performance, I examined my own creative process, and where the impetus came from, and realised the extent to which I did not rely on a visual journal. I examined my own propensity for visual journaling only when I wrote this article.

It was my interest in the border between my creative practice and the inherent pedagogic

implications in what I would unearth, that led to this back and forth gaze, or the shift between the 'ethnographic *wide-angle lens'* (Ellis and Bochner 2003, quoted in Mitchell 2016) and the inward look.

The influence of positionality manifested when my roles changed from director to performer (Mitchell 2016). My perception of what influences creative practice shifted when I changed from a co-producer/director for the art exhibition to a performer of a pattern poem at SAERA. In addition, this exploration raised issues regarding the journaling process when being creative, as well as the impact I have on the creative development of my students.

I therefore find myself responding to Mitchell's (2016, 186) call to arms in 'recognising the place of looking-inward stories in influencing the wide-angle lens'. I recognise the value of examining the nature of my own creative practice, and how it could influence the creative development of my students.

NOTE

1. When blogging, one can add a tag/label to the post to categorise it. All the tags show as a cloud of words in the side bar of the blog, and the more often a specific tag is used, the larger the word representing that tag grows, showing the frequency of usage.
2. A mezzotint is a type of print that is produced by roughening a metal plate mechanically, then scraping and polishing the surface to reproduce areas of light and shade. It is then inked up and printed on to paper (see Figure 6).
3. I have coined these two terms to show the difference between the two selves that are manifesting. The *Guiding self* shows a denotative self and the *Seeking self* a connotative self. These terms are based on Riggins' (1994) categories of 'mapping' and 'referencing' information.

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