

# Creative Articulation

## **Suzanne Vesty**

**M.F.A., M. App. Sci.SE (Distinction), Dip. Drama, Post-Grad. Dip. Tchg, Mem. ANZATA, A.Th.R., Registered Celebrant, Civil Union Celebrant.**

**Creative Articulation - the act of creating, expressing and communicating with intent, generates meaning, a sense of purpose and fulfilment in life**

***Spark Studio, a creative space for adults with disabilities, has implemented a pilot programme in visual arts education and creative expression blending art making methodologies with group and person centred art therapy. Suzanne is manager and senior tutor at Spark Studio.***

## **An Outline to Spark Studio**

Spark Studio is a creative space for adults with various disabilities. We are based in a small studio within the precincts of a central-suburban park in Auckland. The concept of a creative space for artists with disabilities was conceived by Jeannette Baalbergen in 1996. In 2000 a charitable trust was formed under the name of Panacea Arts; the trading name of Spark Studio was established in 2006.

Our current team at Spark Studio consists of four arts facilitators, our administration team and myself as studio manager and senior tutor. As a studio team we collectively hold bachelor and masters degrees in fine art, art therapy, social ecology and art education - one tutor is an experienced health worker and two of us are registered art therapists.

We have around fifty-five people that attend our sessions, most of whom are adults. They have disabilities such as cerebral palsy, autism, Down's Syndrome, brain injury and epilepsy. Some people are deaf, some are virtually blind - many have multiple and complex disabilities. They come from all over Auckland; they live in institutions or with their families or in some instances, independently in their own residences. Many of them are in wheel chairs and rely solely on mobility vans for transport to and from class. Several students are accompanied by one or as in a number of instances, two caregivers.

## **The nature and circumstance of our students**

Constant and common to all our students is a passion to make art. Some students have a cognitive, conscious recognition of this passion; they are intellectually motivated to express themselves through their art medium; others are motivated more from an emotional, intuitive sense; they have a sentient and tactile response to art materials and the creating of form. They may have a minimal *apparent* intellectual understanding of the ideas they are expressing but are absorbed in their creative process and determined in their choice of content.

There are also people for whom it is difficult to originate or extend ideas and who require guidance from tutors. Or whose physical disability is such that they are unable to manipulate tools without assistance. Each of our students has a unique circumstance; tutors give careful consideration in identifying the way of learning that is most appropriate and generative for the individual. As with all artists, they have a particular rhythm - a style and unique way of doing things; this unique expression is acknowledged and fostered through the provision of selected materials and resources.

Obviously, they also have particular personalities and behavioural patterns, some quite eccentric and demanding; all of which contribute to the complexity of their learning requirements and the dynamics of the studio life. The importance of a sensitive, appropriate response from staff to their physical, emotional and psychological needs is imperative.

Whatever their capabilities, most people are enthusiastic and self motivated in their work. They very much enjoy being part of a creative community and being in the studio environment. Attending their regular session provides a stabilising, creative component to their weekly routine; they mostly settle quickly to their work and become immersed in expressing their experience and perceptions through their art.

### **Sense of well being and self identity**

We surmise that being supported and assisted in their creative activity is crucial to our students sense of identity and well being; expressing themselves through art forms provides self reflection, a way of sorting through and resolving ideas, of giving voice - or *articulation* - to their experience in a way and to a degree that is other wise not possible for them. I have often heard people say such things as "I would be lost with out my art class.....".

In our context, the nature and degree of disability obviously influences the cognitive ability of people to be aware of the significance of their creative endeavour; as previously mentioned, for some it can be more of a non-conscious process or deeply habitual; many are inspired by their emotional experience and therefore work with what feels right. On the other hand it is true that other people are very aware of the importance of their creative expression and are quite considered in what it is they wish to create; they may research ideas, gather resources, discuss with the tutors possible directions or pose technical queries. This is often the case of students with cerebral palsy who are regularly intellectually intelligent and alert; however they often have severe physical limitations and challenges with verbal expression.

In a wider context, art making itself challenges the artist to seek through the mediumship of physical materials a 'finer resolution' of that which is living within their self in regard to personal experience and perception – and the world about them. This is common to all

human beings in their desire to seek meaningful connection with others in some way or another. Creative process and expression through creative forms provides a direct 'contactability' of the interior world; it enables people to connect and be in relationship with their self. *Who am I? What am I? What is my place in life? What do I think and feel and experience? What is this need within me to express my condition - interior and exterior - to you; to articulate my experience and reality in life; to transpose this experience through the mediumship of imagery, colour and texture and a depth of visual form?* What inspires this creative impulse within the artist; that provides the motivation and intent to craft their perception through form? How does this position inform and inspire the wider culture? All of these concerns are of the nature of the creatives of the world; artists with disabilities are no different - they have however a greater complexity to contend with and obstacles to overcome.

Central in their passion for creative expression for our artists with disabilities, is an innate need to be involved in creative activity that lends some sense of purpose to their lives through which they can construct or arrive at an experience of meaning and personal achievement. The *process of articulation* in making art provides a vehicle through which the artist can examine, explore and engage with some deeper knowing of self - and life - and the wider world about. The art making itself provides the means by which connection and relationship is built; it synthesises the emotional, intellectual and intuitive processes through the mediumship of physical materials. This may be a deeply subjective process; it is not always a conscious one - and the power of the subjective to inspire and motivate and reveal through spontaneous emergence can be dominantly persuasive.

There is also the factor of simple enjoyment to consider. When I first began at Spark I was deeply moved by the ease and directness with which the artists involved themselves in their art making. It was very evident that there was an experience of joy - a simple and authentic pleasure in working creatively with their expression - and in being part of a creative community with which they could identify.

### **Development of 'teaching' modules**

***Spark Studio demonstrate techniques and explore elements of art making whilst constantly strengthening the notion of self identity and personal narrative through reflective learning processes, introduced themes and group-process.***

At the end of 2006 Spark Studio received an Innovation and Development Fund grant from the Tertiary Education Commission in New Zealand. The initial proposal (instigated by my predecessor), outlined a vision for a much larger project involving visual and performing arts. Spark Studio received only partial funding which was then allocated to the Video Diary

Project. This was centred on the video documentation of individual artists as a means of assessing their process and progress in learning. At the beginning of 2007 I was employed to undertake the video diary project.

Reading the outline of the original vision it was evident that a wider but more defined and in-depth scope was still possible - that the video diary project could record in effect the process, experience and learning outcomes of students involved in a comprehensive programme in visual art education. This would provide a concrete project to research and document and it would make a greater sense and application of the Video Diary Project.

This time was a significant transition for Spark Studio; changes on many levels were implemented. This included addressing administrative and management structures and studio procedures but most essentially it concerned the clarification, re-orientation and development of the purpose and nature of Spark's work.

### **Integrating arts education and self development**

Prior to this time the sessions predominantly concerned creative expression with arts facilitators working alongside artists offering advice or instruction on techniques. It was apparent that given the opportunity and resource, our people could be equipped with so much more; there was a naive and capable talent waiting to be informed and shaped into a more full resolution. This would also provide a more challenging and ultimately fulfilling creative activity with beneficial outcomes. Through a more considered approach to art making that was aligned with 'self inquiry' processes to initiate content and subject matter we could create a responsive form of arts education with self developmental outcomes.

Thus we began a process of introducing a more formal and deliberate approach to our art programmes placing a greater emphasis upon a progression of learning in visual arts education, couched in a self development focus without loss of - or minimalising - the importance of creative expression. We hold the view that the two aspects can equally contribute to a wholistic and integrative approach to art education - and in our context, is particularly suitable for people with disabilities. Everything that we implemented concerned the 'progression of learning' for individual students and the group as a collective - and was in response to the collective themes (introduced and emergent) in the group life and the psyches of individuals.

### **Attitudes to learning - processes of inquiry**

We took the approach that our people are very capable of learning despite their disability; we had real expectations of them to learn - and this has proved to be so. Many of them have had few positive learning experiences in their lives. By teaching elements of art making and by following a group centred process, we had our artists begin to consider many things that they

hadn't necessarily thought about before such as: *'why do we make art, why do we communicate through visual images? What is the content in our art? What are the ideas underpinning our images? What motivates and inspires us? If we make marks in a certain way, what do those marks express? Is this the meaning I wish to relay - or would I rather make a different kind of mark that more accurately expresses this thought or that emotion?'* And so on, constantly taking a line of inquiry to stimulate, coach and challenge new thinking - and to experience new ways of doing things.

Exposure to the notion of choice and possibility provided conceptual stimulation and gave access to more expansive ideas. Being equipped with a vocabulary of mark making, varied techniques, different methodologies and a greater variety and range of art mediums provided artists with greater skill and abilities. The expression of ideas and perceptions became more transparent; this greatly enhanced the potency, sensitivity and depth of the artists' works. The work that we developed in the teaching modules began to infiltrate into the open studio sessions and gradually the whole of the studios activities began to grow for the better.

### **Outline of visual arts learning modules**

#### **Video Diaries as Evaluation and Research**

Our Video Diary Project involved recording the process and progress of individual students on video DVD; we also documented the collective learning processes and teaching methodologies undertaken in the Visual Arts Focus Group.

The individual video diary recordings involved our video operator (Anna Rae, one of our art tutors who is a photographer) taking regular video recordings of each student and their work. Anna approached this task as an integrated, non-intrusive part of the general art making environment so students became very used to her presence and did not often 'play' to the camera ( a very tempting opportunity for some people with dramatic aspirations!).

The purpose of the video diaries was to regularly record the experience, process and progress made by the student in their work and in their experience within the studio environment both from a creative, educational and socially interactive perspective. Each artist's work and progress on the teaching module was edited and rendered onto a single DVD disc – this enabled us to easily keep progressive records of each student.

To adequately evaluate the learning and self-developmental progress of someone with disabilities is complex and requires a non conventional approach. The evaluation process must take into account that the person is often not able to write or express their experience fluently or verbally. In this research, video documentation provided a comprehensive and

transparent way to record and communicate the activities, challenges and achievements of the individual - and provided a means by which to evaluate their experience.

The Video Diaries also documented the collective learning processes of the group of students - and recorded the teaching methodologies, flow of content, styles of presentation and techniques employed - all valuable feedback for the teaching team.

We discovered through the pilot programme that this form of documentation is very demanding on resources - the sophistication of the technology and expertise required is extensive. To utilise this form of evaluation and recording method in an ongoing way is beyond our current resources and priorities.

However, we found that it has particular value as a teaching evaluation tool - and we will continue to document through video in a limited, more focused way. Perhaps in the end, art making and the art itself - the 'process and the product' - will provide the most authentic reflection and documentation of the progression and experience made by the artist.

### **Visual Arts Focus Group 2007**

As part of our pilot programme funded by the Tertiary Education Commission, we developed a module titled the Visual Arts Focus Group - this took the form of two, ten week modules, one in drawing - the other in painting.

Module One was titled: *'I tell my Story'- exploring personal symbol and imagery to express my experience of life in drawing.* This module introduced the students to a wide range of drawing techniques and drawing media, art vocabulary, elements of art making (such as volume, shading, tone, composition, mood, atmosphere, content and meaning) sensory awareness - how it relates to texture, pattern, the use of the imagination and the relation of emotion to expressive and evocative works.

Module Two was titled: *'Self in Symbolic Environment' - exploring personal identity in painting.* This module introduced students to a wide range of painting techniques, use of painting media, composition, understanding and applying colour (tones, tints, hues, etc) and personal narration through imagery, symbols and layered construction - all related to painting.

Both of these modules followed themes of a personal nature encouraging students to be more aware of their experience in life - to value their thoughts, feelings, imaginings and ideas - and to develop ways in which they could express this 'personal narration and world view' within various art forms. This approach assisted them to identify and express ideas that held greater meaning, producing more depth to their work - and it enabled them to develop a 'finer articulation'; they became more capable and proficient as visual artists.

Because of lack of funding we were not able to continue the same quality of programme for the Visual Arts Focus Group in 2008; we did not have the resources to provide the number of tutors nor have the additional time required for sufficient planning and preparation that the teaching modules require. We have however retained the majority of the group of students who completed VAFG 2007 within a two and half hour session and we continue to implement some of the group building elements. The group positively use this time to test out and explore further the learning they had in 2007; they continue to develop their ideas in painting and drawing, and they maintain their visual arts diary practise. Tutors come alongside and provide individual assistance as in the open studio sessions. We are continuing to seek funding for the Visual Arts Focus Group to resume its teaching programme in 2009.

### **Language through Art 2008**

In 2008 we were able to secure a further Innovation and Development Fund grant from the TEC. We developed another pilot programme titled Language through Art. Part of the conditions stipulated by TEC were that this programme was offered to a new group of students, that it had completely different content and subject matter and that we undertake a comparative study between all pilot programmes (Visual Arts Focus Group, Video Diary project and Language through Art). In addition we will hold an exhibition of the works at the end of term four and we will produce a publication on our work. At the time of this conference we have just begun our third term.

Language through Art explores language and imagery within the mediums of printmaking, papermaking and book making. Students are encouraged to express and interpret their experience through 'written' (mark-making) and oral expression. For our students who cannot speak or write this can be a revelational process as they explore notions of language and learn to convey their ideas and emotions through the making of marks.

They are encouraged to use their experience of life as content and to interpret their 'personal story' and extend their ideas through drawing, integrating these images with narration. Within the context of their capabilities, they explore the meaning within these life events - and communicate their understandings and experience within their image making.

They then reproduce their imagery through the various forms of print making. They are learning a variety of printmaking methods and techniques which are adapted to the physical circumstance of our students. The aesthetic and spontaneous processes of printmaking further add to the complexity of marks, tones and effects.

Students are introduced to - and explore the notion of - various forms of 'books' and are in the process of constructing individually crafted collations of their printed works.

Language of Art teaches many processes and mediums of art-making. The programme introduces students to mediums and modalities of paper-making, printmaking (mono-print, monotypes, collagraphs, engraving and lithographs), script and typography (script as an art form, mark making as communication), language (self-expression in prose), relationship between script and imagery and bookmaking (in the widest sense – ways to collate collections of printed works).

### **The Printed Image 2008**

The Printed Image is an addition to The Language of Art. It is offered to a further group of students most of whom have particularly complex disabilities. It focuses on learning a variety of processes in printmaking. The technical aspects of printmaking involve considerable handling of materials and tools. For our high need students this course is stimulating and challenging as they learn and are assisted to manipulate the various materials and procedures. Caregivers accompany them and become an active part of the session, supporting their clients in their art making under the direction and assistance of tutors.

This programme also includes elements of drawing in relation to print making: techniques and design—components in composition, colour, pattern and texture. As printmaking fundamentally concerns the reproduction of images through mark making and layered effect, drawing is an important skill.

In printmaking the artist is able to control what results in the process to a certain degree; beyond that, there is an element that is not predictable. The textures and patterns that spontaneously occur in the process of the plate being inked and printed are a unique and delightful aspect. Students become intrigued by the ‘magical’ appearance of marks, toning or layers of images that they did not necessarily plan.

The theme concerns exploring nature based motif and cultural and personal motif. Students are introduced to and learn about different cultural influences – and think about their personal sense of identity and how that translates to motif. The content in this programme is less in depth than LTA in terms of personal themes; for this group of students the challenge is learning new techniques, art vocabulary and grasping elements of art making. For many of them it concerns more an exploration of mark-making, working with challenging materials and tools (printing inks, knives, etching tools) and discovering all that emerges from these activities.

This programme introduces students to: mono-print, monotypes, collagraphs, stenciling, marbling, stamping, engraving and lithographs.

### **Open Studio Sessions**

In addition to our teaching modules we have retained two open studio sessions; in this context artists are provided with art materials and they make art in a self directed fashion. Tutors come alongside people and assist the artists in ways that are appropriate to that individual - they make suggestions and interventions as necessary or appropriate. On these sessions the tutor -student ratio is much lower so less time can be spent with each person. The open sessions do not have the same funding or resources as the learning modules. It is funding from the Tertiary Education Commission that has enabled the development of our new programmes; funding for our open sessions comes from community grants supplemented by the minimal fees that artists pay.

### **Future Programmes**

Spark Studio's long term goal is to become a centre of learning for adults with disabilities, offering a full programme of integrated, progressive learning modules. Students would begin with the Visual Arts Focus Group which provides them with a substantial grounding in drawing and painting; from there they could go into Language through Art, or the Printed Image – or other especially focused modules in such areas as sculpture and clay work.

There would be more advanced levels in drawing and painting so there is the opportunity for students to continue to learn and truly progress their work; possibly we would develop studio space for the development of individual art practise where particularly skilled and able students were given further opportunity to progress under 'supervision'. We would also likely retain the open studio sessions for those people more suited to this less structured format but would increase the tutor - student ratio.

All of these programmes would be grounded in a self developmental orientation with an emphasis on creative expression; in the end it is the development of creative thinking and creative activity that brings about an enriched quality of life, which fosters self esteem and produces a sense of achievement all crucial to the wellbeing of our people.

### **Group Dynamics**

Throughout all our programmes and in our open studio sessions we seek to maintain the group dynamic in a healthy and enlivened state; as in any group context, the social fabric of our groups is very important. Students are encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings with one another - and to be responsive to one another in respectful ways. Many of our people are living in existent communities - so they have a history and established dynamic with one another that is not always positive. Like any group they have personality clashes although most often this does not impinge on their art making activities.

We hold regular art critique sessions and encourage students to share their ideas concerning their work - and to listen to and be interested in others talking of their work. It is evident that our students relish this kind of group connection; to have the opportunity to be supported and facilitated in personal sharing is a rare and valued experience for them. The quality of group relationships grows slowly as the modules progress. In the Visual Arts Group which has been together now for eighteen months, the positive and harmonious group conception is palpable.

### **Special requirements in working with students with disabilities**

In this context, student's basic individual needs are time consuming – for example, many require assistance to place on their art smocks, to be supplied and maintained with art materials throughout the session (water bowls changed, brushes washed - students often cannot do these tasks for themselves), to have assistance to manipulate tools – and there are the more personal provisions such as being aided to go to the toilet and to drink.

Each student's learning needs requires careful, well thought-through assessment and planning – including time to work intuitively and experiment and to develop processes of learning that are effective, responsive and appropriate. As a team we are constantly challenged to develop innovative ways to deliver material that can be comprehended and implemented by our students; we seek a constant balance between the nature and effects of students' disability and the potential they have as creative learners. We work as a teaching team, operating collaboratively and co-operatively. All these things considered, generous and regular time is required for team reflection and discussion.

All our teaching modules require a high tutor student ratio. In our pilot programmes funded by TEC we have four tutors to ten students – plus myself as senior tutor / studio manager (it is my role to oversee the programmes, supervise the tutors and undertake the research documentation). This ratio is highly necessary to ensure we maintain the quality of the programmes and achieve our outcomes. Even so we still have a need for more time, more resources and more staff hours to accomplish all that we wish.

### **Orientation of our practise**

Our approach at Spark Studio concerns simultaneously holding two points; one of a definite learning intent and therefore the preparation of considered curriculum content; and the other concerning the specific needs and natures of each person – and that of the group collective; we utilise inquiry processes that enable us to identify and respond to the learning edge of the group. Our work is essentially based in experientially centred processes; theory informs what we do but it is the active demonstration and practice of methodologies or ideas that governs our way of working.

### **Content of self identity - personal narration**

Each teaching module has a specific content - a theme concerning self identity around which the sessions orientate. For example in Language through Art we began with an inquiry into 'story': "*what were your first experiences or memories of storytelling?*" Many of our people do not read so it is likely they will have absorbed information, been impressed by film or television or caught snippets of stories from the people and environment around them. The inquiry process concerned finding out what form of storytelling students first engaged with in their lives; what were their experiences and first impressions; what were the forms that they drew stories from? Then the task was (and continues to be) to assist them with their individual inquiry, deepening their engagement and warm-up to their own 'tale'.

It is important not to get caught into the notion that stories must have a beginning, middle and an end. For many students they may be more like cameos of experience, fleeting moments and insights - sensory and intellectual data that is crucial to the visual artist, who through their art creates the visual prose or poetry of that experience.

These themes of self identity become extremely individual and build over the weeks - they end abruptly or they trail away - they resolve neatly - or have no resolution at all. They are lent a life and independence within the 'landscape of imagery'. The individual themes feed in to the collective - mirroring or complementing one another. Some students don't have easily accessed stories to tell but have more a series of perceptions and abstractions from their daily experience. All of it magically translates into imagery or mark making of some kind - narrative impressions that hold meaning for the artist and that produce intrigue and satisfaction for the viewer.

### **Promoting a sense of meaning through creative articulation**

Working with creative processes that invoke inquiry into the underlying purpose in subject matter, provides meaning; meaning that might be multi-dimensional and complex – or simple and straightforward. A sense of meaning assists students to be inspired and enthused about learning and fosters ways for students to make personal connections; learning is made relevant to their life experience.

People with disabilities have extraordinary tales to tell - to have a 'creative voice' is crucial. They are regularly invisible in our society - under resourced, under acknowledged, deemed to be outside of regular people's experience. Creative expression has much to offer. Equipping people for whom it is impossible to communicate in usual ways to communicate their experience through art, is life transforming. It is not about providing people with art education

or art therapy as such - it is about their having a means and developed facility through which they can articulate whatever it is within them, that has them find meaning, connection and placement in the world. *Creative articulation* gives form to this meaning - it shapes it and seasons it - and in so doing further develops a sense of identity and purpose in life.

The *process of creative articulation* is in itself the art and the therapy. The more conscious or absolutely a person stands in 'their place of making' - and the more transparent and articulate they become with their perceptions of life and all that they seek to impart - the more complete they become; the more fulfilled. It can be intellectually understood or emotionally or sentiently experienced. Creativity and its expression produce the momentum and catalysts for growth. When something is 'articulated' we have a sense of something being purposefully crafted - intentionally considered. This is the *creative nature* – the gift that the artists of the world offer to the collective psyche and to the development of global and universal cultures.

As the learning processes progress in our modules, the students become more sensitive, perceptive and considered in their approach and more aware of the meaning within their work. They explore different ways in which to express those ideas, feelings and experience of life - and so their ability to 'articulate their creative intent' is 'fine honed'; they grow and develop as people and become empowered by their capacities and capabilities as artists. They also become much more aware of what it is they think and feel - more knowing and expressive of their experience. Their defences shift and change, dissemble somewhat; it is not always a comfortable passage or one that arrives at a neat and tidy conclusion. It can and does embrace chaos.

### **Integrative education that is inclusive of mind, body and spirit**

In all contexts, for all peoples, quality learning processes are not about placing a primary emphasis on didactic teaching or the absorption of theory – it is about practise – the practical working through of points of learning, appropriately informed by relevant theory. It is about wholistic and integrated processes that are inclusive of the mind, body and spirit. Quality learning is about being informed by the experience and reality of life - of gaining wisdom and knowledge through 'living in the experience'; and living in congruent relationship to the intelligence within our intellectual, emotional and bodily self. And it is about having the courage and wildness of heart to explore and experiment and stand on a most eclectic and eccentric edge; to become a 'radical' - to go to the roots of life - and ideas - and re-examine. In this way, the thrill of exploration and discovery, of simple play and spontaneous experimentation fosters true creativity in people; they grow and develop - and become knowledgeable - and are enabled to contribute with worth, within wider society.

These same factors apply for students with disabilities yet so little enlivened education is available for them. Wider society has too few expectations, too little awareness of the

disability sector. We forget that people with disabilities are feeling, thinking conscious human beings who are enormously challenged to find a voice and a validated place to stand - and who have an absolute right to these things.

### **Visual arts education through creative processes - its wider application**

***Creativity as a means by which all people and communities can generate, explore and bring about personal and societal change.***

#### **Further application of programmes**

We have spent the last eighteen months developing our programmes at Spark Studio. In the near future we will review and apply our research and consolidate our learning. What is already evident is that this material in 'visual arts education through creative processes' is not only an important contribution to education within the disability sector but has the potential for a much wider application. We have had interest expressed in our programmes as a possible format for work in prisons. There are many contexts where we surmise it would reside with great effect and outcome; youth at risk, within mental health services, community arts - for adolescents who are not aligned with traditional forms of art education and assessment, etcetera.

#### **Creativity in its wider application**

Creativity is fundamentally central in all transformative change. It matters not what the context, the people, the culture. It is the aesthetic and poetic notions of the world, the creative perceptions, the expression of ideas and feeling, the rendering and articulation of ideas - and the seeking of meaning and purpose - that raises and inspires the human spirit. Making art (in the widest sense) and engaging in creative process and activity, provides a means by which all human beings can come into a healthier, wholistic and integrated relationship with themselves and with life. It is the *creative nature* within us all in the end that will find the resolution for the way forward for humanity. It is the *creative nature* that yearns to speak, to touch, to understand; to seek, to discover, to test and inquire; and to imagine - and dream - and to inspire to new activity and new action. Creative process does not state or define outcomes; it does not premeditate - it synthesises the art and the science and in the process of *articulation* generates something that is of worth and contribution to society.

#### **Foot Note**

In this paper I have written about our work at Spark Studio. I have also expressed my personal philosophies gained from over thirty years experience working in many community settings, with many individuals and groups in creative centred self-developmental processes. My work as an artist (painting and drawing) greatly informs me. All of these experiences - including my studies - influence my work at Spark Studio and subsequently the direction that Spark has taken.

Also, I feel very fortunate for the quality of people who constitute our team; they are skilled and experienced; they are artists and 'creatives'. They are also most essentially people who are sensitive and aware - and who have compassion. We have a great administration team and a supportive and informative board. It is these things that are assisting Spark Studio to grow.

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