



School of Art, Architecture and Design

# **The Dyslexic Sublime: Exploring the Art-Making Process of Dyslexic Artists through the Lens of the Sublime**

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## Abstract

The connection between art and the Sublime, encompassing concepts like transcendence and the duality of pain and pleasure, is well-established. These formless and invisible concepts can be represented through art, yet research primarily focuses on renowned artists, with limited exploration into how sublime concepts manifest in the art-making process of dyslexic artists.

This practice-based research investigates how dyslexic artists navigate their experiences of disempowerment and marginalisation through the lens of sublimity in their art. It examines the intersection of dyslexia, creativity, and the Sublime, providing insights into the unique artistic practices and experiences of dyslexic individuals. The study employs arts-based research techniques, including workshops, exemplary works and interviews with dyslexic artists, to explore their lived experiences and art-making processes within the framework of the Sublime. This approach is complemented by my own artwork, documented through video diaries and reflexive practice. The research culminates in an exhibition that highlights the use of diverse media in art, that explore the concept of the Sublime.

Rich narratives and empirical evidence reveal how dyslexic differences contribute unexpected elements to artmaking, evoking awe and wonder. Dyslexic artists demonstrate heightened sensitivity to sensory stimuli, creative problem-solving skills and unconventional thinking, which drive innovation and expand traditional artistic boundaries.

The concept of the Dyslexic Sublime emerges as a guiding principle, encapsulating the unique perspectives and creative processes of dyslexic artists. This concept highlights strengths such as holistic and divergent thinking, grounded in the lived experiences of dyslexic individuals, providing a framework for understanding diverse artistic practices

within neurodiversity. Central to the Dyslexic Sublime is the notion of otherness, resonating with the Sublime's themes of unreachability and transcendence. The art-making process reflects a journey of exploration and flow states akin to the Sublime's ambiguity. Dyslexic artists' heightened empathy and visual-spatial perception further underscore the transformative potential of imagination in art.

This study offers practical implications for education and therapeutic interventions, promoting an inclusive approach that empowers dyslexic individuals to leverage their unique strengths in art, thereby fostering a broader dialogue on creativity and neurodiversity.

**Keywords:**

Art, Sublime, Dyslexia, Practice-based research, Transcendence

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## **Author's Declaration**

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared, the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted. All material in this thesis is original and is the author's own work.

## Introduction

### A. Background and Rationale

Before undertaking doctoral study and driven by an earnest desire to embark on a more profound exploration of the art-making process, I immersed myself in academic literature to develop a well-grounded research proposal. As this intellectual pursuit evolved and through introspection, I began to unravel the intentions behind the art I make. After completing a master's in fine art in 2018, I wished to explore the art-making process further. This prompted me to look inward at why I do what I do in terms of making art. Gradually and in part due to feedback from interviews and numerous successive research proposal applications to study at the doctoral level, I began to see that my work leaned towards the area in the arts known as the Sublime. Further still and oddly retrospectively, I began to explore how my identified dyslexia has influenced my artmaking over the years. This ultimately formulated my accepted research proposal for a PhD in Art.

As a researcher with lived experience of dyslexia, I acknowledge the potential for research bias. My positionality is explored in detail in Chapter I, where I critically examine this standpoint, and the methodologies used to mitigate this. The following thesis adopts a reflexive approach to ensure transparency in how my personal experience shapes the research process. To provide context, I begin by outlining neurodivergence.

Neurodivergence spans a range of cognitive differences including dyslexia, ADHD, autism and dyspraxia, each of these have distinct characteristics influencing perception: thinking and creativity (Doyle, 2024). Dyslexia, of which will often coexist with other neurological differences, is predominantly associated with difficulties in reading and writing, but over time, has become apparent of associated strengths in visual-spatial perception and holistic thinking, qualities that are particularly useful within the field of art and design (Eide and Eide, 2011, 2023).

According to the American Psychiatric Association, the term neurodivergence concerns variations in brain functionality and behavioural traits that are considered to be a normal variation in the human population (Shah et al., 2022). Neurodevelopment, on the contrary, involves processes that generate, shape and reshape the nervous system from the earliest stages of development through to adulthood (News-Medical.net, 2025).

For the purpose of this study and though there is debate as to the framing of dyslexia, I will identify dyslexia as a neurodivergent category, which also include ADHD et cetera. It is within this range that patterns might emerge in relation to artistic practice (Hoogman et al., 2020; Howard, 2021; Roth, 2020). For clarification purpose in relation to the specific traits attributable to dyslexia, it is worthwhile looking at differences within other neurodivergences. For example, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), often characterised by symptoms of inability to focus, overactivity and impulsiveness, influencing cognitive processing and behaviour (Mörstedt et al., 2015). Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), often associated with challenges in social interactions, communication and repetitive behaviours, which might also be accompanied by unique strengths in areas such as pattern recognition and attention to detail (Baron-Cohen et al., 2009). Developmental coordination disorder (DCD), often referred to as dyspraxia, affecting motor coordination, of which impacts physical ability (Purcell et al., 2024). It is important to state, this is not an exhaustive list of neurodivergent conditions and the differences pointed out on ADHD, ASD and DCD are that of a broad overview, based on observed patterns in studies. Moreover, neurodivergence is a complex field and one that is continuously developing and evolving for the foreseeable future (Shah et al., 2022; Macroq, 2020).

Similarly, the more specific field of dyslexia is also in constant development. Therefore, this research will be based on the current terminology used. In **Chapter II**, I will explore how patterns emerge in relation to artistic practice among dyslexic artists. As will be discussed throughout this thesis, I have observed a link with the Sublime in relation to the practice of these artists.

## B. Research Questions

1. What insights can be found by establishing an artmaking process that focuses on the experience of dyslexia, specifically in relation to visual-spatial perception?
2. Through such process and dialogue with other dyslexic artists, how does the experience of discrimination, stigmatisation and marginalisation shape artmaking by dyslexic artists, viewed from the perspective of transcendence and otherness?
3. How can concepts such as transcendence and otherness provide new insights into notions of the sublime and how might this understanding inform and inspire artistic practices?

## C. Gaps in Knowledge

I have found a dearth of literature addressing the contributions and experiences of dyslexic artists. There are numerous studies on dyslexia in relation to the written and spoken word (Adubasim, 2018; Shaywitz and Shaywitz, 2003; Mortimore et al., 2006). Similarly, many studies demonstrate that individuals with dyslexia have a greater inclination towards creativity (Chakravarty, 2009; Houghton, 2021; Šimčíková, 2018). However, research on dyslexia in relation to the visual image and the arts is scarce: specifically, studies that explore the differences in perception among dyslexic artists when making art have not been sufficiently investigated. Furthermore, there is an ongoing debate of the link between creativity and dyslexia, whether this is anecdotal or compensational.

The work of professor of neuroscience John Stein, a leader in the field of dyslexia at Oxford University, along with his research on the magnocellular theory and eye differences in dyslexia, provides valuable insights that form the basis of this thesis. The magnocellular pathway is the part of the visual system made up of large, fast-conducting neurons specialised in the detection of movement, low contrast and rapid changes, whereas the parvocellular

pathway comprises smaller, slower neurons specialised in fine detail and the discrimination of colour (Stein and Walsh, 1997; Stein, 2001; Stein, 2014; Stein, 2022). Stein's research has enabled a more concrete study into the impact of dyslexia on artistic perception. His theory suggests that impairments in the magnocellular visual pathway contribute to difficulties in processing visual information, which affects reading and writing (Stein, 2001). Furthermore, some studies indicate that parvocellular function may be enhanced, conferring superior sensitivity to fine detail and colour (Everatt, Smythe & Reid, 1999; von Karolyi et al., 2003). Stein argues this dysfunction in visual processing may also enhance certain visual-spatial abilities, leading to strengths in areas like artistic perception and creativity (Stein, 2021). Stein's work on the neural basis of dyslexia will be elaborated upon throughout this thesis, particularly in **Chapters II and III**, where I will further explore the link between dyslexia and creativity, as well as the neurological mechanisms underpinning these cognitive strengths.

A further review of related literature reveals limited research into the relationship between dyslexia and the Sublime, albeit for an article by Schehr (1992) entitled *Balzac's Dyslexia*. The article explores the intersection of dyslexia and the Sublime in the works of Honoré de Balzac, the renowned French novelist and playwright. The paper suggests that Balzac uses what we now know as dyslexia as a metaphor for perceiving the world differently, echoing the Sublime's concept of experiencing realities beyond immediate comprehension (Schehr, 1992).

While notions of the Sublime have been studied extensively throughout history from ancient Greek philosophy, as discussed in **Chapter IV**, in 1st century CE and developed later in the eighteenth century and the Romantic period, through to contemporary contributions in Postmodern theory and beyond (Heath, 1999; Doran, 2015; Morley, 2010; Silverman, 2016), more recent studies have explored the Sublime through interdisciplinary perspectives, finding new applications of this concept (Arcangeli et al., 2020; Clewis et al., 2022; Reiter, 2023).

Reiter (p.38) states:

To truly understand the weight of the sublime, multidisciplinary research that engages with facets of psychology and sociology ought to be undertaken to study the effect these experiences have on human behaviour. While this work is of considerable size, its merit lies in the growth that can be gained on an individual and societal level from better utilising the Sublime.

While studies such as Reiter's (2023) contribute to the philosophical debate on the Sublime, focusing on cognitive and perceptual differences, it is crucial to clarify that dyslexia is not explicitly addressed in their work. The interdisciplinary approach employed by Reiter offers valuable insights into these areas through psychology and sociology. Similarly, Clewis et al. (2022) emphasises, "the sublime appears to be a topic of emerging interest in psychology" (p. 2). These authors agree that further interdisciplinary studies are needed in these areas of philosophy and psychology to build on this important field of knowledge. In **Chapter IV**, the Sublime will be explored more fully.

This research aims to bridge gaps in knowledge and connect our understanding of the impact on creative expression through art and perception, building upon existing knowledge of the Sublime. The concept of the Dyslexic Sublime focuses on the visual-spatial perception of dyslexic artists in dialogue with notions of otherness and transcendence. This concept serves both a framework to understand the work of dyslexic artists and a stimulus to inform new work. This is explored further in **Chapters IV, V, and VI**.

By examining how dyslexia influence perception and expression through art, we can uncover insights into the creative process and experiences of dyslexic artists. It is documented that dyslexia affects perception in various ways, such as the reversal of visual stimuli and the detection of patterns (Eide, 2011; West, 2017; Griggs, 2021), as explored in **Chapter III**. These differences in perception can significantly impact how dyslexic artists interpret and express the world around them.

Concomitantly, the Sublime, with its evocative and intense sensory and emotional responses, exemplified by Immanuel Kant's Mathematical and Dynamical Sublime (Kant,

1790/2008), as expounded upon in **Chapter IV**, offers a framework for exploring its impact on the work of dyslexic artists. However, it is important to note that dyslexia was not known during Kant's time. By linking dyslexia with the Sublime, I propose exploring the distinctive visual-spatial perceptual differences and creative approaches that dyslexic artists bring to the arts. Moreover, through an analysis of the Sublime within the context of dyslexia, one can further examine how dyslexic expression through art might challenge preconceived notions of dyslexia in relation to perception. Therefore, by exploring dyslexia and the Sublime, a contribution can be made to our understanding of artmaking among dyslexic artists. On this basis, we can discuss the sometimes-idiosyncratic perspectives and experiences of dyslexic artists, thereby highlighting their valuable contributions to the arts.

In broader terms, through the acknowledgment and celebration of these experiences, a more diverse and inclusive understanding of creativity and art can be fostered. This invites us to reconsider traditional norms, thereby expanding our appreciation for the diverse ways in which artists navigate the art-making process and communicate it in their work. I explore this further in **Chapters V and VI**.

#### **D. Gaps in Practice**

When examining the current practices in art by dyslexic artists and within the scope of this research, a gap emerges between the studies of dyslexia and perceptual variances within the realm of the Sublime, as will be expanded upon in **Chapter II**. While the contributions of dyslexic artists are intellectually stimulating and well-substantiated, there seems to be an opportunity for greater focus on introspection regarding their personal lived experiences of dyslexia. Exploring the connections between these experiences and the art they create, as well as the processes they undergo, may provide valuable insights.

As will be explored in **Chapter II**, some dyslexic artists seek to shed light on the linguistic differences linked to dyslexia, while others choose to look outside of their experience



of dyslexia. While these explorations offer profound perspectives of the dyslexic individual, there appears to be little evidence in the practice of dyslexic artists exploring the visual-spatial nuances in their work. There are some notable exceptions, such as the work of dyslexic artist and researcher Katherine Hewlett, who explores the thought process of dyslexic artists when making work and pioneering, ongoing research by Oona Rankin at the RCA, who investigates the strengths of the dyslexic artist when making art, both of whom will be discussed further in **Chapter II**. But there appears to be a gap in the practice of dyslexic artists on the Sublime, specifically in the making of art. This gap is explored explicitly in **Chapters IV and VI**.

Conversely, while acknowledging the complexities involved, the art documented in this research, encapsulated in artistic practice articulated in **Chapters V and VI**, emerges from an intuitive exploration. This body of work seeks to communicate an experimental process rooted in the distinctive perceptual differences defining dyslexia, aiming to forge a compelling connection between these differences and the broader philosophical concepts explored. The quest for understanding, although not explicitly claiming sublimity, embodies a striving toward the ineffable, confronting something beyond normal experience and comprehension.

## **E. The Importance and Originality of the Study**

In addressing gaps in knowledge about dyslexic artists, this research can open new lines of discovery, such as enhancing the appreciation and understanding of their art-making processes. Additionally, contributing to the ongoing discourse of the link between dyslexia and creativity, utilising an interdisciplinary approach in areas that have received limited attention in existing literature. While previous research has primarily focused on linguistic differences among individuals with dyslexia, examining how dyslexic artists create art can shed light on the cognitive, perceptual and imaginative experiences of dyslexic individuals. This dimension remains relatively unexplored, offering a fresh perspective on the unique strengths and creative capacities of dyslexic artists.

## Chapter I

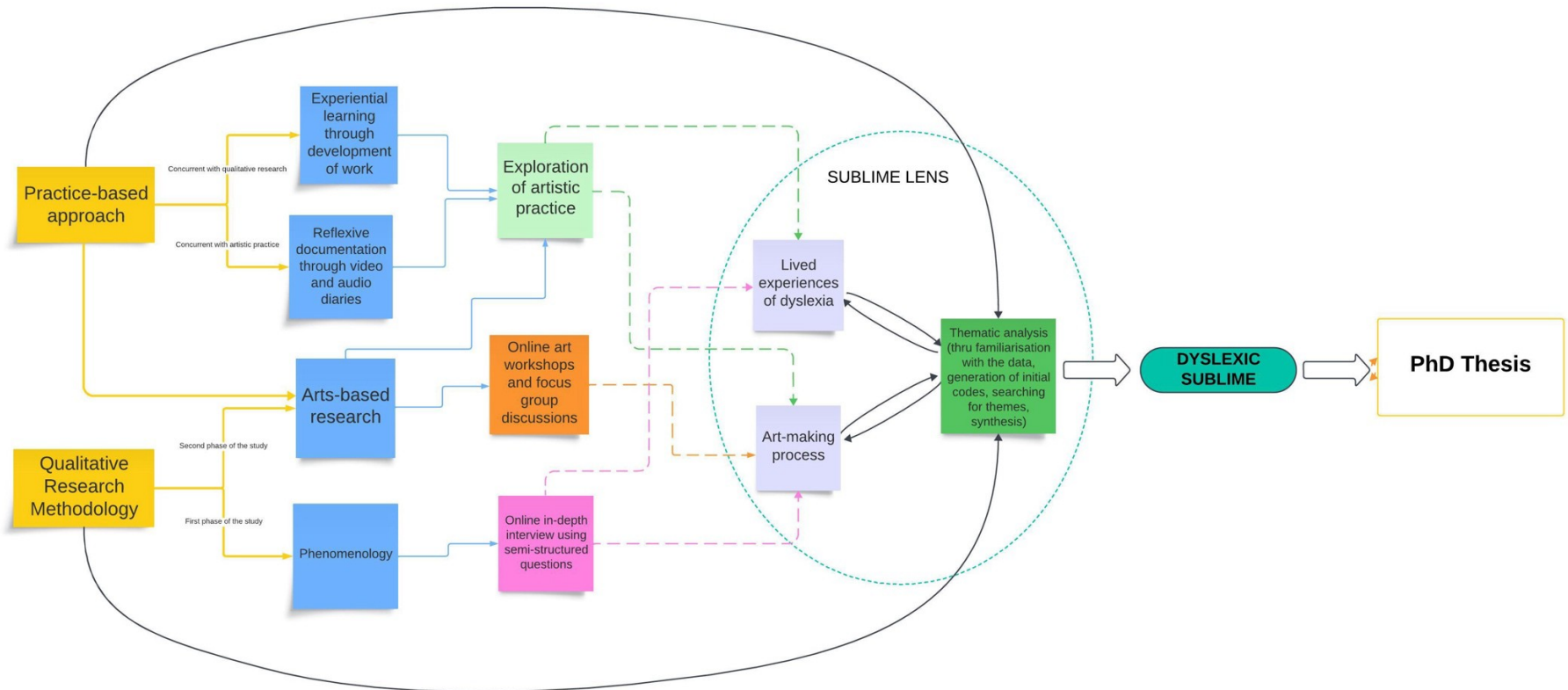
### Research Methodology

#### A. Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I will first outline the rationale for choosing qualitative and practice-based methods as the primary modes of inquiry. I will then discuss in detail the qualitative research methodology before moving onto how I engaged participants for the interviews and the importance of these interviews in comprehending the lived experiences of dyslexia. Following this, I will elaborate on the methods employed in the workshops I conducted and emphasise their importance in exploring the artmaking process of dyslexic artists. Further, I will discuss the methods used to analyse the data collected from both interviews and workshops. This chapter briefly introduces the phenomenological grounding of my research. In contrast to Cartesian dualism, the split between mind and body and to empirical traditions privileging a detached observation, the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) argued that perception is always embodied and situated. Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology highlighted how our bodily being-in-the-world to be the primary source of meaning and knowledge, a view that supports my focus on lived experience, particularly the perceptual differences in that of dyslexic artists. A fuller discussion of Merleau-Ponty’s ideas and their implications for this study is provided in Chapter IV. In this context, I also present mind-wandering as both a subject of interest and a methodological tool, repositioned here as a generative, intuitive mode of inquiry that informs both participant insight and my own artistic process. I will also explain how the methods applied in the workshops combined with my own practice of art making led me to draw parallels with the Sublime, based on the evidence gathered. In this chapter I aim to explore the connections between qualitative research, participant engagement and creative involvement within the context of dyslexia. Finally, I will clarify the significance of using the Sublime as a conceptual frame within this research,

acknowledging its important role in shaping the methodology and overarching aims of the study.

The diagram below (Figure 1) presents the summary of the research methodology employed in this PhD thesis.

**Figure 1. Research Methodology**

## **B. Rationale for the Research Methodology**

The rationale for adopting a qualitative research methodology, utilising a phenomenological approach and practice-based research, stems from the need to comprehensively explore and therefore understand the lived experiences and artistic processes of dyslexic artists. Given the exploratory nature of the research, the phenomenological approach is chosen as it is aligned with the research objectives. Qualitative techniques such as interviews and focus group discussions allowed for an in-depth exploration of participants lived experiences and facilitates insights into the art-making process whilst acknowledging my positionality as the researcher. The use of thematic analysis of the qualitative data is also aligned with the research framework of the Dyslexic Sublime because it enabled the identification of patterns of meaning and exploration of key concepts outlined in the framework, contributing to a nuanced understanding of dyslexic artists' experiences. Moreover, due to practical considerations such as availability of resources and time constraints, the qualitative methodology allowed for the collection of data within the available resources.

Reflexivity has been an important part of my practice-based research. From reflecting on my own positionality as well as reflectively documenting the process that dyslexic artists like myself go through when making art. Art can provide new ways of seeing and thinking that can change what are considered norms of knowledge construction and representation. Moreover, these new ways of seeing and thinking can lead to better understandings of oneself and others, as well as ontological and epistemological premises that influence processes and representations of research, which are captured through reflexive practice (Bogumil et al., 2017; Leavy, 2018). In turn, the discomfort caused by creating art in an unfamiliar way can lead to new opportunities for the development of reflexivity (Skukauskaitė et al., 2018; Chatfield, et al., 2014).

To be explicit about my positionality in this research, I acknowledge that my

subjectivity as a dyslexic artist is not an obstacle but a valuable lens that enriches my perspective on the findings. My positionality has been outlined in the Introduction, where I acknowledged the potential for research bias and the need for a reflexive approach. I will now expand on this by critically examining how my insider status influences methodological choices and the steps I have taken to ensure transparency. Being an 'insider' provides a unique positionality, enhancing my understanding of dyslexic artists' experiences. To ensure a balanced approach, I incorporate reflexive practice, emphasising transparency in methods and analysis. During data collection, particularly in interviews and workshops, I maintain objectivity through rigorous thematic analysis supported by direct quotes. This approach allows me to navigate my insider status while upholding research rigour and credibility. In this practice-based PhD research, understanding my positionality in the process of meaning-making enables me to situate my work within the research context. My intention is to investigate the lived experiences of dyslexic artists, recognising that my dual role as investigator and dyslexic artist may introduce bias.

This acknowledgment in how we interpret the phenomenon under investigation can also serve as a tool that can guide research by means of an awareness of our subjectivity in the analytic process. Upon reflection, we all understand the importance of making art and the disciplines surrounding this, as well as the struggles in the lived experience of being dyslexic. The development of this self-understanding and the very practice of making art can be captured and documented through reflexive practice.

In addition, the selection of practice-based research methodology as one of the primary modes of inquiry is appropriate and aligned with the research objectives of exploring the artmaking of dyslexic artists such as myself where creative practice itself is central to the research process. The creation of artistic works was used as a means to explore the research questions and gain insights on how the concepts related to otherness and transcendence inform

and inspire artistic processes, becoming integral to the research findings of this PhD thesis. By incorporating the methods of reflection and critical analysis, a practice-based approach provided the opportunity to contextualise the creative process and articulate its significance within the broader scholarly discourse. Through practice-based research, I aim to contribute experiential insights into investigating the complexities of the creative practice of dyslexic artists.

### **C. Philosophical Grounding: Phenomenology, Lived Experience and Mind-Wandering**

Affirming the phenomenological foundations of this research, I draw on the philosophical ideas of Merleau-Ponty, whose work communicates how experience manifests not only as cognitively but also sensorially, temporarily and spatially. Merleau-Ponty's ideas of embodied perception, first developed in *Phenomenology of Perception* (originally 1945; see Merleau-Ponty, 2002/2012), situate lived experience in the physical and emotional body, resonating with dyslexic artists visual-spatial differences, as is expounded in Chapter III, IV and VI. His phenomenological approach underscores my investigations into how dyslexic perception engages differently with the visual world, especially during artmaking.

These philosophical concepts underpin my approach to 'mind-wandering,' a phenomenon I not only observe in participants but actively use as a method in my own art practice. Though mind-wandering is often viewed with some negation (Killingsworth & Gilbert, 2010), recent literature (Eide & Eide, 2011, 2023; Corballis, 2015) identifies its usefulness in the dyslexic individual. Eide and Eide argue that dyslexic individuals may engage in spontaneous, associative thought more frequently due to attentional regulation differences and that such thought patterns can be integral to creative problem-solving and conceptual breakthroughs. Corballis (2015) similarly frames mind-wandering as part of our innate capacity for 'mental time travel,' enabling abstract reflection, imaginative thought and innovation.

In this research, I frame mind-wandering not merely as a subject of inquiry but as a methodological strategy, a phenomenological mode of inquiry that complements reflexive and arts-based research. I now believe this to be a form of cognitive relief where one enters an emotional and sensory mode of emerging unexpected connections. In the context of dyslexia, such non-linear and intuitive associations offer insights into alternative ways of seeing, thinking and creating. This perceptual mobility became evident in both participant reflections and my own artistic process and was documented through reflexive audio and visual methods in Chapters V and VI.

By embedding mind-wandering within a philosophical and methodological framework, I argue that what is often construed as cognitive ‘drift’ can instead be repositioned as an epistemological strength, that is, a distinctive way of knowing that produces insights inaccessible to linear or solely rational thought. It becomes a means of accessing affective knowledge, spatial insight and imaginative synthesis that are essential in the creative process. Therefore, mind-wandering is reframed not as incidental, but as central to the methodology of this thesis and to the phenomenological understanding of dyslexic artistic experience.

#### **D. The Qualitative Research Methodology**

Malterud (2001) defines qualitative research as “the systematic collection, organisation, and interpretation of textual material derived from talk or conversation” (p. 483). Qualitative methods are used to describe and make sense of social phenomena (Ormston et al, 2014) as experienced by individuals in their natural environment. In using this method, the goal is to obtain an understanding and rich description of the phenomenon under investigation, and how this phenomenon is experienced in a significant and profound manner (Davidson et al., 2008).

Specifically, I use a phenomenological approach as a qualitative method. This involves the study of the lived experiences of participants (Moustakas, 1994) in which the goal is to explore the phenomenon in depth and find meanings attached by participants to their



experiences, such as discrimination, stigmatisation, marginalisation and how they are able to transcend these experiences. According to Dahl and Boss (2005), a phenomenological approach is based on a number of suppositions: (1) the meanings attached to lived experiences are socially constructed and thus continuously changing and developing; (2) the investigator is also involved in the experience under study and their values are also important in the investigation; (3) we cannot avoid biases in research so they should be clarified early on; (4) there is a partnership in the sharing of knowledge between participants and investigator; (5) there are commonalities in expressing and narrating lived experiences such as the use of art and words; and (6) not everyone perceives, understands or shares the same meanings of the phenomenon under study.

In conducting qualitative research, participants who possess specific knowledge and relevant experience related to the research questions are carefully chosen and considered (Rai and Thapa, 2015). This is because the emphasis is on describing the phenomenon in a more in-depth and accurate way that is rich in detail, imagery and meanings and thus, large numbers of participants are not required. As such, participants in this PhD research were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) they consider themselves artists, and (2) they have been formally assessed as dyslexic. The quality and characteristics of participants, rather than the number of participants, are the paramount consideration in undertaking qualitative research. Thus, purposive sampling in selecting participants is used as a method of recruitment to achieve the goal of qualitative research. In this research, participants were recruited and selected through a purposive snowballing technique by networking on social media with dyslexia groups and obtaining referrals from acquaintances and friends. Each participant was sent an invitation letter and written informed consent via email, which they returned to me signed. A copy of the sample informed consent can be found in the Appendix.

I carried out semi-structured interviews via online platforms, such as Zoom, often using

a video camera, to explore how dyslexia impacts the work of dyslexic artists. However, some participants were not comfortable being on camera, so some interviews were conducted off camera, and some were not. This approach allowed participants to feel safe and comfortable while discussing their experiences, despite the limitations of being able to see facial expressions or bodily gestures. The interviews were conducted online during the COVID-19 pandemic and due to intermittent lockdowns and other restrictions, there was no alternative for face-to-face interviews. There were benefits to conducting these online interviews particularly one-to-one. For example, participants could feel comfortable in their own homes. Furthermore, a one-to-one interview setting can eliminate any feelings of being compared to or being pressured by expectations. All participants were asked to sign a consent form and were made aware that they could stop the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable. They agreed to the recording of the interviews and the workshops as well as the publishing of the materials and images created in the workshop. I received ethics clearance before conducting the interviews to ensure the research conforms to ethical standards on confidentiality, anonymity and safety of participants, a copy of which can be found in the Appendix. Additionally, prior to interviewing the participants, I initiated interviews and dialogues with experts in the field, including dyslexic artists, disability and dyslexia service (DDS) advisors within three universities, curators of neurodiverse arts organisations, founders of dyslexic charities and several professors/doctors of neuroscience and psychology, to gather their insights on the topic.

Another qualitative method I used in this PhD research is the focus group discussion (FGD). The use of focus groups is often developed with a specific topic in mind and adheres to a semi-structured design to provide opportunities for open discussion and social interactions amongst the participants. It is suggested that the number of participants in an FGD can range between four to twelve in size (Tong et al., 2007). I found focus group discussions to be a very effective way to gain insight from the tasks set and various reactions, responses and interactions that take place amongst the participants. In this PhD research, three FGDs in each of the three

workshops were carried out, with 4-5 participants in each FGD. The objective was to discuss the process involved in their art making and observe how participants interact with other FGD participants.

Thematic analysis was used in this PhD research to interpret the qualitative data, which involved organising and interpreting patterns of meanings across the data. The goal was to create a coherent description of the lived experiences of dyslexic artists and their process of artmaking by identifying commonalities and differences in their subjective experiences (Crowe et al., 2015). To accomplish this, I followed the successive stages of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006), including: (1) familiarisation and immersion with the data (i.e., I first carefully listened to the recorded interview, transcribed the interviews and read the transcripts over and over again to get a sense of the whole data and gain insights into the participants' subjective experiences); (2) generation of initial codes by interpreting the interview transcripts and making annotations to provide context (for example, meaningful words or phrases of participants such as 'being stupefied', 'feeling left-out and different', were coded as 'lived experience of marginalisation and stigmatisation' and wording such as 'moments of conceptualisation when everything starts to crystallise' was interpreted as 'artmaking process of dyslexic artists'); (3) searching for themes and defining and naming themes, illustration of themes with reference to the interview and FGD transcripts (i.e., interpreted or coded words or phrases in the interview and FGD transcripts that were related to each other were clustered together to describe participants' lived experience and artmaking process and multiple exemplary quotes were generated to provide examples for the themes); and (4) synthesis and presentation of findings (i.e., the relationship of the themes from the interview and FGD transcripts were explored, analysed and presented in relation to the aims and objectives of this PhD research). Although this process is systematic, it is also iterative and involves moving back and forth between the data set, confirming, or disconfirming emergent themes, and adding a rich text analysis of the themes (Bassett, 2004; Boss et al., 1996). A table

of the interview and FGD transcripts that were coded and grouped into themes is provided in the Appendix of this PhD thesis.

## **E. The Practice-Based Approach**

This practice-based research is aimed at developing my own artistic process in light of the research questions, while simultaneously exploring the artmaking of other dyslexic artists, in order to gain a critical understanding of how the lived experience of dyslexia can be framed using the Sublime lens. Through this practice-based research, I aim to contribute new knowledge to the field of art by bringing a unique perspective to the creative process. According to Candy's (2006) definition, this type of research involves generating original contributions to knowledge through creative activities such as creating visual art and exhibiting it. This dichotomy is often faced by PhD students in Art, where one might find oneself attempting to balance conducting good research with creating impactful art (Biggs, 2010). Whilst pure practice focuses solely on the practitioner's subjective goals at the time of making the art, practice-based research seeks to develop new techniques and advance the collective understanding of the field.

Scrivener (2002) further elaborates on this, proposing that delving into one's practice can lead to deeper understanding of one's area of expertise. Through practice-based research, the findings are contextualised and documented, leading to a thorough understanding of the outcomes. Scrivener (2002) suggests that practice-based research can offer fresh insights into a new and interesting piece of art or artefact, benefitting both the creator and the audience. Additionally, practice-based research can create opportunities that differentiate the researcher and the professional, the former advancing knowledge in the field towards greater understanding of creative methods, techniques, or processes.

Michael Biggs (2010) argues that the primary component of practice-based research is experiential learning. He believes that this property of experience arising through practice takes

precedence over cognitive content that emerges from reflection on one's practice. In this practice-based PhD, I contend that both are important, my experiential learning and my reflections on my practice. I frame my understanding of the art making process and how my lived experience of dyslexia, along with my awareness of potential visual-spatial strengths, aligns with sublime principles as a theoretical lens. As a dyslexic artist, I have embraced the belief that it is essential to be acutely aware of the distinctiveness of dyslexia and how individuals like myself have surpassed feelings of isolation, prejudice and bias associated with this difference. This principle of a transcendent sublime now guides my practice.

For the dyslexic artist, often when working alone, they can develop their ideas at their own pace and exceed expectations without the negative preconceptions of others hindering their potential. This is explored further in Chapter III and VI. Additionally, these experiences reveal strengths often found in dyslexia. Despite feeling like outsiders and facing challenges, dyslexic artists can explore their potential and develop their ideas independently, leading to unique and innovative artwork and, in turn, contributing to knowledge generation in the field.

As an artist, I now realise that utilising unique visual-spatial strengths, along with the dyslexic experience of being an outsider, can profoundly guide my practice. This understanding is significant both in retrospect and in the present. Over the years, I have chosen to focus on the subject matter of light and water, which is assimilated into my PhD work and which I have developed spanning several decades prior to this. Capturing light on and in water presents a challenge for artists, as water is often translucent and in motion. Despite this difficulty, I made a conscious decision to attempt to paint and draw water as a subject matter. I attest, as a dyslexic, I am inclined to divergent thinking, to be a problem solver and approach difficult tasks in a unique, non-linear manner, which is a strength I possess. In addition, when light is reflected and refracted in water, it becomes distorted. These distortions allude to perceptual differences experienced by some dyslexics, such as the morphing of text and reversals in letters or numbers.

Therefore, by working with the challenging subject matter of water, I can explore and highlight these differences in perception. This choice in theme of light and water is deeply rooted in my personal experience of struggling with dyslexia, overcoming challenges, and developing strategies to transcend my condition. By looking into this subject matter, I can investigate my own experiences of being dyslexic and explore how this difference has influenced my artistic practice.

Through practice-based research, I aim in part to explore my own dyslexic experiences and express this creatively. Dyslexics often reverse words, numbers and names, which is commonly viewed as a weakness (Simpson, 1991). Dyslexic artists, including myself, can inadvertently leverage this perceptual difference as a strength in our art. This heightened difference and sensitivity to seeing things in reverse can be harnessed in our art and occasionally evoke a sense of awe in the viewer. This concept will be further elaborated upon in Chapters III and VI. By incorporating my struggle with dyslexia into my research, I aim to create a rich and nuanced artistic practice informed by my unique perspective as a dyslexic artist.

Throughout this PhD, my focus has been on perception. Exploring visual-spatial perceptual differences related to dyslexia as well as in the making of art. For instance, in my own practice, the reflections of trees morphing in water, as well as introspective considerations regarding the very plane onto which I depict the visual image. For example, I examined the square and the perspectival angles involved in viewing a plane. Additionally, I experimented with the square plane, transforming it into a cube and exploring the perspectival differences that arise when the cube is rotated. Similarly, I've experimented with rotating the painted, sketched, or digitally rendered plane, observing how the image morphs into something else during rotation. These concepts are discussed in greater detail in Chapters III, V and VI.

As aforementioned, undertaking research at the doctoral level as a practicing artist can

pose a challenge, as the usual focus for the artist is often on creating art for the purpose of exploration and expression that results in aesthetically pleasing outcomes, rather than the generation of new knowledge (Candy, 2006). In practice-based research, this emphasis on acquiring new and original knowledge comes through experimentation and reflexivity. This can result in a more investigational approach to creating artwork, raising questions about the loss of aesthetic value and how new knowledge can be derived from one's practice. In retrospect, I discovered that producing experimental and conceptual drawings helped me to reflect and analyse my thought processes. Throughout this I reflexively documented my work through video, audio, and a written journal, which allowed me to reflect on my purpose as a researcher and acquire new knowledge. Through my audio reflexive commentary, it became apparent that my experience of dyslexia caused a heightened self-doubt which often arose during the creation of artwork. However, these doubts were countered by insights and problem-solving techniques, which can be useful to other dyslexic artists seeking inspiration and insight. I concur, by utilising experimentation and reflexivity, it is possible to acquire new knowledge and insights while maintaining the aesthetic value of one's artwork. There are of course limitations and challenges of undertaking research on one's own practice in terms of demonstrating its applicability and relevance to other practitioners. Thus, it is imperative to effectively communicate or disseminate the findings of the practice-based research so it will have an impact in the field. My practice-based research will culminate in a curated exhibition of my work in various media. By drawing the spectator in, the perceptual differences of the dyslexic artist offer insights that immerse the viewer in their lived experience, ultimately leading to a form of enlightenment through this immersion.

## **F. Use of Arts-based Research Methods**

Within the scope of this practice-based research, I specifically focus on arts-based research methods to draw on my own lived experience and art practice to explore the life and

works of other artists with dyslexia as well as their art-making process. According to Shaun McNiff (2008, p.29), arts-based research is defined as the “systematic use of the artistic process” as a method of inquiry to investigate research questions, generate new knowledge and communicate research findings. Through arts-based methods, we can create, analyse, and interpret artistic works as a means of generating insights and understanding about the research subject. Leavy (2017) further emphasises that the arts-based methods involve the use of creative arts in the research process, not just as a means of collecting data and presenting or communicating research findings but also as a tool to illustrate or explain research data.

The philosophical grounding of arts-based research is based on the following principles suggested by Gerber and colleagues (2012): (1) the recognition that art can convey and bring knowledge of the self and others; (2) that art is important in gaining self-other knowledge; (3) that pre-verbal ways of knowing are equally important; and (4) that there are different ways of knowing such as sensory, emotional, kinaesthetic or imaginary knowing. The goal of arts-based research methods is to produce research outcomes that are both rigorous and innovative, using the creative process as a means of engaging with research questions in a more intuitive and exploratory way. This approach values the subjective and embodied experiences of participants and researchers, emphasising the importance of creativity, imagination and experimentation in the research process (McNiff, 2008).

Since the main objective of this PhD research is to examine the art making of dyslexic artists, the use of arts-based methods is imperative. The arts-based methods in this PhD research include drawings and other visual elicitation methods as an evocative and provocative way of eliciting responses from participants which was systematically done during a series of art workshops with focus group discussion. This provided participants with a creative way to express their meanings, associations and interpretations of their lived experience of dyslexia. This co-facilitation workshop with other dyslexic artists allowed for description and reflection



upon our artistic expressions using the Sublime as a lens (which is discussed further in Chapter IV). In so doing, we collectively engaged in a series of drawing tasks focused on a central theme, that being the ‘eye’ in both literal and visual-spatial terms and explored concepts that are often attributable to the creative and unique perceptual abilities and cognitive processes of dyslexics, such as the mind’s eye, divergent thinking and the concept of mind wandering (West, 1991; Rankin, 2021; Eide, 2021). In these workshops, through intermittent reflexive focus group discussions, we analysed the various drawings, processes and thinking involved while completing the different tasks. We compared our experiences of interpretation and how our works are similar or contrasted in terms of the formal patterns and contextual influences of dyslexia as our commonality.

To uncover the processes in the art workshop, drawing exercises were conducted, where I utilised video documentation, together with observations, note-taking and dialogues with other dyslexic artists. From the transcripts of the art workshop, critical themes were developed from the patterns of our responses and from the interface of reflexive documentation, interviews and sample works created. Concurrent to the development and facilitation of the workshops, I was developing work as my own practice-based research, but using themes and techniques, such as the eye, trees, water, circle and the square plane, as expounded on in Chapter VI.

## **G. Reflexivity in the Creative Process**

As a method in this practice-based research, I used reflexive documentation in the process of making art. In particular, I made use of audio and video diaries. Reflexivity, as a research process, is defined by Skukauskaite and colleagues (2022) as a form of self-analysis whereby researchers develop awareness of their roles in co-constructing knowledge. Through ongoing engagement in reflexivity, researchers analyse how their backgrounds, values, experiences and perspectives influence their research participation, including methodological

decision-making, ethical stance and interaction with research participants (Finlay, 2002). Skukauskaite and colleagues (2022) also highlight the importance of reflexivity in understanding the researcher's perspectives in connecting and representing self and others in research that adheres to ethical standards in a socially just manner.

Dowling (2006) explains that reflexivity provides researchers with an opportunity to engage in self-critique and critically scrutinise how one's personal experiences have shaped the research process. This is further explained by Patnaik (2013) who defines reflexivity as a way in which the researcher becomes aware of his or her own contribution and influence in the research process and research findings. This enables researchers to engage in continuous assessment and reassessment of their roles in the research enterprise and thus gain a deeper understanding into the phenomena being studied. Reflexivity is primarily used in the qualitative tradition as the researcher makes use of different interpretive lenses. Through reflexivity, this investigative lens is turned toward the researcher (Palmer, 2019) to examine how their positionality in the process, including one's own attitudes, values and biases, influence the research direction, methodology, findings and data analysis.

The use of reflexive documentation is notable in arts-based practices. Leavy (2018) emphasises the need to promote reflexivity in arts-based practices as it leads to developing empathy through the emotional and intellectual connection and engagement that develop amongst researchers, participants and the audience. Empathy is essential in arts-based research because it helps connect with and understand the experiences and perspectives of the participants who may come from diverse and marginalised backgrounds such as dyslexic artists. By cultivating empathy, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of participants and can create a more inclusive and respectful study environment (Leavy, 2018). Empathy also promotes ethical and respectful research practices and creates a collaborative and trusting study environment.

In arts-based research, it is common practice for researchers to recruit participants through various channels, including personal connections, academic networks and community organisations. In this PhD study, I recruited participants from my pre-existing networks and acquaintances I made through my art practice as well as connections with dyslexic groups. This is particularly useful, as previous connections and relationships with my research participants helped build trust and rapport and facilitated more open and honest communication (Huff et al., 2002). However, as a researcher, I am mindful of the potential for bias or conflicts of interest when recruiting participants through personal connections. To mitigate these risks, I disclosed any personal relationships or connections with participants and took steps to ensure that this research is conducted in an ethical and unbiased manner. For instance, I used pseudonyms in reporting the results and followed the rigorous methods of interpreting findings using thematic analysis of the qualitative data.

I have pursued the career of an artist my entire adult life. In the same way that many of my participants have also pursued a career in the arts throughout their life. Many of us and including myself have found this to be therapeutic and a way where we transcend our negative experiences through the discovery of visual-spatial strengths, where we become able to succeed and achieve through art, as will be discussed in succeeding chapters. Such commonalities of experiences are best captured in a reflexive process. Therefore, the use of reflexive documentation is paramount in practice-based research.

All throughout this practice-based research, I collated many hours of audio diaries as a form of reflexive documentation of my artmaking, an example of which can be found in Chapter VI and more in the Appendix. Through audio diaries, I recorded my thoughts, insights and feelings as I engaged in art making, whilst video diaries were used in video recording the process of artmaking I undertook, examples can also be found in Chapter VI. Williamson et al. (2015) believe that audio-diaries can be a valuable tool in qualitative research to collect rich

and detailed data about peoples lived experiences, specifically in the phenomenological paradigm. This can yield rich qualitative data and serves as a practical and convenient documentation tool which ensures that thoughts, feelings and key accounts of experiences are not lost because they are recorded or narrated as events unfold (Mackrill, 2008) in real time and context (Bolger et al., 2003). One of the main advantages of using audio and video diaries in research is that they allow participants to share their experiences in their own words and in their own time and provide a way for participants to document their experiences over time, allowing researchers to capture changes and developments in their perspectives and experiences. They offer a flexible and participant- centred approach to data collection and can provide unique insights into how people experience and make sense of their lives (Probst, 2015).

Using a time-lapse mobile video recording method, I documented my artmaking from start to completion. These recordings are later compressed into video footage without an audio, to provide a glimpse of how a particular artwork was completed from inception to execution, this is evidenced in Chapter VI. As a research method, video diaries provide opportunities for phenomena under study, such as events, activities and practices, to be “visibly, audibly and viscerally present” (Bates, 2013, p.36). This is expounded by Pink (2003) who argued that research videos serve as “expressive performances” (Pink, 2003, p.55) in which human experiences are shown corporeally (Pink, 2009). Thus, video diaries are especially relevant in documenting practice-based research because some details of the practice cannot be captured in audio documentation or interviews (Muir and Mason, 2012). One of its methodological strengths is to vividly communicate the “physicality of embodied experience” (Brown, Dilley and Marshall, 2008, p.11).

The audio and video diaries produced in my practice-based research were not only used as a data collection method and tool for reflexive documentation. They will also be utilised in the art exhibition to culminate the practice-based PhD research and provide the audience with

a researcher, insider perspective on my artmaking. Through audio diaries, I was able to record my thoughts and feelings as they unfolded whilst I was making art, which provided insights into my dyslexic difference of thinking and feeling about the creative process. These are supported by the video diaries I used in recording the making of my work. Both audio and video diaries as reflexive documentation of my arts practice provided evidence of how dyslexia shapes my artmaking process.

As I continued to develop my practice as a dyslexic artist, I began to focus more on introspection in my creative process. This led me to engage in this reflexive documentation, which also involved reflecting on the patterns, techniques and strategies I use in my artmaking as a means of artistic inquiry within a practice-based approach (Dallow, 2003). Through this process, I gained a deeper understanding of how dyslexic artists, like me, approach their work. In this PhD thesis, the original contribution to knowledge does not only come from the primary research I conducted with other dyslexic artists but also from my own creative practice, henceforth, my original creative work is included for submission.

## **H. Chapter Summary**

Within this chapter, I have explored qualitative research methodology and arts-based methods employed in this practice-based PhD research, focusing on the experiences of dyslexic artists. Utilising a phenomenological approach, this study explored the lived experiences of dyslexic artists, with the aim of better understanding how dyslexia influences the process they go through when making art. By means of purposive sampling and semi-structured interviews conducted online, allowed for a more detailed exploration of these participants' experiences, while focus group discussions (FGD) permitted for further insights into the art-making process and the interactions between said participants. The thematic analysis of qualitative data warranted for the identification of patterns of meaning and contributed to a nuanced understanding of experiences amongst these dyslexic artists. Moreover, by means of

integrating arts-based research methods, I have presented a creative measure of inquiry by allowing participants to explore their experiences through the making of art. Through the incorporation of drawing exercises and visual elicitation methods within the art workshops, participants were presented not only with opportunities for self-expression but also to contribute to the research findings. Concurrently and simultaneously with these drawing exercises, I assimilated these arts-based research methods and experiments into my own practice, as extrapolated in Chapter VI. This chapter also highlighted the relevance of phenomenology and embodied perception in understanding dyslexic ways of seeing and making. In addition to this, the inclusion of mind-wandering as a methodological tool has been introduced as central to both participant insight and my own creative process.

Overall, I argue that the combination of qualitative research and arts-based methods provides a comprehensive and insightful approach to exploring the experiences of dyslexic artists and their art-making process.

## Chapter II

### Overview of Dyslexia and Creativity

#### A. Chapter Overview

This chapter interrogates the contradictory and complex field of dyslexia, presenting a nuanced frame of reference that bridges cognitive science, lived experience and artistic expression. I begin by contextualising dyslexia within both social and scientific discourse, tracing definitions from dominant institutions such as the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) and the International Dyslexia Association (IDA). I present different viewpoints from researchers such as Mortimore, Nicolson, Stein and Elliot. These debates exemplify the contested and evolving trajectory of dyslexia as a category, from neurobiological, educational, psychological and socio-cultural. This chapter then examines the relationship between dyslexia and creativity, identifying a growing body of evidence that links dyslexic traits, particularly visual-spatial reasoning, global processing and holistic thinking, to enhanced creative capacities. Drawing on Stein's magnocellular theory, emerging ideas of 'positive dyslexia,' allow for neurological explanations of dyslexic individuals' strengths in the visual arts and problem-solving, challenging the deficit-oriented model. The concept of post-traumatic growth is introduced to understand how some dyslexic individuals transcend adversity through creativity; a theme further developed in Chapter III.

Finally, the chapter situates dyslexic artists within the broader context of the arts sector, particularly through the lens of 'Outsider Art.' I explore how dyslexic individuals are often both invisible and marginalised within mainstream art institutions and yet paradoxically celebrated when they are framed as an inspiration or a marketable opportunity of difference. This discussion will draw on critical perspectives, calling attention to the need for more ethical and inclusive curatorial practices, laying out the theoretical groundwork for understanding dyslexia not as a limitation but as a generative and powerful force challenging normative models of cognition and creativity, opening space to value these differences within the arts.

## B. Contextualising Dyslexia

This chapter investigates the intersectionality of dyslexia in relation to creativity. Prior to this, it is important to further contextualise our understanding of dyslexia building on previous observations. In addition to the existent framing of dyslexia within the context of neurodivergence, dyslexia is also widely known as a specific learning difficulty (SpLD) that essentially affects the ability to accurately read and spell words. However, definitions do vary considerably among researchers and institutions; this is reflective of the broader debates in its nature and aetiology.

The BDA's definition of dyslexia is 'a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling, characterised by difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed' (BDA, 2023). The IDA similarly defines dyslexia as a neurobiological condition with differences in accurate or fluent word recognition including poor spelling and decoding abilities, often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and classroom instruction (IDA, 2020).

Furthermore, Mortimore (2008), McLoughlin and Leather (2013) frame dyslexia through the lens of individual learning styles and cognitive diversity, suggesting visual-spatial strengths accompany these verbal differences. Conversely, Nicolson and Fawcett (2010) put forward a cerebellar theory of dyslexia, linking it to difficulties with automatisisation, coordination and time management, stating that "developmental dyslexia is one of the developmental disorders characterised by impaired functioning of the procedural learning system" (p. 221), which might explain why some individuals struggle with reading and writing, even when they are capable and intelligent in other areas.

Controversially, Elliot and Grigorenko (2014), in *The Dyslexia Debate*, have questioned the existence of dyslexia as a distinct condition, suggesting it unhelpful as a label for such wide-ranging reading difficulties. Their follow-up work with Rod Nicolson in *Dyslexia: Developing*



*the Debate* (2016) presents opposing viewpoints, while Nicolson defends dyslexia as a neurodevelopmental condition with Elliot maintaining scepticism about its diagnostic utility. However, the scientific literature indicates the term ‘dyslexia’ carries significant conceptual and practical implications. In this study, I use ‘dyslexia’ to validate a specific set of lived experiences, while I acknowledge the field is continually evolving.

Informed by these debates, this thesis adopts a nuanced view of dyslexia, acknowledging both the scientific and social complexity of the term. For the purposes of this research, dyslexia is understood not only as a learning difference but as a diverse cognitive profile marked by visual-spatial strengths, creative problem solving and a preference for non-linear, global, holistic thinking. These characteristics can sometimes emerge from a form of post-traumatic growth, as will be expanded upon in Chapter III. For some dyslexics, the struggle with literacy and the stigma associated can be causal to compensatory strengths in other areas, particularly the arts. Dyslexia, therefore, as will be argued, becomes not only a challenge but also a catalyst for creative achievement, emotional resilience and a unique means of self-expression.

While further explorations of this post-traumatic growth and the concept of the creative ‘niche’ are discussed in later chapters, this framework sets the stage for understanding the lived experience of dyslexic individuals, particularly in artistic domains. From this foundation, I will now explore the creative practices and experiences of dyslexic artists, the neuropsychological basis for the dyslexia-creativity link and the sociocultural factors that influence how these individuals are perceived and supported in the arts.

### **C. Creativity amongst Dyslexic Artists**

As previously mentioned, there has been much debate over the years regarding the link between creativity and dyslexia. While some research has found inconclusive evidence supporting the idea of a link between dyslexia and creativity (Erbeli, Peng and Rice, 2022;

Martinelli and Camilleri, 2016; Majeed and Hartanto, 2021), others (Kapoula et al., 2016; Šimčíková, 2018; Cancer, Manzoli and Antonietti, 2016) found consistent evidence of greater creativity in dyslexic individuals. Neuroimaging results show increased activity in the brain associated with creativity (Fink et al., 2018). Additionally, studies have found a link between the speed at which holistic or global processing occurs and the visual-spatial talent in dyslexic individuals (von Károlyi et al., 2003; von Károlyi and Winner, 2013).

Some research has speculated that phonological differences are predominantly the cause of reading and writing difficulties in dyslexic individuals (Lewis, 1992; Demonte et al., 2004). Others such as Stein, have doubted this to be the leading cause, stating that “the phonological principle is essential for all learning to read; so, every poor reader will show a phonological deficit” (Stein, 2022, p. 4,9). Stein and others have found a predominance of cellular difference in the eye of the dyslexic, although this difference often results in difficulty with reading. As Nicolson and Fawcett state “Stein does not limit his magnocellular hypothesis to sensory input systems. In an impressive, sweeping vision, he also includes motor output and muscular control systems” (Nicolson and Fawcett, 2010, p. 35), highlighting the broader implications of magnocellular functioning across various domains of literacy and coordination.

Stein’s theory suggests that the magnocellular pathway, responsible for processing visual motion and rapid changes, is impaired in dyslexics. This impairment makes it harder to stabilise visual input, which is causal to affecting reading fluency. A weak magnocellular system has been known to result as impairment in the stability of visual fixation, which is critical for fluent reading. As Stein explains:

Stable fixation on letters or words being inspected is obviously important for successful reading and this stability depends crucially upon the magnocellular system detecting any unwanted eye movements which would otherwise cause the text to appear to move around... A weak M system therefore leads to less stable visual fixation, which leads in turn to the possibility that words and letters will appear to move around, a symptom of which many dyslexics complain (Stein, 2001, p. 69).

While visual instability is often thought of as a deficit, some researchers such as Stein, suggest that it may reveal a different mode of visual processing, one that heightens sensitivity to motion and spatial change (Stein, personal communication, 2023; Eide and Eide, 2023). This enhanced sensitivity, of which may stem from these magnocellular differences, can explain why dyslexics often display strengths in the arts, where abilities to perceive holistic patterns and dynamic relationships is a marked advantage. Stein proposes that these same neurological traits, which obstruct reading fluency, may at the same time foster heightened visual awareness and creativity, skills that are particularly valuable in art and design-based disciplines. This perspective is further supported by Dr Tilly Mortimore, who expands on the role of magnocellular systems beyond visual processing:

To summarise, the magnocellular neuronal systems of the brain are involved in the mediation of auditory, visual and motor temporal elements of speech and reading, affecting both the orthographical and phonological aspects of literacy and co-ordination and the development of automaticity (Mortimore, 2008, p. 55).

Furthermore, Stein discusses this eye difference in the brain of dyslexics as causal to a “holistic, artistic, seeing the whole picture” approach, which is often linked to the connection between art and dyslexia (Stein, 2001, p. 13). He later referred to this as “superior perceptual abilities” when speaking at the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) annual conference in 2021. This leads to a broader hypothesis in a somewhat later paper:

The converse of this magnocellular deficit in dyslexia may be parvocellular proliferation in them, which has also been clearly demonstrated. This compensation may explain ‘positive’ dyslexia, which is the exceptional creative, artistic, entrepreneurial, communication, and engineering talents that some dyslexics display and it emphasises that dyslexic talents should be valued, prioritised and nurtured (Stein, 2023, p.10).

The term ‘positive dyslexia’, introduced by Nicolson (2015), touches on the idea that underlying neurological differences in dyslexia may not only be experienced as difficulties in the processing of reading and language, but exceptional strengths in areas such as creativity,

innovation, visual-spatial reasoning and problem-solving. This reframing fosters a shift from deficit, toward a more balanced understanding of dyslexia as a profile of both challenges but with an emphasis on talents. In an email questionnaire, Stein elaborated on how these neurological differences may translate into specific visual-spatial strengths:

Superior perceptual abilities have been shown for dyslexics, namely superior sensitivity to fine gratings (high spatial frequency), i.e., dyslexics can detect them at lower contrast than others can, superior discrimination of green from red and also fine detail particularly in the periphery of the visual field. These superiorities suggest that their ‘parvocellular’ function is better than average. I think it fits in with superior detection of symmetry and sublimity because they see a more complete picture in one glance than others do (Stein, personal communication, 2023).

Following this statement, and in response to my emailed question where I asked Stein to elaborate on the aforementioned “superior perceptual abilities”. Stein links this to a heightened capacity for perceiving symmetry and, by extension, sublimity, suggesting that dyslexic perception may offer a qualitatively different, more holistic apprehension of visual fields. Moreover, this potential definition of an eye difference in the brain of dyslexics is important as it shifts focus away from the disablism associated with dyslexia and reveals these strengths to be fundamental to understanding why dyslexics are different, which helps free us from the stigmatisation resulting from past ignorance. Shifting the focus from disablism and better understanding the neurological differences associated with dyslexia helps to reframe its negative associations. Furthermore, by revealing and recognising these significant differences in the dyslexic brain, we can explore how such differences might contribute to the learning styles and cognitive processing of dyslexics and their preference for creative expression.

Some researchers have speculated whether this link between dyslexia and creativity might be compensational. For instance, through struggles with the written and spoken word, dyslexics might lean away from this way of communicating and instead develop their attention to the arts as a form of communication and as compensation for their difficulties with the written and spoken word (Winner et al., 2001; Wolff et al., 2002; Vezzoli, 2017). This debate has now

spanned several decades and numerous studies supporting this argument have slowly gained traction. This is useful as there is now sufficient anecdotal evidence for this connection to establish itself, as confirmed by Stein when I questioned him on the dyslexia and creativity link, he responded by stating “I think there are enough anecdotes to call it evidence and there are various studies that have quantified this scientifically” (Stein, personal communication, 2023).

#### **D. Discrimination, Stigmatisation and Marginalisation of Dyslexic Artists**

Discrimination is something that many dyslexics experience. Dr Neil Alexander-Passe states in one of his numerous publications "many dyslexics experience discrimination on a daily basis" and cites several studies that highlight how "frustration and anger that can build up inside dyslexics when faced with tasks that highlight their inabilities, causing stress and anxiety" (Alexander-Passe, 2015, pp. 204, 205). Alexander-Passe eloquently conveys the effects of such discrimination and emphasises how there is a lack of research into this aspect of dyslexia. Much of this is borne out of ignorance from the past when little was known about dyslexia. This discrimination due to differences develops into stigmatisation leaving the individual marginalised and often feeling like an outsider.

Let us now consider the above in relation to intersectionality. For example, the experience of being a dyslexic artist from a low socio-economic status (SES) or of an ethnic minority might differ significantly. These overlaps can vary depending on an individual's intersecting identity. Low SES, for example, can impact an individual's ability to access resources, appropriate interventions, artistic endeavours and other opportunities. Consequently, this adds to the experience of marginalisation and being disadvantaged in society. Another example, a dyslexic of an ethnic minority might face a different layer of complexity in their

experience. They may then be faced with discrimination regarding both being dyslexic and their racial ethnicity. By acknowledging intersectionality, we can better understand the diverse experiences and voices of the dyslexic and contribute to a more inclusive understanding of their experiences.

These experiences, causal to marginalisation, can particularly impact a young person's self-esteem in variable ways depending on the support around them at the time. For years, literature has confirmed the importance of early intervention in the lives of dyslexics to avoid long term self-esteem issues and other related mental health problems (Snowling, 2013; Drigas and Batziaka, 2016; Mello and Gabrieli, 2018). Even if intervention occurs as late as adolescence, as a young adult one might discover what's known as the 'niche'. The niche is literally the gap in a person's life where they find something in which they can excel in; this can mean a career change but can promote self-esteem and have a huge impact on the individual's life (McNulty, 2003). This support can be found through teachers but more importantly through family members who might persuade the individual to explore their strengths like art, for example, instead of focusing on their difficulties with the written and spoken word. The concept of the 'niche' will be expounded on further in Chapter III.

Many dyslexics turn to art for expression, with the percentage of art students found to be dyslexic being around 35% on average, while at some institutions, such as Glasgow School of Art, purportedly claiming as high as 50% of art students are dyslexic (Reid, 2018). There are of course those who remain unassessed and those who wish to keep their assessment hidden.

Due to the differences in perception, the dyslexic individual will often prefer the visual image, or other forms of art such as creative writing or performance where one can use the whole body as form of communication. Some might prefer harmonics and music or three-dimensional forms where one can experience art in a more multisensory way, such as textile or sculpture (Stein, 2021). All of these and other art forms make expression, communication

and learning more accessible for the dyslexic. Through the making of art, one can learn and develop in a way that might not have been possible before. Particularly poignant for dyslexics is that through the making of art, the individual can often experience a sense of achievement and even excel (Deh, 2019).

### **E. The Arts Sector: An Outsider Perspective**

Contemporary art in recent decades has clearly advocated for new perspectives, including those often-termed *outsider* approaches. Colin Rhodes, a British art historian and leading authority on Outsider Art, argues that the term ‘outsider’ is deeply entangled with histories of othering and medicalisation and how it has historically framed artists with neurodivergent traits or mental health conditions (2000). The term, ‘Outsider Art’ was historically defined as “the work produced outside the mainstream of modern art by self-taught, untrained visionaries, spiritualists, recluses, folk artists, psychiatric patients, prisoners and others beyond the imposed margins of society and the art market” (Rhodes, 2022, p. 7). This is particularly relevant to experiences of dyslexia, which are frequently associated with feelings of marginalisation or being positioned outside dominant cultural and educational norms (Gibby-Leversuch, Hartwell and Wright, 2021; Gibbs and Elliott, 2020). However, the term outsider, while relevant to this research, carries its own connotations, some of which are themselves questioned within the contemporary art world. David Maclagan (2010), art theorist and writer on outsider art, argues how the commercialisation of outsider art has been problematic. Maclagan asserts when outsider art entered the marketplace, it began to be selectively curated and aestheticised in ways that were often a deviation from its original context and expressive urgency. He further contends how the art world’s embracing of outsider art is often paradoxical; while celebrating its authenticity and rawness, institutions simultaneously reframe it to fit narratives that are marketable, thereby neutralising its critical edge. As Maclagan observes:

Outsiders are a bit like a species that once inhabited the wild, was then declared an endangered species and as a result was rescued and decanted into safari parks or zoos, but that may now have to face the alternative of dying in captivity or being hunted to extinction (Maclagan, 2009, pp. 21–22).

The above metaphor communicates the paradoxical complexities faced by dyslexic artists, where increased visibility often comes with confinement. While their work may be celebrated for being different, it is then reframed to fit institutional or marketable narratives and therefore loses its authenticity. This also is evident regarding creativity in dyslexia, intuitive, non-linear and often resistant to convention, is both constrained and yet valued within mainstream art spaces. This framing highlights the need to progress beyond a tokenised inclusion and towards genuinely reflexive and empowering curatorial practices. Therefore, the category of outsider art serves as a useful, albeit complex, reference point. Emerging from the early 20th-century modernist concept of *Art Brut*, literally 'raw' or 'ugly' art, this movement celebrated aesthetic production by untrained individuals, including, as Rhodes pointed out, institutionalised psychiatric patients (2022). The underlying idea was that such work possessed a kind of power of expression or unmediated authenticity due to being made outside of conventional artistic norms. Jean Dubuffet, who coined the term *Art Brut*, was influenced by the work of psychiatric patients like those documented by Hans Prinzhorn in *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* (1922), inspiring artists like Paul Klee and Max Ernst (Maclagan, 2009).

I contend outsider art is a term deeply entangled with histories problematic of othering. This dynamic becomes particularly significant when considering neurodivergence in contemporary art. Moreover, dyslexia, often remains invisible but can deeply shape aesthetic practices and cognitive approaches. As a dyslexic artist and researcher, I argue for recognising dyslexia not as a deficit but as a generative framework. However, art institutions often frame neurodivergence through a medicalised or market-driven lens, positioning it as either inspirational or commodifiable (Quigley and Gallagher, 2025). There are more ethical approaches, such as those of Project Art Works (<https://projectartworks.org>), who are



beginning to reframe neurodivergent practices without flattening their complexity (Project Art Works, 2024).

In my own lived experience and that of working with other dyslexic artists in this research, I have observed ambivalence towards being categorised under the broader terminology of neurodivergence. Dyslexic individuals are often reluctant to be placed within this broader field, not only due to the extant stigma surrounding disability and mental health but also because their specific cognitive differences may be misunderstood or overlooked, obscuring the very differentiations that often form their experiences. As David Alexander, a neurodiverse academic reflecting on his own lived experience observes in *Disability and Society* (2024, p. 3037), “we are seen, and talked about, in terms, often akin to something which is ‘hidden’. An ‘other’ that exists, but are often reluctant to ‘disclose’ ourselves, so our voices are not heard.” This ambiguity is echoed in recent research, where participants reject the term ‘disability’ in favour of more nuanced or strength-based descriptors, citing concerns of misrecognition and stigma (Wissell et al., 2025; O’Hara, 2024).

Resistance to fixed labels reflects a broader tension within neurodivergent identity, where individuals often navigate contradictory and complex social expectations. For the dyslexic individual, as evidenced in participant accounts and in conversation with other practitioners with dyslexia, there is a recurring sense of being ‘not disabled enough’ to receive recognition or accommodations within neurodivergent discourse, yet still ‘too different’ to be fully accepted in normative mainstream contexts (Alexander-Passe, 2015). Moreover, Odegard and Dye (2024) caution how portraying dyslexia through neurodiversity can inadvertently stigmatise and isolate those who do not conform to such stereotypes, effectively reinforcing this liminal position. This layered kind of othering and invisibility leaves the dyslexic simultaneously overlooked and marginalised. Across the workshops and talks I have held during the course of this PhD, one of the themes that repeatedly emerged was participants’ descriptions of feeling invisible or of hiding their dyslexic identity for fear of misunderstanding

or dismissal, mirroring these findings. The literature also underlines how dyslexic individuals might feel an inclination to conceal their identity due to the nature of their differences and the fear of being misunderstood or dismissed (Knight, 2025; Alexander, 2024). This dynamic is expanded upon and evidenced in the following chapter and in Chapter V.

Thus, the term ‘outsider’ serves both as a useful reference and a contested category. Who decides who is inside or outside the art world? For dyslexic artists, whose positionality is often unseen, outsider status both fits and fails. The art world’s tendency to commodify difference must be challenged through critical, inclusive and reflexive curatorial practices. In the next section, I will survey different organisations that engage with neurodivergence and specifically dyslexia.

## **F. Current Perspectives on Dyslexia and its Artistic Representation**

Research interest in neurodiversity, specifically in dyslexia, has increased over the past twenty years (Milton, 2020). Previous attitudes towards dyslexia have transformed, fuelled by a better understanding of neurodiversity. This paradigm shift has inspired the establishment of dyslexic charities, the emergence of neurodivergent art platforms and the curatorial support for exhibitions that are collectively challenging more traditional notions of artistic expression and representation.

Instead of viewing dyslexia as solely a learning disability, current thinking recognises that this difference of cognitive processing can be a unique strength (Nicolson, 2015). This shift challenges the historical stigma associated with dyslexia and fosters an environment that values such diverse cognitive differences advocating for a more inclusive representation.

One such notable researcher in the field is Professor of Psychology Nick Walker, who proposed the hypothesis of 'neurotypical' as a misnomer. In an interview with Dr Dora Raymaker, Walker (2020, pp. 6-9) describes how being neurodivergent relates not only to a learning difference but also to neural factors, relating to the nervous system, which influence

not only the way we think, but also the way we feel. Walker criticised the “pathology paradigm” as archaic, as it focuses more on what is wrong with the individual; he believes it should be replaced with the “neurodiverse paradigm” as a way of addressing social acceptance of our neurological differences. Walker further describes the pathology paradigm as “oppressive”, whereas the neurodiverse paradigm is seen as “generative”, emphasising the need for a paradigm shift. Interestingly, Walker highlights developments in the humanities and creativity to be most exciting in terms of their “transformative potential” in this area of research (Walker, 2020, pp. 6-9).

The term 'dyslexia' has gained popularity, particularly due to the emphasis on the strengths associated with this learning difference (Kannangara, 2018). Historically, dyslexia was largely perceived as a disability, as evidenced by its etymology, derived from the prefix 'dys-' meaning difficulty, and 'lexis' or 'lexia,' relating to reading. Formal recognition as a disability occurred only in 2010, when it was incorporated into the Disability and Discrimination Act in the UK (Bacon, 2013), despite being acknowledged informally for around a hundred year prior (Snowling, 2019). This legislative milestone necessitates increased awareness of this often silent or invisible disability (Griffiths, 2012).

The act of labelling a disability has been explored in Alexander-Passe’s article (2015), where this labelling is described as “a noose around the neck” (p. 212). This sentiment was echoed by research participants TH, who found it “unhelpful”, and by ZS, who expressed an aversion to being identified by their disability due to societal stigma and perceived self-diminishment. However, as noted by Alexander-Passe and McNulty, “the positivity of the labelling comes from individuals' understanding of their diagnosis” (Alexander-Passe, 2015, p. 212; McNulty, 2003). Furthermore, acknowledging the label, may address issues such as the “unlevel playing field” often faced by dyslexics, including workplace discrimination (Barden, 2014, p. 12)

Dyslexia charities often play a pivotal role in shaping the current narrative of dyslexia. These organisations provide essential support for dyslexics and access to resources, promoting education, awareness and empowerment. By calling attention to the diverse talents and capabilities of the dyslexic, these charities contribute to changing perceptions in society and to foster an environment where these neurodivergent voices can be heard and even celebrated within the creative sphere.

The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) is a leading advocate for dyslexic individuals, striving to form a society that supports their full potential. With a vision of a flourishing world for people with dyslexia, the BDA's mission is to eliminate barriers in education, employment and life. By expanding awareness through education and evidence-based approaches, the BDA promotes understanding and empowers individuals in the dyslexic community. Their core values of excellence, respect, teamwork and innovation guide their work towards achieving strategic objectives, including knowledge advancement, community engagement, advocacy, expert service provision and organisational sustainability. The BDA offers a range of services spanning expertise, engagement and empowerment, from providing expert information and training to advocating for inclusive practices and supporting individuals seeking assessments and adjustments.

Renowned dyslexic entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson's coinage of the phrase 'Dyslexic Thinker' (Prestidge, 2020) is a notable milestone in the field. Kate Griggs (2021), founder of global charity Made by Dyslexia, elaborates on this by identifying different dyslexic thinking skills as: (1) visualising, or envisaging space, senses and ideas; (2) imagining, or innovating new ideas; (3) communicating, or conveying clear messages; (4) reasoning, or making logical decision; (5) connecting, or empathising with others; and (6) exploring or using

curiosity to learn and understand (Griggs, 2021, pp. 65-76). Remarkably, ‘Dyslexic Thinker’ is a skill that is now recognised and endorsed in LinkedIn, thanks to Griggs pioneering work (Coleman, 2023). For many dyslexics in different fields, success is not an easy path. The charity Made by Dyslexia has compiled many interviews with high profile celebrities who are dyslexic, detailing the difficulties they experienced during their school years and how their dyslexia caused them to find strengths and excel in other areas such as acting, music and art.

Thomas G. West, author and authority on visual thinking and dyslexia, introduced the concept of “Leonardo Syndrome” In *The Mind’s Eye* (1991, p. 64), coined after Leonardo Da Vinci and his “pattern of reversals,” such as mirror writing, is an analogy to dyslexic traits of pattern detection. These reversals are seen in those with learning disabilities such as dyslexia in what West calls “mirrored minds” (West, 1991, p.64). It can be inferred that due to this kind of observation on the positive characteristics of dyslexia, more people are now vocal in speaking out and (in some instances) even acknowledge their dyslexia, equating this with a sense of pride, causing some to now declare dyslexia as a gift (Burden, 2005; Hale, 2015). There is still much work to be done however, as I have found throughout this research, many dyslexic artists are still reluctant to disclose their dyslexia. Some claim it is for personal reasons relating to family, others claim it is due to a preference for focusing on one's abilities rather than disabilities and others attribute it to the ongoing bias in which being portrayed or perceived as marginalised hinders their efforts to secure gallery representation.

The Royal College of Art (RCA) has conducted several workshops with dyslexic artists and researchers affiliated with the RCA have published their findings (Rankin, Riley and Davies, 2007; Riley et al., 2009; Rankin et al., 2017). A pioneer in the field of dyslexia and art making is Qona Rankin, the RCA's Dyslexia Coordinator. Rankin epitomises the institution's commitment to nurturing dyslexia within the art school. Rankin's own fifty year lived experience of artmaking and dyslexia, from being a student grappling with the limited support available to her at the time, to her now pivotal role in establishing dyslexia-aware programs, is

an embodiment of the RCAs transformative influence. Rankin has published many papers over the years and presented at numerous conferences in the field of artmaking and dyslexia. In her book, co-authored with Professor Howard Riley, Rankin speaks of to “look without language” and of how dyslexics struggle with numeracy but can find strength in what she calls “visualey”. Rankin and Riley discuss the struggles dyslexic artists might have with observational drawing and the ways of overcoming this, such as divergent thinking (Rankin and Riley, 2021, p. 13).

The emergence of neurodivergent art platforms is a sign of a broader societal shift towards the celebration of cognitive diversity in creative expression. Furthermore, such specialised organisations can provide a platform for dyslexic and neurodivergent artists to showcase their work, thus challenging established norms of artistic representation. Curatorially, these spaces are prioritising collaborations with artists to co-create exhibitions representing authentically the experiences and perspectives of dyslexic artists, resulting in an artistic dialogue reflecting the diversity of human cognition.

During a visit (March 2022) to Cromwell Place in Central London, an exhibition entitled *Art et al. X Cromwell Place: Season One* was held. The exhibition featured a selection of neurodivergent artists revealing a shift in consensus of what is considered diversity in the arts. The exhibition was put on by the organisation known as Art Et Al as its first UK show (<https://artetal.org>). This international organisation states that they are engaged in ‘expanding the scope, role and definition of contemporary art’ (2024). The very name of the organisation resonates with inclusivity, as the Latin ‘et al’ meaning ‘and others’ signifies the inclusion of otherness or outsider art. Although the organisation was founded only in 2021, it is supported by both the Australian and British Arts Councils.

OutsideIn, a neurodivergent arts charity, is a notable organisation that supports artists facing barriers in the art world, including those who are dyslexic. The organisation offers tailored support and fosters inclusivity (<https://outsidein.org.uk>). OutsideIn provides a platform

for dyslexic artists through various programs and initiatives.

I will now explore the experiences and perspectives of two curators from OutsideIn, Beth Hopkins and Cornelia Marland, who agreed to partake in an email questionnaire (personal communication, 2023) and who shed light on their engagement with dyslexic artists and the strategies they have put in place to facilitate an inclusive environment within their organisation. In response to my questionnaire, Hopkins and Marland, state that OutsideIn's approach to working with dyslexic artists is through open communication and offering personalised assistance. Furthermore, the organisation offers various ways for artists to engage in the art world, ranging from artists one-to-one support sessions to opportunities for artists training and taking part in exhibitions, as well as practical support such as help in creating proposals and applications for arts opportunities. They emphasise the importance for dyslexic artists to feel empowered and to be able to express themselves comfortably and effectively. The curators note that there is a diverse pool of artists at OutsideIn and that the perceptual differences often found in dyslexic artists are not readily apparent. For example, they discuss how dyslexic artists choose whether to disclose their dyslexia at their own discretion and how the organisation is committed to maintaining artist's agency in the sharing of such personal information. It is explained that this nuanced approach respects the individual's privacy while creating an environment where the artists can seek and receive the support needed. Hopkins and Marland highlight how significant accessibility is when supporting dyslexic artists. They offer options such as video submissions and facilitate phone calls or Zoom meetings as alternative means of communication. OutsideIn toured the UK with one of its biannual exhibitions, this time entitled Humanity (2023). The show commenced at Sotheby's in London, then Glasgow and finally Brighton.

## **G. A Review of Artistic Practices of Dyslexic Artists**

The dynamics of the creation of art and dyslexia have given rise to a somewhat less-

trodden avenue of inquiry for researchers such as myself. Within this section, the focus shifts to a comprehensive scrutiny of the practice of dyslexic artists. I will begin with speculations that artists like Leonardo da Vinci, Pablo Picasso and Andy Warhol were dyslexic. Different studies show potential links between these artists and dyslexia (e.g., Galenson, 2021; Chakravarty, 2009). However, this is inherently assumptive, as during these different periods, awareness of dyslexia was either undiscovered or undefined.

Probably the earliest well-known identified dyslexic artist is Robert Rauschenberg, an American multimedia artist whose work is notably connected to movements such as pop art. In an article, Professor Ken Gobbo (2010) elaborates on how Rauschenberg describes his dyslexia, noting challenges not only with written and spoken language but also with reversals. The artist explains how these presented difficulties in linguistic contexts but also how he was able to leverage it as a strength in his art. This Gobbo describes as a “novel way of seeing things,” which Rauschenberg was able to incorporate into his work (Gobbo, 2010, pp. 3-4).

Another well-known dyslexic artist is Chuck Close. Close is known for his large-scale photorealistic paintings. When speaking of his lived experience of dyslexia, Close states, “no one cared” (Gobbo, 2010, p. 3-4). Another article by Gobbo looks at the work of Close and similarities in the use of reversals as a strength in the work of the artist. Close states that he was able to mirror write from a very young age and says of when working on his portraits, “I have no trouble imagining what it looks like the other way around”. Gobbo expands on this, confirming that, “his learning difference shaped his cognitive style and his approach to problem solving” (Gobbo, 2014, pp. 3-4).

More recently, dyslexic artist Katharine Morling conveys how her childhood was marked by dyslexia and educational challenges, forming the core of her artistic narrative. In an article, she states, “my work is an emotional response to personal narrative,” conveying low self-esteem issues related to her dyslexia and school experience (Fielding, 2011, p. 42). Morling



went on to study at the Royal College of Art, where she embraced drawing as a lifeline to express her emotions. The artist translates everyday objects into life-size ceramic illustrations (Figure 2), a unique fusion of the familiar and the extraordinary. Morling's work serves as an emotional response to personal narrative, addressing issues related to dyslexia and school experience.



Figure 2. Katherine Morling. *Poison Pen*. Porcelain and black stain. 2010. 45x76cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Jason Lilley, an emerging printmaking artist, openly discusses his dyslexia and struggles with the written and spoken word, gaining notoriety for his unique perspective on iconic London landmarks (InspiringCity, 2020). Rachel Deane's paintings offer a window into dyslexic perception, with her installations conveying the complexities of relationships through striking visuals and narratives (Johnson, 2017). Deane's art reflects her idiosyncratic way of perceiving and comprehending the world, centred around visual cues and narratives, representing a distinctive cognitive approach (Johnson, 2017).

Rebecca Kamen pushes the boundaries of artistic expression with her neuroscience-

inspired sculptures, deeply influenced by her fascination with the brain and her own dyslexia discovery (Rolfe's, 2014). Kamen integrates artificial intelligence (AI) technology into her recent work, showcasing the potential of dyslexic minds in enhancing imaginative contributions through visual representations (PBS, 2014). Olivia Thomas, artist and preschool educator, finds inspiration in her students' imaginative thinking, shaped by her dyslexic perspective (Thomas, nd). Her embrace of self-love and empathy fosters understanding for those perceiving the world differently.

South-London artist Lucas Dupuy, discusses with *It's Nice That* how he is inspired by his personal experiences with dyslexia (It's Nice That, 2018). Dupay creates abstract art that blends painting, design, and drawing. A series of work shown at his Graduation Show at City and Guilds of London Art School (2017), offers intriguing insight into the experience of dyslexia. The works on show, entitled *Stackofreading*, *Readingpaper* (Figure 3) and *Learningof*, are indicative of the struggles with the written and spoken word. In this work, the artist explores how the blurred shapes of words affected his childhood learning. The work incorporates symbols that represent the unreadable, using a spray gun to evoke the blurriness he experienced with the written and spoken word. Dupuy's use of visual language reflects his unique perspective as a dyslexic artist.



Figure 3. Lucas Dupuy. *Readingpaper*. Acrylic on paper. 2017. Courtesy of the artist.

Katherine Hewlett is a dyslexic artist and researcher, who investigated the thinking approaches of visual artists, specifically dyslexic artists, focusing on the significance of divergent thinking, problem-solving abilities and lateral thinking in the context of artistic creativity. Her research, in collaboration with Norwich University of the Arts and the University of the Arts London (UAL), explored various facets of creativity, such as visual-spatial intelligence and pattern recognition and considers the potential link between dyslexia and creativity, which highlights the limited body of research in this area. The study utilised

interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and case studies to uncover unique cognitive strategies among dyslexic artists, emphasising multi-dimensional thinking, dream management and collaboration as integral components of the creative process. The research positions dyslexic flowed visual cognition (flowed thought) as a valuable creative strategy that extends beyond the arts, which offers insights into the distinctive thinking approaches of dyslexic artists and their impact on the creative landscape. Hewlett's research culminated in an exhibition entitled *Outsiders* (2016), with the artist stating the following, "this is an exhibition exploring the condition of being different and outside the mainstream" (Hewlett, 2018, pp. 17, 277).

Kye Wilson, a dyslexic artist specialising in video art installations, explores unconventional perceptions of the natural world. Despite encountering difficulties as a dyslexic artist, Wilson is celebrated for his achievements and accolades, featured on the BDA website #MyDyslexiaStory (2021).

Dyslexic twins Trevor and Ryan Oakes have revealed how they were encouraged into using their imagination in artistic pursuits rather than focusing on their "word problems" during their schooling years (Weschler, 2009, p.127). The Oakes twins were fortunate to have grown up at a time and in an environment that nurtured their dyslexia and were encouraged to develop their creative strengths and potentials despite their learning difference. For example, in Lawrence Weshler article *Double Vision*, he recounts how the young twins were not permitted to watch television or even fill out colouring-in books, instead, they were provided with art materials and an array of other items such as pipe cleaners, lolly sticks, glue, coloured paper, glitter and coloured markers. Their mother explains, "I didn't want their imaginations squeezed between somebody else's lines," (Weshler, 2009, p. 127). Being twins, they quite literally share the lived experience of being dyslexic artists. It is noticeable that much of their work leans

towards the perspectival and ocular vision (Pepperell, 2015). The twins' interest in perceptual differences is evident, for example, in their work entitled *The Bean*, 2008, (Figure 4), executed on a concave plane, which amplifies this distortion in their rendition of the original monumental sculptural work entitled *Cloud Gate* by Anish Kapoor, an artist I discuss later in Chapter IV. Here the Oakes twins have manipulated space using a concave canvas. In a recent article by Artnet News, the artist's work is described as “uncanny” when describing the “optical doubling” of their collaborative art making (Cascone, 2018).

The Oakes Twins lived experience resonates with that of the dyslexic gaze when exploring ocular and perspectival vision. The artists' work accentuates the importance of diverse perspectives in art and in the context of dyslexic artists engaging with the complexities of perception.

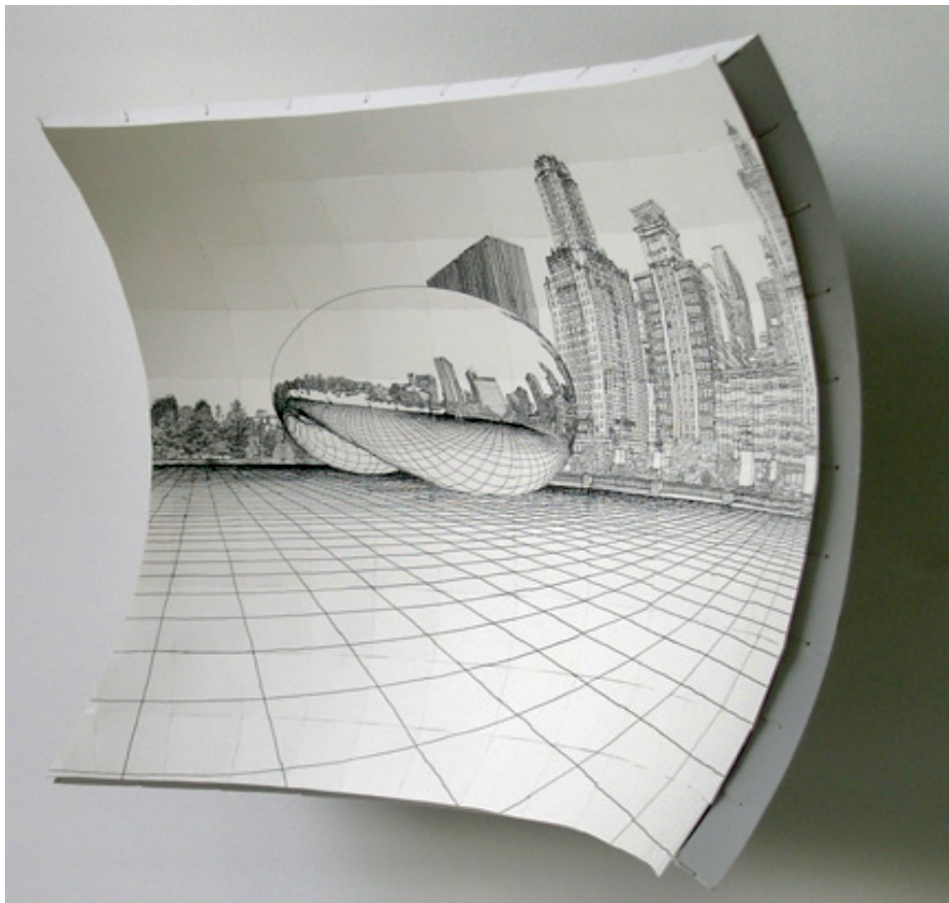


Figure 4. Ryan and Trevor Oakes, *The Bean*, 2008 Black pigment ink, cotton paper, linen tape, museum board 20 x 21 x 10 inches. Courtesy of the artists.

Dyslexic artist Navid Nuur talks of his work being otherly and “not fitting in”. The artist’s reversal traits attributable to dyslexia are evident when he talks of “working from the inside out” and use of lettering and mirrors in his work (Carey-Kent, 2013, p. 26). In the article *Flink of an Eye*, the artist’s work entitled *Theory* (Figure 5) suggests that the visual image can be perceived as transient and ephemeral (Westcott, 2009). The work consists of kitchen cloth with the wording theory written in capitals and in black felt tip pen. The artist then adds water in a technique known as colour washing. The image fades over time, as do all images. The work speaks of perceptual differences, including those related to the written word and suggest preference for wordplay. This inclination is often observed in dyslexic individuals, who may engage with words in this way rather than simply reading or writing them (Leveroy, 2013).



Figure 5. *Theory*. Navid Nuur. 2007-2008, Kitchen cloth, black felt pen.  
13 x 18 in. Courtesy of the artist.



Martin John Callanan, through an email questionnaire, acknowledged his lived experience of 'phonological dyslexia.' His work *A Planetary Order* (Figure 6-7) was featured in the *Scaling the Sublime* exhibition, which I discuss further in Chapter IV. His terrestrial globe represents a snapshot of Earth's atmospheric dynamics by displaying one second's worth of cloud cover data from NASA and the European Space Agency. Crafted from raw scientific data, found in the globe's pristine whiteness, intricate global cloud patterns can be discerned. Executed during Callanan's residency at University College London (UCL) Environment Institute, this artwork merges art and science to invoke contemplation on the Earth's interconnectedness. As Callanan reflects, "phonological dyslexia" intersects with his creative endeavours (Callanan, personal communication, 2023), which can be equated to holistic thinking and 3D global processing. This interdisciplinary approach, visualisation of complex data, emphasis on interconnectedness and spatial awareness exemplify how dyslexic traits are manifested in his work, while offering a profound and interconnected perspective on global issues.

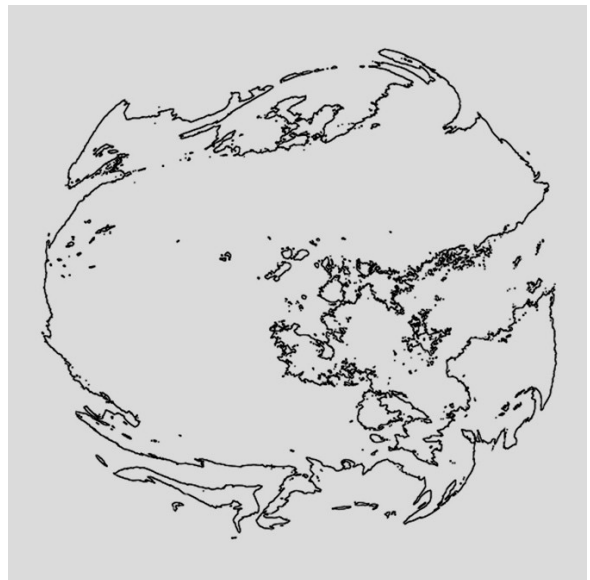


Figure 6-7. Martin John Callanan, *A Planetary Order (Terrestrial Cloud Globe)* 2014.  
Courtesy of the artist.

Australian artist Kim Percy is a multidisciplinary artist whose work explores the lived experience of dyslexia. Currently completing her PhD at Federation University Australia, her research project, *Visualising the Invisible*, culminated in a 2025 exhibition at the Post Office Gallery in Ballarat. Her practice spanning photography, video, painting, digital media and investigates dyslexic strengths, such as visual-spatial awareness, narrative reasoning and pattern recognition, which inspire and inform her creative practice. Percy's approach combines autoethnographic inquiry by utilising photography and digital media, as well as augmented reality and AI, revealing the often-invisible dimensions of dyslexia. I met Percy at the 2024 BDA Conference, where I presented my central finding, *The Dyslexic Sublime*. Percy has since thoughtfully engaged with this concept in her own work. One of the paintings (Figure 8) featured in her PhD exhibition titled *The Dyslexic Sublime* (2025), is a gesture that reflects the resonance of this idea within her practice. In our correspondence, I noted how its inclusion offers a powerful example of the impact and reach of this emerging discourse.

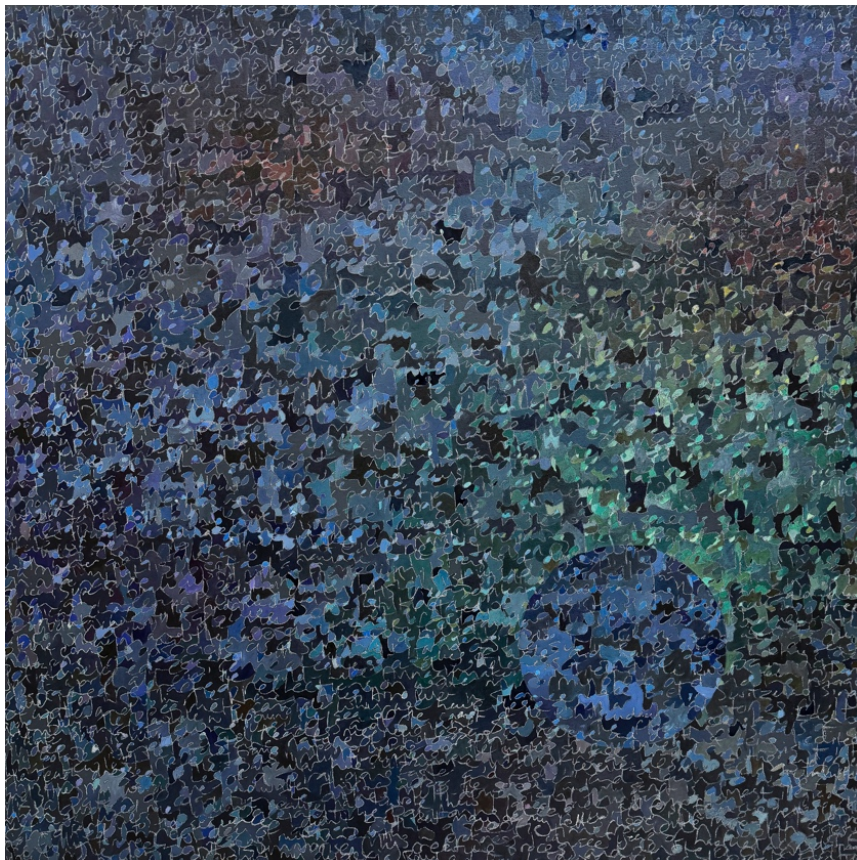


Figure 8. *The Dyslexic Sublime*. Oil and pastel on canvas 115 x 115 cm. 2025. Courtesy of the artist.



## H. Chapter Summary

This investigation into dyslexia in relation to creativity reveals unique strengths, as supported by evidence of consistent patterns of creativity among dyslexic adults. Neuroimaging has revealed increased brain activity associated with creativity and research points to enhanced global processing, holistic thinking and visual-spatial talents that contribute to a distinct artistic approach. Stein's magnocellular theory suggests neurological differences that impair reading fluency may simultaneously foster perceptual sensitivity, artistic vision and creative problem-solving. Stein emphasises "superior detection of symmetry and sublimity," identifiable in the dyslexic. The notion of 'positive dyslexia' reframes these neurological differences as potential strengths rather than deficits. Shifting the narrative from disablism to understanding neurological differences reveals dyslexia as a source of unique cognitive abilities and creative strengths, some of which may be compensatory and developed in response to challenges with literacy or communication.

This chapter also outlined the contested definitions of dyslexia, tracing variable perspectives from scientific, educational and sociocultural fields. Definitions from institutional bodies such as the BDA and IDA were compared with alternative models, including cerebellar and learning-style-based theories. This established the debated and evolutionary nature of dyslexia as both diagnostic and lived experience.

Furthermore, this chapter has explored how dyslexic artists often face discrimination, impacting their mental health and how this intersects socioeconomic status (SES) and ethnicity. I have expounded on how intersectionality is pivotal in understanding the experience of dyslexia, calling for early intervention and underscoring the positive impact of discovering a creative 'niche' in adolescence. I highlighted current perspectives on dyslexia, promoting a paradigm shift towards a neurodiverse understanding of cognitive difference. Figures like Walker who challenge

oppressive pathology paradigms and initiatives by dyslexic and neurodivergent charities and art platforms contribute to societal changes in this area. Notwithstanding such progress, reluctance to disclose dyslexia is extant, reaffirming the importance of a more inclusive society.

The concept of the ‘outsider’ was critically revisited, disclosing how dyslexic artists may be simultaneously marginalised and celebrated, often reframed by institutions to fit with marketable or inspirational narratives. The chapter underscores the need for more ethical and reflexive curatorial practices that move beyond a tokenistic inclusion.

Finally, this chapter presented the practices of dyslexic artists, drawing attention to their unique perspectives and creative processes. I expanded on the dyslexic artists' can utilise their visual approaches and unconventional thinking as a strength and how they make a significant contribution to the arts. I spanned a range of artists across different mediums, including painters, sculptors, and multimedia artists, to demonstrate the diversity found in dyslexic creativity. This emphasises the importance of embracing diversity of perspective in art, where each artist contributes uniquely to the field.

## Chapter III

### Lived Experiences and Artmaking Process of Dyslexic Artists

#### A. Chapter Overview

This chapter provides an in-depth investigation into the lived experience of dyslexic artists. The dyslexic artists, as research participants, are profiled to explore how the traumatic experiences of dyslexia can contribute to or be viewed through the lens of the Sublime. This chapter examines the challenges faced by dyslexic artists and how they transcend the experience of being an outsider and the concept of otherness. This discussion is followed by an examination of how the Sublime can serve as a framework for the development of methods in art making. I then refocus back to dyslexic artists and the art making process, highlighting the significance of visual-spatial related concepts such as the neuroscience of divergent thinking, the mind's eye and other related phenomena including mind wandering, which forms a part of my methodological approach, as outlined in Chapter I. I expand on Stein's research that magnocellular deficits in dyslexia may be causal to compensatory reliance on the parvocellular system, enhancing attention to visual detail and spatial awareness, factors that may underpin strengths in the arts (Stein, 2001). Lived experience also plays a crucial role: difficulties with language often lead dyslexic individuals to develop strengths in visual means of communication that, over time, might evolve into creativity.

In this chapter I also draw connections between mind-wandering and the concept of the *flaneur*, a reflective wanderer open to sensory impressions, highlighting how such states may function as creative strategies among dyslexic artists. I argue how these different aspects contribute to the art making process and to the causation of sublimity in art among dyslexic artists specifically. By calling attention to not only the unique challenges but also the opportunities that dyslexic artists face, this chapter contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the art world and the diverse perspectives that shape it.

The participant interviews in this PhD thesis have been reported anonymously, and all quoted statements are taken from these interviews which were conducted in 2021.

## **B. The Creative Journey: Lived Experiences of Dyslexic Artists**

### **1. Profile of Dyslexic Artists as Research Participants**

Twenty (20) participants were interviewed for this PhD research, nine of whom are female and eleven are male. The interviews took place in 2021. The participants vary in age, ranging from the early twenties to early sixties. There is a diverse range of ethnicity, cultural heritage and socio-economic status (SES) among participants. Some of them claimed to be mildly dyslexic and others severely; however, scholars disagree as to whether there is any way of measuring the degree of dyslexia (McLoughlin & Leather 2013; Snowling, 2019). The participants are at varying stages of their careers. There is also an exciting diversity in terms of their practice, as some of the artists use traditional means such as painting, drawing or sculpture; several of the artists find writing poetry to be a preferable way of communicating; some use filmmaking or animation; there is a musician in the group and several who prefer digital means of expression; one of the participants is a sticker artist, and another is a performing artist. All participants, however, share the urge to express themselves and their stories through the creation of art.

### **2. Trauma Experience in Dyslexia: Paving the Road to the Sublime Experience**

The experience of school for the dyslexic is often that of frustration, misunderstanding and in some cases, trauma. This can range from severe academic failure and exclusion to experiences of bullying or that of being marginalised, or indeed both (Armstrong, 2012; Burden, 2008). Over time these difficulties notably impact the self-esteem and emotional wellbeing of these individuals. With support in the classroom being of importance, research suggests consistency of support outside the classroom and particularly at home, can play a pivotal role in developing resilience, coping strategies and a positive sense of self (Glazzard,

2010; Alexander-Passe, 2006). Participant NM recounted his childhood schooling and the experience of name calling such as “thick, spastic, stupid” he said, “it affected you greatly”. This experience highlights the pervasiveness of trauma in the school experiences of dyslexic individuals, particularly those of the older generation like NM. This trauma is evident in various forms such as stupefaction and bullying that could contribute to a negative perception of oneself over time. According to the American Psychiatric Association, (1994), trauma is defined as something one experiences when threatened with physical harm or death. However, over the past few decades numerous authors have expounded on the traumatic experience of being humiliated, stupefied, and in some cases, physically abused at school because of being dyslexic (McNulty 2003; Alexander-Passe, 2016; Larsen, 2018). As pointed out by Michael McNulty, not all dyslexic individuals experience physical harm, but many do experience “intense feelings of shame and humiliation,” repeatedly. The lived experience of dyslexia has been described by Alexander-Passe (2016, p. 94) as ‘learning disability (LD) trauma’, often associated with post-traumatic stress (PTSD) Alexander-Passe, 2016, p. 94; McNulty, 2016, p. 377).

Participant ZS affirmed he had experienced being stupefied at school, such as being excluded from SAT’s exams, saying he felt “less adequate”. ZS was put in the lowest groups in secondary school. He explained how he had to work extremely hard to prove himself to be capable and was eventually promoted to higher groups. He recalled being called “stupid,” which, for him, was and still is the most offensive label, triggering his experience of being stupefied. This description by ZS of being excluded emphasises the emotional impact of being treated as inferior and the subsequent feelings of low self-esteem and incompetence. This account also highlights how often dyslexic individuals must work harder to prove their abilities in the overcoming of such negative perceptions and sense of belonging.

Participant TH also experienced being stupefied at school. TH recounted being held back a year, as was the way back then, which he found humiliating. Similarly, participant HS experienced bullying by peers and teachers during her schooling years and had to repeat a year

twice, “you were just classed as being dumb,” she said. HS was then threatened with being put into a “mentally handicapped school.” HS spoke of being labelled “dumb.” This narrative evidence the emotional impact of being marginalised and singled out within the education system, but also of the lack of knowledge and understanding about dyslexia and how the system was not equipped to support students with this learning difference.

Participant JN said she struggled at school and at times felt “thick” because she said, “this is what academia had told me.” This feeling attributable to JN's education implies that due to being dyslexic, JN was inferior. This serves as an example of the impact of societal expectations on self-esteem and how such experiences can affect one's intellectual confidence in later years.

Participant JB described “having a very hard time reading” at school, recounting “sometimes my classmates laugh at me, and I feel ashamed.” JB also described reading in front of the class as “very hard.” This account by JB reveals an emotional vulnerability in the educational setting and the stigma often associated with such encounters. Conveyed here are the difficulties associated with reading for the dyslexic individual and underscores the emotional impact when one becomes a target for laughter and the subsequent feelings of shame accompanying these struggles with the written word. Furthermore, this experience of negative peer interaction and ridicule is then associated with feelings of isolation, leading to self-confidence issues, reinforcing the dyslexic experience of otherness.

Participant KT described his childhood experience of schooling as “fraught.” KT's parents were dismissive of his learning difficulties as a child, he said. KT talks of his school experience as “I just bimbled [sic] through.” KT, being in his fifties, is of the generation where many educators and parents alike were often simply unaware of dyslexia. This highlights the lack of understanding and support that many dyslexics of this generation experienced. KT affirmed this by stating how it was simply unrecognised.

BR described her school experience of being accused of laziness and “left pretty much really at the back of the class.” BR described her secondary schooling as “a pretty bad experience for me all around.” BR said that because of this, she became “very withdrawn.” She further stated, “this is when art came into my life and became very important to me.” BR described being at school as “put in a stupid bracket.” She conveyed how art became a crucial part of her life at this time and highlighted the empowering importance of this. BR mentioned being put in the “stupid bracket” as an indication of the negative labelling and common experience of marginalisation because of dyslexia in the classroom environment.

Participant WK talked of how she “struggled at school” and her concern about the impact on a child’s self-esteem. WK stated, “I saw the school environment as this system in this game, that I saw what it took to win. And I saw that that [sic] was the like, winning was the goal, not learning.” WK talked of how “winning” was the primary goal instead of the pursuit of knowledge, highlighting the distorted priorities and the pressures experienced by the dyslexic individual within the education system. This emphasis on winning instead of learning in this competitive, traditional form of education perhaps undermines the innate motivation when acquiring knowledge, a priority of performance over learning. This experience persists according to Alexander-Passe (personal communication, 2024) and can also be indicative of the participants' interest in seeking alternative paths to success and in acquiring knowledge due to their different ways of assimilating information.

Participant RT said, “the only thing I was good at school was art”. Unfortunately for RT, it seems this was not encouraged by his educators at the time. He went on to say, “I’ve lived my life all the time, like this. Just thinking I was lazy.” This is a common experience of dyslexic artists in this age group and can lead to the internalising of negative self-narratives about oneself. RT said, “I’d spend most of my school time in the special needs unit.” RT experienced being called a “retard” and being told he would be “nothing in life.” He described his time at school as “horrendous.” This account by RT highlights the profound impact on a

dyslexic individual's self-esteem. This experience also resonates with many other dyslexic individuals who encounter similar condemnation and lack of support and understanding in education. These misconceptions of one's abilities and talents not being valued or even recognised as well as the negative labelling reflect the stigma and discrimination that many dyslexics have faced. Furthermore, being placed in a special needs unit aligns with the detrimental effects of social exclusion and stigma.

Participant BM talked of her early schooling experience:

It was really challenging for a long time. And I think more of the emotional effects of being dyslexic are probably the thing that stuck with me the most. Growing up not being able to keep up and how hard I had to work to get through high school and get through college. It wasn't easy. And I was really hard on myself for a very long time. But now I'm trying to look at it as something that made me stronger and not a deficit that I have. Because now, I mean, I'm not the fastest reader, but I can read, I can write, none of my letters are backwards. But you know, it's just a struggle when you have to learn differently your entire life. I went to a private Christian school, and I did have the support like, extra time, the extra whatever. But I still felt like I was so dumb all the time. Like it was me just struggling, struggling, struggling to keep up. Even with all the extra time. You know, kids would look at me different. They would think things about me because I needed the extra time. They thought I was lucky because I got the extra time.

Furthermore, BM expressed how the negativity experienced at school “bleeds into the creative experience to the over analysing.” By this, the participant said, “I have some trauma of learning with dyslexia, and that trauma caused me to be very critical of myself.” BM further discussed being overly critical of her artwork due to this. She said, “I’ve really struggled with not feeling good enough, because I felt so stupid.” She talked of how this has affected her, stating, “I don’t want to ask the question; I don’t want to feel dumb.” BM also mentioned her experience of “social anxiety”, describing it as, “I’m not good enough; everybody’s out to get me.” She explained how the humiliation felt by dyslexics at a young age “really sticks with you.” She then pointed to the emotional effects of dyslexia, discussing an internalised self-criticism and persistent feeling of “not feeling good enough,” something often attributed to the dyslexic experience. This aligns with



the psychological impact of dyslexia in relation to self-evaluation and self-perception. BM spoke of social anxiety due to the years of humiliation and negative perceptions she faced as a dyslexic, resulting in a feeling that “everyone’s out to get me” and the lasting effects on her confidence and social interactions. In summary, this account highlights the powerful emotions of dyslexia, such as self-criticism, inadequacy and social anxiety.

CP described his experience at school as “just dreadful.” CP began taking guitar lessons at aged ten. He was dissuaded by his teacher, who, at parents’ evening, told his parents that he should “pack up as he will not play an instrument in his life.” CP later joined a punk rock band, noting that “you only needed to play 3 chords.” In addition to being part of a band, he has gone on to teach music for most of his life. CP recalled being bullied by teachers because of his dyslexia. He said, “I couldn’t wait to get out of school.”

Participant DB recounted his experience in education. He said that at home, he was told he was “clever” but at school, he was called “thick or lazy.” He recalled feeling “terrified” when he had to sit for tests at school. DB recounted a dichotomy between being told he was “clever” at home and being labelled as “thick or lazy” at school. This perceptual discrepancy has impacted DB, who, for example, recounted his fear of tests due to the negative experiences encountered in school, which were linked to these feelings of inadequacy. He described being “terrified” before sitting for these tests, underscoring the emotional intensity and distress triggered in such settings.

Participant CV stated, “I never felt like I fitted in,” when discussing her schooling. CV explained how she was a very shy child. CV clarified that school years “were not happy memories for me.” She said that dyslexia was not recognised by her parents or school, and CV conveyed feelings of being an outsider during her schooling years.

Participant MC said that at school, “dyslexia was [sic] never mentioned.” He went on to discuss his school years, stating, “I was always behind. It was a very stressful time for me.” He described his experience with dyslexia as “it’s something I’ve fought through.” He talked

about the “imprint” that these negative early experiences leave on the individual. MC described his schooling as a stressful experience. For example, he conveyed the common absence of support for dyslexic difficulties and described being frequently left behind. However, MC also described having fought through his dyslexic experience with resilience and determination. This is common among dyslexic individuals who are often faced with similar adversity in their academic pursuits.

SM recalled his school experience, mentioning his struggle with copying from the blackboard quickly. He said, “spelling was always difficult for me” and further stated “reading out loud was quite difficult; I had to have a more in-depth understanding” when learning at school compared with his peers. He noted, “a lot of poets have been through trauma in their life, and they use the poetry to heal that trauma.” SM’s account of school as a struggle relates to his difficulty in processing information quickly. This is aligned as a common characteristic amongst dyslexics. SM conveyed a need for more thorough comprehension when learning and made an interesting connection between trauma and poetry. He believes this can be a means of coping and processing of intense emotional experiences, leading to a catharsis.

There are many commonalities in the experiences of trauma among this group of dyslexic artists. They all, in their own often unique ways, experience trauma to some degree. This trauma led them to seek ways to ameliorate these events. As they developed into teenagers and young adults, many of them discovered art to excel and a means to find peace from these often-disturbing experiences.

It is important to note that those from older generations clearly experienced more painful and often traumatic experiences than the younger participants. Despite progress in understanding dyslexia, as outlined by Wilmot et al. (2023), children still face significant challenges in education. They encounter heightened risks of mental health issues like “anxiety and depression” (Wilmot et al., 2023, p. 51). Furthermore, the educational environment conceals their difficulties, leading to anticipatory anxiety and school refusal, resulting in long-

term emotional suppression (Wilmot et al., 2023, pp. 50-51). As highlighted by Alexander-Passe (2024) and supported by participants within the group who are parents, stigma and discrimination persist in both school and higher education (HE). This prompts some parents to continue home-schooling their children, due to witnessing similar mistreatment in school. Additionally, older dyslexic individuals still face discrimination in HE (Alexander-Passe, personal communication, 2024).

According to Alexander-Passe and others, some dyslexic individuals respond positively to trauma in what he refers to as Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), stating that “trauma drives them.” This is defined by Jayawickreme et al. (2021, p. 145) as “enduring positive psychological change experienced as a result of adversity, trauma, or highly challenging life circumstances.” Alexander-Passe, however, confirms that this represents a relatively low percentage, about a third in his studies, and due mainly to parental support, which may differ substantially among individuals (Alexander-Passe, personal communication, 2024).

### **3. Finding the Niche in Art**

As discussed, many studies outline a connection between art and dyslexia (Rankin, 2007, 2017; Šimčíková, 2018; Houghton, 2021). As noted by Šimčíková (2018, p. 466),

Research studies into the incidence of dyslexic symptoms in people with high creative potential, as well as research studies directly comparing the level of creativity of individuals with dyslexia to intact individuals, have generally yielded consistent conclusions. These conclusions suggest that individuals with dyslexia have the ability to develop creative thinking exceeding that of intact individuals.

People with dyslexia often prefer the visual image as a means of communication. This can lead to the dyslexic individual developing a career in the arts. This development can lead to one finding what is known as a niche. As also previously discussed, a niche can be defined as an area where one can excel by finding something we can get better at by perseverance, often initially outside the classroom, which for the dyslexic may be reminiscent of trauma. I discovered my niche in late adolescence.

During my late teens, I began drawing extensively. This was noticed by a family member who asked a friend, who was also head of art at a college, to visit our home and look at my work. The head immediately arranged an interview for me, leading to my enrolment in a diploma in Art and Design that academic year. Discovering my niche during late adolescence was a crucial time to find something at which I was able to achieve success in. This bolstered my self-confidence and self-esteem, as I was learning to be good at something which led to exhibiting and selling work, leading to a transcendent experience. By attending college, I was able to mingle with like-minded individuals (artists) and feel part of a community with a sense of identity and connection. For the first time in my life, I was able to be in a classroom environment and succeed. As a result, I went on to complete a Bachelor's in Painting, an MA in Fine Art and now pursuing a PhD in Art. By finding this niche in my late teenage years, I was beginning to overcome the classroom trauma often experienced by the dyslexic and experience success and learning in HE, as well as establishing a business selling my art.

Similarly, participant NM described being dyslexic and an artist as “a double edge sword.” NM attended a specialist school and stated that his artistic talents were recognised and he found an “escape” through art. NM stated that “you were aware of the artistic talents you had been given.”

Fortunately for Participant ZS, whose parents were supportive of his dyslexia, worked in the creative industries and he had relatives who were also dyslexic. ZS said, “visual intelligence is very important for dyslexics.” ZS stated that although he started by painting, he became very aware of space and his work evolved into the medium of sculpture. ZS recalled in his younger years working on family-owned farms, where he learned skills that he was able to transfer into his practice of sculpture.

Participant JN compensated her dyslexic trauma by attending music school, which was her “creative vent.” JN then became self-taught in photography and worked as a commercial

photographer. She went on to attend arts school and graduated with a first. She now works in sculpture/mixed media, particular mirrors and glass, “transparent things” and described herself as a conceptual artist. JN is currently studying a PhD in Art.

TH enjoyed art from a young age and would often stay behind at school for extra art class. His parents were supportive of his interest in art from a young age. People would often say, “he’s good with his hands,” although TH says he found this condescending. TH is now represented by a gallery and has shown work at the Royal Academy Summer Show, as well as being engaged in many other successful commercial pursuits as an artist.

Participant HS parents were supportive; she was sent to an expensive boarding school. HS then attended an apprenticeship in metalwork at the young age of 13/14. From this grew her interest in metal work, to which she describes as having developed “in a refined manner” as a choice early on, shaped by negative experiences at school. HS stated, “metal is my first language.” Prior to this, HS talked about a period in her youth (aged about 11) when she was always carrying a tennis ball and bouncing it around, as if to emphasis her heightened dextrous perceptibility. HS talked of experiencing a “precision” either with a machine or with her hands that she was good at and how she gained confidence thereafter. HS is now a highly successful artist and educator.

JB participant described her love of painting and drawing since childhood. JB said she prefers to “focus on something I’m good at,” which she sees as a consequence of her dyslexia. Many people tell JB that her work is good and now she sells her work. JB said, “now I am selling things that I make from my hands” and it is clear this has increased her confidence.

Participant KT stated that since being identified as dyslexic and engrossed in his art, he felt more relaxed and more self-accepting of himself. He described his work as a process of research within himself, his artmaking and his dyslexia, a kind of “working out,” he said. KT often takes part in group shows as an artist and works successfully full-time in community arts

projects.

BR was offered a place at a six-form college because she wanted to study A level art. It was here that her life significantly changed, as she also discovered she was dyslexic. She described this artists' environment as "brilliant, yes it was quite a leap." BR described artmaking as "my words, my way of making poetry." When asked about feeling stigmatised, BR stated, "because I'm in the art world I'm not facing too much of that now in my life." The artist regularly exhibits, sells and receives accolades for the art she makes.

WK shared that her mother was an art teacher, who often would tell her "art is the most important subject" WK said this "holds true in my soul." She preferred art over "focusing on what I was bad at." WK believes her mother encouraged and valued her creative strengths. She described being an artist as "it was my only option."

BM said, "as a kid, art class was the one place where she felt confident." She stated, "I felt like I was free in a sense." BM spoke of art as "a place where I can express myself where can't elsewhere." By this, she also means the writing of stories as an art form. She described her story writing as "creating a whole new world." She talked of her creative writing and how she prefers not to write on her own real-life experience, but rather imagined worlds and characters where she sees herself in these characters. She said that she is interested in their lived experience of "not feeling good enough" and stated, "I have a different brain." She also wished that art was taught more as an alternative or as a form of therapy, remarking that, "art provides a way to learn differently."

CV voiced how "colour, shape and form are fundamental to my daily life" when discussing how dyslexia relates to her artmaking. CV said that she has always been drawn to art, but she was not aware that it related to her dyslexia, apart from the fact she was assessed as a "visual reader" earlier on. CV's mother being an artist, seems to have had quite an influence on her. She said, "art making is the only place I feel at home in myself" further adding,

“my art practice is the thing that grounds me, connects me with the world, and in a way that makes me feel sane and safe.”

Participant MC recalled drawing a lot at the age of 9/10 years old and how this was encouraged by his parents. He also wrote “boxes” of poetry at about the same age. MC described his art making process as a “safe haven, a sacred space, where all that mattered was the thing that you’re working on.” He described this as a “comfort zone, a judge-free space” He said he did not see himself as being good or bad at art, saying, “It was just something that I did.” He described being in this space where “it’s just you and your medium, you’re the driver.” SM, a poet, performs at “open mic events.” In these events, poets recite their work onstage. According to SM, using Zoom and being on the mic performing to an audience have helped boost his confidence and he says, “develop my style, performing my stuff.” SM talked about the concept in relation to poetry as “own your stuff, nobody else can be you and you can’t be anyone else.” He talked of the fun of doing what he calls “improvisation poetry” off the top of one’s head. He said that with poetry, “you can take it in any direction you want.” He writes “free verse”, which he also calls “brain dump.” He described becoming aware of dyslexia as “an enlightenment.”

#### **4. Experience of Being an Outsider and Otherness**

Many artists experience a sense of being an outsider and feelings of otherness. The distinction for dyslexic artists, as previously touched upon, lies in the fact that dyslexia is frequently an invisible disability, accompanied by cognitive processing differences that give rise to distinct challenges in seeking understanding and accommodations. Psychologist and dyslexia specialist Ursula O’Mahoney states, “our cognitive processing can be as individual as our appearance” (O’Mahoney, expert interview, 2021).

Dyslexic individuals may also belong to other marginalised groups, creating an

intersectional experience that adds complexity to their narrative. O'Mahoney talks of dyslexics "dealing with otherness" throughout their lives (O'Mahoney, 2013), meaning the experience of 'not fitting in' and being discriminated against due to their learning differences. Alexander-Passe notes that dyslexic people often "feel that they don't fit into their family," adding another layer to the pervasive sense of not belonging that many dyslexics experience from a young age (Alexander-Passe, expert interview, 2021). Participant KT describes feeling like an outsider because, despite his ability to communicate effectively and think through things clearly, people doubted his learning difficulty and, he says, suspected he was "pulling a fast one." KT relates dyslexia as something "otherworldly," bigger than us and beyond our understanding. He recounts being discriminated against even in the workplace. Despite (he says) being able to present himself reasonably well verbally, he perceived that his peers saw him as "odd". This combination of disbelief, discrimination and being viewed as peculiar by his peers contributed to his feeling of being an outsider.

In this research, I argue that dyslexia and otherness can be connected to the notion of the Sublime, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter IV. Zepke (2017) discusses the Sublime in relation to an ontology of otherness. He draws upon Immanuel Kant's concept of the 'suprasensible,' which refers to phenomena beyond the scope of the senses, relating it to infinity and the Sublime experience. I expand on this in Chapter IV. Author Nami Lee speaks of "transcending comprehension of the other," describing a transcendence to otherness through the Sublime and putting forward the Sublime as "salvation" from suffering (Lee, 2021, p.94). Another perspective of otherness is recounted by West who defines this experience of otherness specifically in relation to dyslexia, stating:

It is commonplace that the best artist or writer is an outsider, observing human events at the edge. Again, many non-dyslexics can take on this role. But many dyslexics, because of their experiences of deep humiliation from the earliest days, seem naturally to assume the role of a distant observer, the truth-talking commentator who is not caught up in the race. They have felt the otherness from the start (West, 2017, p. 116).



I contend that dyslexic artists tend to exhibit an inclination towards alterity or otherness, often seeking elements beyond the self. This observation stems from the challenges they face due to their dyslexia, which has led them to grapple with a sense of being different throughout their lives (O'Mahoney, 2013). I posit that dyslexic individuals, amidst their struggles, may find a parallel between their experiences of otherness and the Sublime aspects of art and visual-spatial perception. I propose that by harnessing these visual-spatial strengths, dyslexic artists can pave a path forward through the creation of new, positive experiences; they may ultimately transcend the negative associations often associated with dyslexia.

## **5. Transcending Discrimination and Marginalisation**

As previously mentioned, interviewed participants share a common experience of trauma as dyslexic artists, particularly in their younger years. This experience resonates with the sense of trauma in the Sublime, as recounted by philosophers in this field, particularly in relation to terror. This exploration of the Sublime relates to the overwhelming and awe-inspiring aspects of nature or experiences that evoke a sense of terror and fascination simultaneously (Shaw, 2017). This will be further explored in Chapter IV. In the context of dyslexic artists, their encounters with the challenges of dyslexia, which are often distressing even in adulthood, can be likened to the overwhelming and often terrifying nature of the Sublime. This experience often results in a sense of despair, isolation, stupefaction, humiliation and impacts on the formation of self-esteem, which can persist into adulthood (Deh, 2019). Just as the Sublime invokes both fear and wonder (Shaw, 2017), the creative journey of dyslexic artists navigating adversity encompasses moments of both distress and inspiration.

Most traumatic experiences require some recovery. Art can be a useful means to facilitate this recovery. For example, Appleton states “trauma is stored in memory as imagery, expressive art processes provide an effective method for processing and resolving it” (2001, p.

6). Similarly, dyslexic artists, such as I, find a profound sense of healing through our art and the art-making process, finding a niche whereby we are allowed to fail without fear of experiencing humiliation, learn from failure and eventually succeed. These are transcendent experiences (Decker, 1993).

WK describes her experience of art as a powerful means of communication and connection. She explains that when she is able to connect or communicate with her audience through her work, it feels like a transcendent experience, “in a bigger way.” She refers to art as a “connection tool” between herself and the spectator, highlighting the profound impact of this interaction. WK emphasises, “we have a need to communicate, and we have this thing about us that inhibits that,” pointing to the inherent challenges in self-expression. For her, expression is transcendent, which she describes as “breaking out of your body.”

Similarly, BR describes her creative process as a form of being “totally absorbed” and states, “it’s a spiritual act, whenever you’re in the moment of something.” She talks about “being in the moment, which you’re not often in any other thing,” reflecting a profound sense of immersion in her work. DB adds that his own experience when making art involves “waiting for that moment of clarity where suddenly everything clicks,” describing these instances as “magical moments.” Similarly, KT reflects on moments in the artmaking process when he feels, “I’m losing myself for a minute in a great swirl of thought” and describes art and art education as “liberating.” KT notes, “I find those things easy that others find difficult,” emphasising his unique perspective and motivation, which he characterises as “self-led.”

Participant NM conveys his experience with art and art making, describing it as “beauty and terror, side by side.” Furthermore, participant SM spoke of his work as a therapeutic process, saying, “that’s why I can do poetry, I can just let my mind go.” Each participant reflects on how art provides a means of transcending everyday experiences, connecting deeply with their inner selves.

This experience of transcendence provides healing from past trauma and, I argue, be a source of profound inspiration for ‘big ideas.’ Moreover, the acceptance of their neurodiversity and identity as an artist offers a sense of freedom to be different. Digital artist LV talked of his experience of depression and anxiety in his younger years, saying he has “overcome many things” through his work. He reflects on this journey as an artist by noting, “we can do things alone, we can succeed alone,” highlighting how personal resilience and artistic expression have enabled him to navigate and transform his challenges. This desire and belief in one’s ability to work independently is further evidenced in Chapter V, as well as in my own practice as an artist in Chapter VI.

The lived experiences of these dyslexic artists resonate with my own. Discovering that I am dyslexic caused me to reflect on why my preference of expression throughout life was the visual image. I became aware in my younger years that I was a visual reader through tests taken whilst studying at college. Having worked as an artist my entire adult life, I now look back on those years and question myself what can be learned from my lived experience as a dyslexic artist.

### **C. The Sublime as a Frame in Understanding Dyslexic Artists**

Reflecting on my practice over the years, I have learned through extensive reading on the Sublime that my art making process has affinities with these concepts. I argue, therefore, that from the struggles I have faced due to my own neurodiversity, in relation to alterity, have led me to explore an otherness in the creation of art. As discussed, there is a connection and resonance between this sense of otherness in dyslexia and the notion of otherness in the Sublime, as will be further explored in succeeding chapters. This has sparked my interest in the question of alterity and how dyslexic artists respond to it.

In the interviews, I raised the question about how the participants’ making of art might relate to aspects of the Sublime in relation to art theory. Many of the artists found this question

particularly interesting; however, a minority claimed that they saw no relevance of the Sublime to their work. This response was usually influenced by the participants' actual interest in or knowledge and awareness of Sublime-related ideas. Upon further examination of the interview transcripts, many participants have inclinations towards areas that can be equated with the Sublime, either consciously or unconsciously. For example, although participant CN did not see a direct relevance of the Sublime in his art making, he emphasised his keen interest and expert knowledge of technology, which he extensively utilises in his work. He described how he and other dyslexics excel at "solving problems and working around things," which reflects the Sublime's principle of pushing beyond limitations. While CN did not explicitly frame his technological expertise and problem-solving skills within the context of the Sublime, these aspects of his practice align with the Sublime's principle of transcending constraints.

In contrast, other participants expressed a more explicit connection to the Sublime in their art practices. CV states that her artmaking is a transcendence. She describes a "duality" and talks of a "phantom self," stating that through her art, she is trying to ask big questions such as, "who am I? What is this world? What is this other?" She talks of stripping away constructs of the self. DB describes his experience of being dyslexic as encouraging "larger or bigger more overpowering experiences."

An affinity with spirituality and the Sublime in art can provide a means for artists to navigate challenges in their material lives (Anachkova, 2017). Consequently, I argue that the Sublime holds particular significance for dyslexic artists, given their marginalised experiences of otherness. The negative associations frequently encountered during childhood and into adulthood, such as feeling out of place, confused, or defective, can be recontextualised through creative expression. Dyslexic artists often harness these experiences of alterity as strengths. What may be perceived as disadvantages in conventional academic settings can, in fact, become advantageous in creative environments (Sepulveda and Nicolson, 2020).

## **D. Visual-Spatial Perception**

Notions of a visual-spatial learning are often associated with dyslexia and attributable to perceiving in an intuitive holistic manner (Silverman, 1991; West, 2017; Stein, 2021). Although some research suggest a deficit in dyslexia and visual-spatial abilities (Facoetti et al., 2000; Menghini et al., 2010), other research has shown that dyslexics have an increased emotional sensitivity to visual stimuli, a heightened ability of the manipulation of three-dimension imagery and a propensity to problem solve by divergent thinking (Nicholson & Fawcett, 2010; Taylor & Vestergaard, 2022; Sturm et al. 2021; Stein, 2021; Hewlett, 2017). Therefore, dyslexic individuals might have a unique relationship with the visual world, identifiable by both weaknesses and strengths in visual-spatial perception and heightened sensitivity to sublime stimuli, as outlined by Stein (personal communication, 2023).

### **1. The Neuroscience of Divergent Thinking Abilities in Dyslexia**

Dyslexia, traditionally viewed as a reading disorder, has increasingly been recognised for its potential strengths and unique cognitive inclinations, particularly in realms related to discovery, invention and creativity (Taylor and Vestergaard, 2022; Whitfield, 2022; Whitfield, 2020; Mortimore, 2003; West, 1997; O. West, 2008). As Eide and Eide aptly noted (2019) "the question we need to be asking is not what's wrong with the dyslexic brain, but what is dyslexic cognition for, what are these brains really built to do?" (Eide and Eide, 2019, *Dyslexi och Kreativitet*, June 3rd). Relatively new research investigates the neuroscience of divergent thinking in dyslexia, shedding light on the strengths attributable to dyslexic individuals who excel in seeing the bigger picture, detecting complex systems, making connections across various domains, identifying patterns and simulating future scenarios (Griggs, 2021).

This consistent cognitive advantage observed in individuals with Dyslexia is their exceptional ability to see the bigger picture. This skill involves the capacity to detect and reason

about complex systems, recognise connections between disparate perspectives and fields of knowledge and identify patterns and analogies across contexts. As touched upon, individuals with dyslexia exhibit a heightened ability to simulate and make predictions about the future or unwitnessed past events (Eide and Eide, 2011). This broader perspective not only enriches their creative potential but also has profound implications for divergent thinking.

As found by Taylor and Vestergaard's (2022), an important aspect of divergent thinking is exploration, a cognitive process they say plays a pivotal role in creativity and innovation. In the context of dyslexia, individuals may possess a specialised form of exploration that is characterised by enhanced "cognitive search capacities" (Taylor and Vestergaard, 2022; p. 9). This specialisation allows them to adapt and excel not only in a specific environment but across a range of habitats. Furthermore, the cognitive advantage of this adaptive specialisation, which pertains to the development of specific skills or strengths that enable individuals to thrive in their unique circumstances.

Stein's earlier research into the magnocellular visual pathway has been foundational in understanding dyslexia as more than a reading disorder, as outlined in Chapter II. While previously I discussed the difficulties associated with magnocellular impairments, particularly in relation to reading and writing, I will now shift the focus to how these neurological differences may support alternative cognitive strengths, especially in visual-spatial and creative domains.

A central concept in Stein's work is that many individuals with dyslexia possess enhanced abilities in holistic visual processing, what he describes as "seeing the whole picture" (2001, p. 13). This cognitive strength allows them to swiftly perceive and comprehend complex visual stimuli, including "impossible figures" such as Escher's Waterfall (Figure 9), where water seemingly flows endlessly in a continuous loop, a phenomenon characteristic of such images. Dyslexic participants show a speed advantage in detecting the impossibility of impossible figures, a task that relies on global rather than local processing

(von Károlyi, 2001; von Károlyi et al., 2003; Taylor and Vestergaard, 2022). Holistic processing involves perceiving and comprehending visual information as a unified whole, simultaneously considering the relationships between its various elements. Consequently, dyslexic individuals exhibit adeptness in interpreting paradoxical visual stimuli, a trait that stands out when compared to individuals without dyslexia (Rajabpour et al., 2021).

As previously stated, Stein proposes that deficits in the magnocellular system may prompt increased reliance on the parvocellular system, which handles high-resolution visual input and fine detail. This reallocation of perceptual resources may contribute to the strong visual-spatial awareness seen in many dyslexic individuals. These compensatory mechanisms, according to Stein (2001), are not just alternate routes but can be sources of artistic and creative advantage, offering insight into why many individuals with dyslexia excel in fields that require visual thinking.

I contend that although there is clear evidence of brain differences in dyslexic individuals, when it comes to art, the relationship is also shaped by lived experience. From my own perspective as someone with dyslexia, I have found that early difficulties with written and spoken language often led to a growing reliance on visual imagery as a more effective means of communication. This shift, born out of necessity, may explain why studies frequently show little difference in creative output among young dyslexic schoolchildren, but a noticeable increase in creative achievement among dyslexic adults. As previously discussed, it is through adolescence and often through finding the ‘niche’ that many individuals with dyslexia begin to develop compensatory mechanisms. I contend that over time, these mechanisms not only support communication but also evolve into strength.





Figure 9. *Waterfall*. M.C. Escher. 1961. Lithograph. 39.8x30cm. All M.C. Escher works © 2024 The M.C. Escher Company - the Netherlands. All rights reserved. Used by permission. [www.mcescher.com](http://www.mcescher.com)



As previously outlined by Taylor and Vestergaard (2022), reframing individuals with dyslexia as specialised in exploration carries profound implications for educational and societal structures. Recognising their unique strengths in divergent thinking and exploration can guide the development of educational curricula that harness these abilities. Moreover, urging society to move beyond deficit-centric perspectives and create inclusive environments that empower individuals with dyslexia to flourish. Nevertheless, it is essential to note that differences in exploratory specialisation can also expose individuals to social structures that limit opportunities. Therefore, dyslexia is not merely a disorder but a unique cognitive difference that may bestow individuals with exceptional divergent thinking abilities. The neurological underpinnings of these strengths, including global, holistic processing and enhanced exploration, offer valuable insights into the artmaking of dyslexic artists.

As touched on in Chapter II, I highlighted the work of researcher and dyslexic artist Hewlett, who conducted a doctoral study in association with UAL on divergent thinking among dyslexic artists (2018). Her studies found a high percentage of dyslexic artists worked in a lateral divergent way and in what Hewlett termed “multidimensional thinking” (p. 80), providing empirical evidence of divergent thinking abilities in the dyslexic individual. In Hewlett’s research, the recurring mention of a “third eye” relative to the mind’s eye (p.100) signifies a reflective and analytical perspective among a group of dyslexic artists who took part in her study. This highlights how our often-unique way of making sense of the world aligns with heightened awareness and observational skills. Furthermore, aside from using one’s mind’s eye, Hewlett found commonalities among her participants, including daydreaming/nightdreaming (mind wandering), otherness, intuition, fluid thinking and what she termed “spark moments” (p.46). Hewlett’s research focused extensively on the thinking of dyslexic artists, with the author stating that her work “discusses thinking as a way of seeing” (Hewlett, 2018, pp. 46-100).

In exploring the neuroscience underpinnings of divergent thinking in dyslexia, I aim to offer specific insights into the exploratory cognitive processes and creative potential of dyslexic artists. The objective is to expand the definition of artistic experience to include the unique perceptual differences inherent to dyslexia. I propose that the creative process, fuelled by the visual-spatial abilities of dyslexic artists, is a profound experience. This sense of being outsiders, linked to viewing the human condition from an alternative perspective, will be explored in the following chapter, emphasising how unconventional viewpoints can yield profound insights.

## **2. The Mind's Eye and Spatial Reasoning**

The mind's eye, or visual imagination, plays a crucial role in human cognition, particularly when individuals allow their minds to wander or experience what some might consider "weird daydreams" (West, 1997, p. 61). This ability to create mental imagery without prior sensory input enables individuals to simulate experiences visually, assisting with memory preservation, creativity and problem-solving (Kosslyn, 1980). Conjuring mental images helps one retrieve memories, envisage scenarios and explore solutions, which can be highly beneficial to human cognition (Sacks, 2011; West, 1997).

Related to this is 3D spatial reasoning, the ability to mentally manipulate and comprehend three-dimensional space (Eide and Eide, 2011). Individuals, especially those with dyslexia, who may possess strong 3D spatial reasoning skills can visualise and manipulate objects in their minds, accurately perceiving spatial relationships, depth and movement. I explore this in Chapter V and VI. Furthermore, interconnected reasoning, a cognitive strength closely linked to spatial reasoning, involves understanding the relationships between elements within a system and recognising that nothing exists in isolation (Eide and Eide, 2023). This skill allows individuals to perceive patterns and understand how changes in one part of a system can impact the whole, contributing to a holistic understanding of complex systems and the

ability to quickly identify ‘impossible figures,’ as previously touched upon. Together, these cognitive abilities illustrate the power of visual thinking and holistic perception in solving problems and grasping complex systems.

### 3. Mind Wandering as Creative Processes

Known as the “default mode network,” mind wandering is something most of us are inclined to do and up to half the time (Fox and Beaty, 2019; Corballis, 2013, p.1; Eide, 2011). Michael Corballis, a Professor of Psychology, believes that letting the mind wander is something very useful and a “source of creativity” (Corballis, 2012, p. 215). Mind wandering for the dyslexic artist is a way of the mind taking a break from the detail and engage in holistic perception, as evidenced in my own practice where I reflexively documented the process in Chapter VI. I noted that my own mind wandering usually lasts approximately thirty second intervals where I found myself in a relaxed state. I also noted down my thoughts immediately as; thinking about everything but nothing. Based on documented thoughts from these three-mind wandering experimental exercises, several key discoveries and insights emerged, an annotated example of these notes can be found in the Appendix. During the first exercise, which lasted 38 seconds, thoughts were unfocused and generalised, leading to a relaxed state. This suggests that allowing the mind to wander freely may naturally induce relaxation, offering a break from specific tasks or concerns. Exercise two lasted 30 seconds and highlighted an awareness of mind wandering itself, reflecting a level of metacognitive awareness, or thinking about one’s thinking. The third, lasting 30 seconds, involved more structured thoughts around problem-solving and the envision of an art project, while looking out of a large window. This exercise showcased how mind wandering can incorporate detailed, goal-oriented thinking, potentially aiding in creative problem-solving and planning processes. Across all exercises, a common theme was relaxation, indicating that mind wandering serves as a mental respite.

An earlier concept resonating with mind-wandering is that of the *flâneur*, particularly in an urban setting, as explored by Satvir Singh (2024) and writings of Walter Benjamin (1940)

and Charles Baudelaire (1863). The *flâneur*, a figure who wanders the city with no fixed destination, embodies an openness to impressions and detachment from the detail. Comparable to mind-wandering, *flânerie* is a state of mental respite, where meaning emerges not through directed thought but other sensory perceptions like intuition. For dyslexic artists, this mode of mental travel, whether through a cityscape or the inner mind as touched on previously by Corballis (2012), is useful in the creative sense. Importantly, the *flâneur*'s sensitivity to one's surroundings is tied to its ambulatory quality: the slow, unhurried movement through space creates a kind of emptying that allows clearer thought and a synchrony of body and mind, whereas mind-wandering is often framed as occurring in a stationary body. In this sense, mind-wandering among dyslexic individuals might be seen not merely as an inclination, but as a creative strategy deeply embedded in a longstanding cultural tradition of reflective wandering, hence what is referred to as our 'default mode' (McCormick et al., 2018; Corballis, 2013).

Moreover, Preiss and others (2020) argue there is a connection with imagination and mind wandering and how daydreaming can be useful in the same way as nightdreaming, stating "letting the mind wander facilitates unconscious memory processes" (pp. 19-21). The authors expound on how alternating between intense focus or mindfulness and mind wandering can be useful using a term known as "flip-flopping." In the context of creativity, "flip-flopping" is a means in the dynamic process of alternating between generating ideas and evaluating them. This phrase gives emphases of the importance of fluidity between divergent and convergent thinking modes in the creative process. According to Preiss et al., 2020, pp. 19-21), this fluid oscillation between controlled and less controlled thinking is crucial for fostering creativity.

Dyslexic artists often talk of letting the mind wander to gain insight or inspiration (Eide, 2021). Participant BM describes getting a better sense of something by letting the mind wander, for example to "sit there, look out of the window and think about it." Participant NM, a painter, stated how he likes to "dwell it over [sic]" before continuing a work. For example, he talked of how he enjoys being outside in a natural environment and how he can somehow distil this

memory in his mind/imagination and later, allowing his mind to wander or “dwell it over [sic]” and depict it on canvas. Another participant and multi-media artist, JB, described looking at the clouds, seeing shapes, and “imagining things very creatively” before making art. In studies, Eide and Eide found that dyslexic individuals had a preference to let their mind wander before doing some of their best work, five times more often, compared to a control group (Eide and Eide, 2021).

## **E. Chapter Summary**

This chapter examined the lived experiences of twenty dyslexic artists and how schooling-related trauma, stigma and marginalisation shaped feelings of otherness. Despite such challenges, participants described finding agency and a ‘niche’ in art, using creative practice to reclaim identity, counter negative labels and experience moments of connection and transcendence. These narratives were situated within the Sublime as a conceptual frame, clarifying how visual–spatial perception informs dyslexic artmaking

Drawing on Stein’s work, the chapter considered differences across the visual pathways (magnocellular/parvocellular) and how compensatory perceptual strategies, together with lived experience, may underpin visual–spatial strengths. It also established mind-wandering as a methodological and creative resource, set alongside the cultural figure of the flâneur and discussed related constructs such as the mind’s eye, 3D spatial reasoning and ‘flip-flopping’ between divergent and convergent thinking.

Taken together, the chapter showed how dyslexic artists transform adversity into distinctive creative strengths and clarified the conceptual and methodological bases used to interpret their practices.

## Chapter IV

### The Sublime as a Conceptual Frame in Understanding Dyslexic Artists

#### A. Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I examine key thinkers on the Sublime in the history of Western philosophy, acknowledging that this concept has also been explored across various theoretical and geographical contexts. I refer to a range of movements, including but not limited to, Ancient Greek philosophy, the Enlightenment, the Romanticism period and the Postmodernism era. The backdrop of Western thought refers to the intellectual tradition, philosophical viewpoints, cultural values and historical developments having shaped discourse on the Sublime, originating primarily from Europe but later spreading to North America.

Through Dionysius Longinus's early treatise in the first century CE to additions by Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant in the 18th century and later Jean-François Lyotard in the 1980s, the Sublime has captivated philosophers over the centuries. Notwithstanding such diverse perspectives, these thinkers have a shared credence of the Sublime transcending ordinary experience and is evocative of both awe and wonder (Mukand, 2015; Bethelmy and Corraliza, 2019). The chapter also situates the Sublime within art history, tracing its shift from Romantic nature to modern and current practice. Figures such as Barnett Newman and Merleau-Ponty, whose work and philosophical perspectives further expand the concept of the Sublime beyond traditional aesthetic boundaries. Lastly, I will argue how sublime concepts, such as transcendence and otherness, can be used as a conceptual frame in understanding the lives and artmaking of dyslexic artists.

It is crucial to emphasise that I am not suggesting that all artists with dyslexia inherently possess a propensity towards the Sublime; this assertion cannot be definitively

proven, and data does not consistently support such a claim. Rather, I argue the concept of the Sublime can offer valuable insights into artmaking by individuals with dyslexia, irrespective of the artist's stylistic preferences, whether they personally define their work using the term or are even aware of the concept of the Sublime. I propose that the Sublime can be a powerful way of evaluating and understanding unique experiences and perspectives attributable to the dyslexic individual and in the context of making art.

### **B. Longinus, Kant, Burke, and Lyotard: Theoretical Underpinnings of the Sublime**

One of the earliest thinkers to postulate on the Sublime was a Greek philosopher thought to be named Longinus, who used the term “hypsos,” which translates into ideas of “elevation, peak, height, or crown” (Shaw, 2017, p.17). In his treatise *On the Sublime*, Longinus believed that the Sublime was a quality of speaking and writing that could inspire awe, wonder and admiration in its audience (Russell, 2016). Longinus argued that the Sublime was achieved using grand and elevated language, as well as vivid imagery and metaphors. For Longinus, the Sublime was not only a quality of language but also a quality of thought and the truly sublime orator was one who could express the highest ideals and emotions in a way that was both powerful and beautiful. Longinus’ concept of the Sublime has been equated with terms of greatness, loftiness and grandeur of thought, or “eminence” or “excellence” as the quality of mind (Doran 2015, p. 33).

Longinus speaks of “pathos, passion, [and] strong emotion” (Longinus, (trans.) 1991, pp. 8-19). Furthermore, he conveys the use of hyperbole, amplification and dramatic appeal in the spoken and written word. Longinus's treatise, which could be seen as an early form of literary criticism, highlighted the quality of good writing, which made significant contributions to the idea of the Sublime. This perspective was part of a broader movement within the Roman Empire, where there was a growing interest in the arts. Specifically, Longinus's focus was on the rhetorical power of the spoken word. However, this emphasis on the Sublime later evolved

into more literal interpretations, particularly gaining traction from the eighteenth century onwards.

Longinus' concept of the Sublime resonates profoundly across various intellectual and creative disciplines, encompassing literature, philosophy, rhetoric and aesthetics. In literature, the Sublime is intrinsically tied to moral greatness, as Longinus emphasises the significance of the writer's soul and nobility. This notion permeates literary works by accentuating the writer's ethical values and the ability to transcend worldly pursuits like wealth and power, thus instilling depth and authenticity into their creations. The association between moral nobility and literary excellence inspires writers to infuse their works with *pathos*, conveying strong emotions, heroism, sympathy and tragedy that resonate with readers on a profound level. Furthermore, Longinus champions naturalness and a down-to-earth portrayal of life, reflecting the concept of *ethos*, which enhances the writer's connection with the audience.

In philosophy, Longinus' ideas on the Sublime delve into the metaphysical realm by encouraging contemplation of that of which is much bigger than the individual, in relation to our existence. This philosophical exploration aligns with the broader concept of freedom and moral integrity, essential components in Longinus' view of literary and intellectual greatness. The idea that great writers must break free from superficial, showy writing devices to create a lasting impact on future generations speaks to the power of rhetoric grounded in ethics.

In the eighteenth century, Irish philosopher and politician Edmund Burke believed that the Sublime was a quality of experience that comes from a sense of danger or threat. Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) postulates the primacy of pain and pleasure, particularly terror, in the sublime; this has been characterised as an *existential sublime* by Ibata (2018). Burke argued that the Sublime was not only a feeling of awe and wonder but also that of fear or terror that arose from the experience of danger or threat, such as encountering a wild animal or being in a storm and that this feeling was



essential to a sublime experience. Burke believes that the Sublime was a way of confronting and overcoming our deepest fears and anxieties and that it was through this confrontation that we could achieve a sense of transcendence and spiritual renewal (Anachkova, 2017).

Burke's exploration of the Sublime has made a significant impact on a range of fields, beyond the boundaries of literature, including philosophy, rhetoric, aesthetics and other disciplines. In literature, Burke's concepts of the Sublime have laid the foundations for understanding the emotional depth and intensity of literary works. Writers during the Romantic era, such as William Wordsworth, drew heavily from Burke's ideas to convey the profound and awe-inspiring experiences found in nature. The Sublime became a central theme in Wordsworth's poetry, allowing him to capture the emotional states of his characters.

In philosophy, Burke's contributions to the Sublime have influenced discussions about aesthetics and ethics. Additionally, in the realm of rhetoric, Burke's understanding of the power of language and imagery has played a crucial role in shaping persuasive techniques that resonate with audiences emotionally. His insights into the Sublime have emphasised the importance of evoking deep emotional responses in rhetorical communication.

In the 18th century, contemporaneous with Burke, philosopher Immanuel Kant wrote extensively on the theory of the Sublime in his *Critique of Judgment* (Kant, 1790). Kant conceived of the Dynamical Sublime in terms of a sense of awe relating to nature and the Mathematical Sublime concerning scale or magnitude (Zepke 2018). On the Dynamical Sublime, Kant refers to "nature as might", asserting that "might is a power that is superior" (Murray, 2014, p. 260). According to Kant, the Dynamic Sublime was a quality of experience of a person when confronted with something that was both vast and powerful, such as a stormy ocean or a towering mountain (Kant, Walker (ed.) 2008). For Kant, the Sublime was evoked primarily by the experience of immensity exhibited in the natural world (McShane, 2017). Kant argued that the Sublime is also a source of both pleasure and pain. He believed the Sublime

was a transcendent occurrence, allowing the experiencer to go beyond their own limitations and connect with something greater than themselves. For Kant, the Sublime was not only a quality in nature but also of art and great works of art could generate the same sense of awe and wonder as natural phenomena (Brady, 2012).

Professor of Philosophy, Douglas Burnham elaborates on Kant's concept of sensibility or "sense perception" and the imagination, discussing "things sensed in space and time" concerning "sensible intuitions" and deducing intuition and imagination as facets of Kant's sensibilities (Burnham, 2000, pp. 14-20). For Kant, the imagination is linked to the Sublime, where one attempts to grasp vast magnitudes holistically, suggesting immediate and comprehensive understanding, which contrasts with the gradual, sequential apprehension during a "feeling of the Sublime" (Kant, Walker (ed.) 2008, p. 89). This attempt to comprehend vastness "at one glance" reflects the mind's desire for an immediate, simultaneous intuition, challenging the imagination's typical step-by-step process. As Kant explains, the Sublime "does violence to inner sense" as the imagination struggles with this task, revealing the limits of sensory perception while pointing to reason's capacity to grasp the infinite (Kant, Walker (ed.) 2008, p. 259). In Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, conveyed is the concept of the "suprasensible". Kant elucidates this as "a faculty of mind transcending every standard of sense," pertaining to realms of human cognition that are deemed "unknowable" and unintelligible (Kant, Walker (ed.) 2008, pp. 169, 254).

When we think of transcendence, it becomes apparent that this involves experiences and states of being that surpass the boundaries of ordinary human existence. As psychologist Abraham Maslow (1969) articulates, through the transcendent aspect of the Sublime, individuals can overcome the imperfections and shortcomings of our human nature and instead experience a sense of perfection or realisation of one's potential. Maslow writes of these extraordinary moments as "peak experiences" or "metahuman" experiences, emphasising their capacity to evoke feelings of awe, wonder, or amazement (Maslow, 1969, pp. 62-65). These

transcendental episodes can manifest across various conditions, whether it is encountering the grandeur of a natural phenomenon like a vast mountain range, being moved by a profound work of art or music, experiencing extreme serenity and reverence during meditative contemplation, or establishing a profound spiritual connection with something greater than oneself, such as a higher power, a spiritual entity, or the cosmos (Long, 2000). These transcendent experiences not only offer a glimpse into realms beyond the mundane but also serve as catalysts for personal growth and spiritual fulfilment.

There is a similitude between Maslow's concept of transcendence and Kant's concept of the Sublime. While Maslow may draw inspiration from Kant's ideas regarding the Sublime and aspects of human transcendence, Maslow's concept of peak experiences and self-actualisation introduces unique elements that differentiate his approach from Kant's philosophical framework. Maslow's focus on personal growth and fulfilment adds depth to the understanding of transcendence beyond what Kant proposed in his philosophical works. For Maslow, transcendence means to go beyond the limitations of the individual self and experience a sense of unity and interconnectedness with the world around us and sharing social responsibility (Maslow, 1969). Transcendence is considered as a fundamental human need, and it is often associated with peak experiences such as creative flow, spiritual experiences and moments of deep connection with others.

In the 1980s, Jean-François Lyotard introduced the Postmodern Sublime. In his work *The Postmodern Condition* (2005), Lyotard redefines the Sublime as an encounter with unfamiliar or strange phenomena. This departure from traditional notions of the Sublime highlights the essence of Postmodernism, which challenges established norms and embraces ambiguity. Lyotard's exploration emphasises the fragmented, diverse and disorienting experiences characteristic of Postmodern thought, where encounters with the enigmatic take precedence over conventional notions of grandeur. Furthermore, these experiences are evocative of feelings of anxiety and are seen as both unsettling and exciting (Behrooz, 2020).

In a similar light, individuals are confronted by something that is very different from everyday experience, challenging their preconceived notions, and forcing one to reassess their understanding of the world. In the Postmodern world, these unsettling experiences come through technology (Salvesen, 2021). Lyotard elaborated on Kant's distinction between the Mathematical and Dynamic Sublime: he argued that the Mathematical Sublime, as defined by Kant, is a representation of the unrepresentable or that which exceeds our capacity to perceive and comprehend. This is what Kant termed the suprasensible or beyond the senses, as previously outlined.

Lyotard expounds on the unrepresentable as a limit to human thought and experience that is encountered in moments of crisis or upheaval (Lyotard, trans. Bennington and Massumi, 2005). The Mathematical Sublime, according to Lyotard, is the experience of this limit, which exposes the incompleteness of our human knowledge and understanding (Silverman, 2016). In contrast, the Dynamic Sublime, as defined by Kant, can be the experience of threat and overpower (Kant, Walker (ed.) 2008). For Lyotard, the Dynamic Sublime represents a challenge to human agency and control, as it exposes the fragility of human existence in the face of natural forces beyond our control (Silverman, 2016). In this sense, the Sublime is not simply a matter of individual sensory experience, but also a matter of collective ethical and political significance, as it calls into question not only our assumptions about human autonomy and our relationship to the world, but to ourselves and relates to what is known as the Techno-Sublime. The Techno-Sublime refers to the awe and terror elicited by advancements in technology and digital media, highlighting the vast, often uncontrollable power of technology that transcends human understanding and evokes a sense of the infinite (Morley, 2010). Lyotard went beyond postulating on the collective ethical and political significance of the Sublime, especially in the era of rapid technological development in digital media (Shaw, 2017).

Scholar Hugh Silverman (2016) explores key concepts in Lyotard's philosophy, specifically examining the 'differend' and the 'event.' Lyotard's 'differend' refers to conflicts

stemming from fundamental differences in understanding, resulting in communication breakdowns, notably evident in moments of conflict and radical misunderstanding. Silverman explains how these breakdowns are not only a cause of miscommunication but are also causal to injustice, as one side may lack the means to express its position adequately within the existing frameworks of language and power, leaving their grievances unvoiced or misunderstood. Lyotard's use of the term 'event' articulates a conceptual framework that incorporates both ethical and sublime dimensions, distinguishing a 'before' that signifies a state of potential and ethical consideration prior to the occurrence of transformative or disruptive experiences (Silverman, 2016). In these instances, Lyotard views the otherness of the 'Other' as a 'differend,' emphasising the special qualities of these occurrences. This means that sometimes communication breaks down because of fundamental differences in how we perceive things. Despite this difficulty, Silverman suggests that there's something special and important in these moments, the "before" or the 'event' has ethical (related to morals or values) and sublime (awe-inspiring) qualities (pp. 10-11). Furthermore, Silverman contends that these moments possess unique and significant insights akin to the Sublime (2016).

According to Longinus, the Sublime involves a sense of transcendent elevation and strong emotion (Longinus, Grube (trans.) 1991). Burke, on the other hand, saw the Sublime as arising from feelings of awe and terror (Costelloe, 2012), while for Kant, the Sublime is an experience of overwhelming magnitude that exceeds our ability to comprehend it (Doran, 2015). Lyotard takes the Sublime into the future, considering the ineffable and injustice born out of misunderstanding (Silverman, 2016). Whilst each of these philosophers had their own unique perspective on the Sublime, they share a common interest in the idea of an experience that transcends the ordinary. In postulating on the Sublime, the overarching theme is striving to overcome the bounds of human experience in what was termed by Kant as a transcendent force. Whether using language, the contemplation of nature, or the confrontation of our deepest fears, the Sublime remains an enduring and fascinating concept that continues to captivate our

imaginations.

### C. The Sublime in Art History

The concept of the Sublime is often associated with notions of grandeur and the ineffable beauty of nature. However, within the field of art, the Sublime surpasses mere representation of impressive subjects, extending beyond nature as its exclusive domain. The Sublime is not solely conditional on the portrayal of sheer size or scale. While vast landscapes, towering mountains, or colossal volcanoes may inspire awe, mere magnitude is not inherently evocative of the Sublime. As put forward by Kant, the Sublime hinges not only on the size of an object, but on how it is presented (Kant, Walker (ed.) 2008). Consequently, the Sublime is attributed to the creation of entities that transcend both beauty and scale while simultaneously eliciting feelings of awe and fear, echoing Burke's assertion that it is productive of "the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling" and entails "an astonishment, accompanied with a degree of horror" (Burke, Guyer (ed.) 2015, pp. 33-34).

Current artists' engagement with the Sublime tends to be subjective, in contrast to earlier, more formal or theoretical approaches. Some speculate that artists may deliberately avoid addressing the Sublime directly, instead allowing viewers to determine independently whether a work relates to the Sublime. In discussions on the Sublime, author Simon Morley characterises this phenomenon as "shying away", explaining that this occurs due to the excessive use of exaggerated language and stylistic elements. Morley further contends that "the discourse of the Sublime is therefore tainted by association with both malevolent politics and inauthentic mass culture" (Morley, 2010, p. 19). By this, he means how discussions on the Sublime have been influenced by negative political agendas and commercialisation of culture, undermining the authenticity and purity traditionally associated with the Sublime. Consequently, some artists may avoid or feel no connection to the concept of the Sublime, given its origins in a predominantly Western, patriarchal tradition, that might now feel outdated.

Others speculate as to whether the Sublime is even something achievable through intention, questioning if its very nature resists deliberate pursuit and can only emerge spontaneously or through unintended experience (Horan, n.d.). Several centuries of philosophical discourse on the Sublime have in recent times, introduced elements of intersectionality. This shift critiques traditional philosophies and advocates for methodologies that address the complex interplay of race, gender and sexuality (Mejia, 2023; Musser, 2019). It is within my own positionality, as part of a marginalised group, I argue that the Sublime can be reframed as a useful concept. For dyslexic artists who are marginalised, the Sublime can be a form of escape from normality; a way in which we can transcend our previously conceived limitations and a way in which we can find unique and individual expression through art making, utilising our strengths in visual-spatial perception.

Thus far, the discussion on the Sublime has investigated historical and philosophical perspectives, tracing its evolution by prominent thinkers over past millennia. Romanticism, an artistic and intellectual movement that originated in Europe in the late 18th century, is particularly significant in this context. The Romantic movement emphasised emotion, individualism and the glorification of nature, often reacting against the industrial revolution and the scientific rationalisation of the natural world (Berlin, 2013). Romantic artists sought to capture the Sublime, reflecting the awe-inspiring and sometimes terrifying aspects of the natural world and human experience (Amstutz, 2023). I aim to draw our attention to this discourse by offering an overview of artists whose work demonstrates evident connections with the Sublime. This exploration will begin with the foundational influences of the Romantic period through to Modernism and then current times, examining these relationships to the Sublime.

The oeuvre of nineteenth-century German landscape artist Caspar David Friedrich can be connected to Kantian philosophy, as exemplified in Friedrich's Romantic interpretation of the Sublime. Friedrich's landscape paintings, characterised by vast horizons and expansive skies, evoke a profound sense of awe in the natural world. Artists continue to draw inspiration

from Friedrich's work, interpreting it as an invocation of the Sublime. Similarly, the works of English landscape artist Joseph Mallord William Turner, an influential figure during the Romantic era, whose work leans toward the Sublime and aligns with philosophies expounded by Burke and Kant. Turner frequently depicted turbulent seascapes, enveloped in atmospheric effects that capture the awe-inspiring power of nature and its impact on humanity. Turner challenged contemporaneous notions of perception through his adept use of light, colour and atmospheric effects. His legacy, particularly in how his work invokes intense emotional responses, endures in contemporary art. In Chapter VI, I will touch on how my own work might have affiliations to that of these early Romantic landscape artists.

Modernism, as a cultural and artistic movement, emerged from a desire to rupture tradition and confront the psychological dislocation caused by industrialisation, war and the acceleration of modern life. In contrast to the Romantic Sublime, which located transcendence in nature and the divine, the modern Sublime turned inward, toward abstraction, affect and existential confrontation (Duffy, 2023; Shaw, 2010). Newman's seminal ideas in his essay, *The Sublime is Now* (1948) articulate this rupture. For Newman, the task of the modern artist was no longer to depict external grandeur, but to express internal states of being and the raw experience of existence itself. In his essay he states, "Instead of making cathedrals out of Christ, man, or 'life,' we are making them out of ourselves, out of our own feelings" (Crowther, 1984, p. 54). In his vision, the Sublime is not mediated by religious symbolism or myth, but becomes an event of presence and intensity, a confrontation with the void, the unknown and even terror. In invoking 'primitivism,' I draw on Rhodes (1994) and Strick (1994), who argue that modernism drew on idealised or appropriated notions of the 'primitive' to reject academic tradition and reconnect with elemental human experience. In this context, Newman reflects on the emotional core of so-called primitive art when he says, "terror lay at the base of primitive art ... [but] the terror was of man's own making rather than of nature" (Strick, 1994, p. 25), a point Strick highlights to show how Newman linked modernist abstraction to a universal, rather than purely



formal, human impulse. This sense of existential terror is not passive but generative, as illustrated by Newman's signature vertical *zips*, narrow bands of colour that divide the canvas and evoke presence, tension, and the viewer's confrontation with the void. This suggests that existential terror may not merely be a state imposed upon the individual, but a condition through which new ideas and creative expression can emerge. Newman insisted, "I feel that my zip does not divide my paintings. I feel it does the exact opposite... it unites the thing. It creates a totality" (Strick, 1994, p. 8). Philip Shaw further emphasises that Newman's zip "unifies as it divides... [it] suggests speed rather than stasis," framing it as a dynamic vehicle of metaphysical intensity (Shaw, 2010, p. 17). The zip thus functions not merely as a compositional line but as a structuring device that holds presence and absence in tension. Newman's work moves even beyond that into what he termed the "plasmic, plasma, as the fluid part of the body communicates thought" (Strick, 1994, p. 19). In attempting to express the inexpressible, the modern Sublime, as enacted by Newman, becomes a space where the limits of language, form and cognition are exposed. Where Romanticism found the Sublime in overwhelming nature, Newman locates it in the immediacy of being, resonating with those whose sensory and perceptual worlds are already heightened or disoriented. Newman himself described the process of creating the work *Onement I* (1948), featuring his first zip, as a moment of discovery rather than execution. He states, "I actually lived with that painting for almost a year trying to understand it" (Strick, 1994, p. 9), signifying that the Sublime, for him, is not a product but a prolonged and intimate encounter with the unknown. Newman asserts how the modern has a desire to destroy beauty, this reflects a shift from the picturesque to the overwhelming or from form to formlessness. In his essay on Newman, Crowther (1984) argues that the artist's zips and colour fields function as vehicles for metaphysical intensity, confronting viewers with a void that is both empty and saturated with presence.

Another prominent modernist artist is Mark Rothko, whose work explores easily distinguishable figure-ground relationships. His large-scale colour fields can be seen as

subverting the conventional organisation of “focused attention (the ‘figure’) and inattention (the ‘ground’)” (Morley, 2023, p. 81), creating instead an immersive and ambiguous visual experience. In this context, Rothko’s art does not merely depict the Sublime; it enacts it through perceptual destabilisation, inviting alternative cognitive styles to participate in meaning-making and opening a space where resonance, rather than recognition, becomes the primary mode of engagement. Simon Morley (2023) suggests that Rothko’s *Seagram Murals* deliberately undermine the “mind’s drive to organise the visual field into a familiar and stable perceptual field,” using large-scale canvases and repetition to create “an immersive viewing space” that frustrates conventional visual processing (p. 81). This destabilisation of perceptual norms resonates with Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of embodiment, which arose in critical response to the Cartesian mind–body dualism and to empiricist models of perception (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, pp. ix–x; 9). As touched upon in Chapter I and will be revisited again in Chapter VI. In *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012 [1945]), Merleau-Ponty argues that our contact with the world is not abstract or detached but rooted in our bodily being. He states: “by thus remaking contact with the body and with the world, we shall rediscover ourselves, since, perceiving as we do with our body, the body is a natural self and, as it were, the subject of perception” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, trans. Smith, p. 239). Through what he calls bodily intentionality, Merleau-Ponty reframes perception as a dynamic relation between self and world, where meaning arises not in the mind alone, but through embodied engagement with time, space and possibility. This is echoed in *The World of Perception* (first delivered, 1948), a later, more accessible series of lectures, where Merleau-Ponty describes perception as “a grasping of the world with our body,” underscoring that the body is not a thing but a ‘form of existence’ (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, trans. Davis, p. 63). This view complements Newman’s insistence that the Sublime lies not in symbolic representation, but in the immediacy of experience, an encounter that is felt before it is understood. Just as Newman’s zips function as ruptures and unities within the field of vision, Merleau-Ponty sees perception as already structured by the body’s temporal and spatial orientation. Rothko’s immersive canvases also

reflect this approach, rejecting stable figure-ground relationships and instead fostering a perceptual openness that prioritises emotional resonance over the clear identification of forms. Viewers are drawn into an atmosphere of ambiguity, where the experience of the work is felt rather than intellectually resolved (Morely, 2010). In both phenomenology and the modern Sublime, perception is not a single event but a series of bodily and affective events, an unfolding of the world in relation to the body, open-ended and unresolved.

In more current times, the Sublime in art has continued to evolve from romantic conceptions of overwhelm and natural grandeur to immersive, sensory experiences that challenge our perception and self-awareness. Bill Viola, a contemporary video artist whose work is shaped by Zen meditation and Eastern philosophy, exemplifies this shift. For Viola, the Sublime is not external spectacle, but a deeply internal event, emotional, spiritual and bodily. As he puts it:

The word 'sublime' means being overwhelmed, not just physically, the way a great storm at sea would, but being overwhelmed emotionally, spiritually, within every fibre of your body. Not destruction or chaos, but absolute revelation and truth of the moment. Absolute confirmation that this moment is an eternal moment. (Viola, quoted in Lawley, 2009, p. 24).

Viola's understanding of the Sublime anticipates the perceptual intensity and emotional resonance explored in the immersive works of other current artists. James Turrell's light installations exemplify this shift in the art making process where, in his work, light is both the subject and the medium. Turrell's *Aten Reign* (2013), dissolves spatiality immersing the viewer in fields of luminous colour that might elicit awe and disorientation. The artist's use of light causes one to contemplate the very act of perception itself (Sakhno and Staruseva-Persheeva, 2019). Here the viewer is an observer and participant, suspended in a luminous space, evocative of both the infinite and immaterial (Adcock, 1990). Similarly, Olafur Elisson's work titled *The Weather Project* (2003), of which transformed the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall into a mist-filled chamber, dominated by a vast, artificially created sun, reframing the Sublime as a communal experience.

Eliasson has merged technological construction and elemental spectacle, tempting viewers to engage with one another and their surroundings in somewhat collective wonder. Bishop (2005) suggests that Eliasson's work is appealing to viewers to engage in an emotionally resonant, collective experience, where the work becomes a blend of references to the natural world with technologically, constructed environments, prompting reflection of the Sublime in contemporary life. Anish Kapoor's work exemplifies a contemporary engagement with the Sublime through his use of voids, disorienting spaces and material ambiguity (Morley, 2010). His installation *Descension* (2014), a dark, swirling vortex of water, confronts viewers with a seemingly endless abyss, evoking both fascination and unease. As noted by *TheArtStory*, "Kapoor's conceptual work *Descension* speaks to a postmodern age in which our own security within nature is a given" (TheArtStory, n.d.). By destabilising perceptions of control and solidity, Kapoor's work reconfigures the Sublime as a sensory and conceptual experience that speaks to inner psychological and existential states, rather than external natural grandeur.

These artists cultivate the Sublime as an interactive experience of contemplation; anchored in perception, atmosphere, and the boundary between artifice and nature. Such themes are central to Romantic art and remain relevant in current explorations of the Sublime. Moreover, these artists incorporate elements of disorientation, darkness and despair into their work, resulting in visually striking and emotionally potent creations (Lombardi, 2022). British artist Antony Gormley's sculptures, often featuring large-scale figures in distressed states, evoking feelings of awe and fear, embodying darkness and despair. In correspondence with Antony Gormley Studio, where I inquired on the artist's interest in this subject, the response was that the artist does indeed reference Burke and the Sublime, asserting "there is no beauty without some terror" (Gormley Studios, (Gormley, 2012) personal communication, 2023). In the art world, there exists a profound and enduring fascination with the Sublime. Aside from such big names, many other artists have recently and overtly taken up the Sublime in their work. The Djanogly Gallery's exhibition, *Scaling the Sublime* (2017), held in Nottingham, UK, provided a captivating glimpse into this pursuit. Notably, the artists

featured in this showcase, including Martin John Callanan (whose work is featured in Chapter II), Simon Faithfull, Tim Knowles, Mariele Neudecker, Rebecca Partridge, Katie Paterson, and Richard T Walker, have shown an inclination for subjects that encompass the most awe-inspiring aspects of nature. These artists engage with subject matter such as magnificent mountains, majestic glaciers and the enigmatic allure of the moon and the stars, as well as the often-unreachable depths of the ocean. It is an exploration that is as relevant today as it was in the era of Romanticism, despite our current age of technological advancement and the unprecedented expansion of knowledge.

These contemporary artists operate across a diverse range of media, whilst drawing inspiration from traditional methods of image creation. Through collaboration with experts from other disciplines, they expand the horizons of their creative practice. The resulting artworks lead the viewer through a spectrum of emotions, from wonder and melancholy to contemplation of futility and absurdity. In *Scaling the Sublime*, the artists collectively contribute to a visual dialogue to that of sublime concepts and the natural world. Curated by Nicholas Alfrey and Rebecca Partridge, the exhibition is not only a testament to the enduring allure of the Sublime, but also the ability of current artists to provide fresh perspectives on the relationship between humanity and the Sublime in nature and reflect on our own existence within it. *Scaling the Sublime* demonstrates the unyielding power of art to evoke profound emotions and provoke contemplation, demonstrating its continued relevance in a world shaped by technological progress.

Mariele Neudecker is an artist among those who participated in *Scaling the Sublime*. Neudecker has carved a unique niche in the art world particularly through her tank works. The artist has a multifaceted approach to her work encompassing a range of media, including photography, sculpture, film and sound. Neudecker's practice explores the formation and dissemination of cultural constructs related to the natural and technological worlds, while examining the concept of the Sublime. In leveraging technology's virtual capabilities, the artist recreates a heightened experience of the landscape. Drawing inspiration from nineteenth-century Romantic artists, Neudecker seems

driven by a quest to uncover contemporary manifestations of the Sublime, be it in nature or technology. Her earlier ‘tank works’, characterised by meticulously crafted landscapes submerged in glass tanks, an echo of the Romantic tradition. In these miniature worlds the artist recreates atmospheric effects such as mist and fog, conveying a reimagined perspective on landscapes inspired by artists like Friedrich. In *Seisamag.com* (2022), Neudecker explains how her tank work has evolved from post romanticism to a response of the shifting perspectives brought about by climate change, notably exemplified by the work titled *And Then The World Changed Colour: Breathing Yellow*, created in 2019 and commissioned for display in London’s Dulwich Picture Gallery. Within this artwork, Neudecker skilfully depicts a forest submerged in an unsettlingly acrid yellow environment, serving as a vivid and poignant representation of the potential catastrophic breakdown of our environment. As our world grapples with the challenges of climate change, Neudecker’s art confronts these profound environmental issues with striking visual impact (Trigg, 2022). In the same way that Neudecker’s work leans toward the Romantic artists, I will show how my own work echoes both Neudecker’s and the Romantics’. It is important to note that this was not a conscious thought-out process, but rather one of serendipity and happenstance, evidenced and further discussed in Chapter VI.

Taken together, this overview from Romantic to current engagements with the Sublime provides a historical and theoretical ground on which my own practice has developed. In Chapter VI, I return to these ideas in relation to works such as *Canvas Cube*, *Trees in Water* and *Mind’s Eye in Water*, evidencing how the rotated square plane, perspectival shifts and immersive installations translate this lineage into a dyslexic mode of seeing. In this way the discussion above provides context for the reflexive analysis of my own practice in Chapter VI.

As expounded upon, the Sublime transcends being merely an aesthetic concept; it is not confined to the depiction of vastness, or the natural world. It can also manifest in man-made objects and other forms of creativity. Moreover, it is not the object itself, as previously expounded by Kant

and the suprasensible, but rather the 'event,' or “merely what happens,” as elucidated by Lyotard, that is central to understanding the Sublime (Gasche, 2001, p. 117-118). As a multifaceted concept, the Sublime entails the evocation of awe and fear through the manifestation of art in its totality or infinity. In this context, current artists, by crafting visually striking and emotionally powerful works that incorporate elements of chaos, disorientation, darkness and despair, prompt a reinterpretation of the Sublime. I contend that this contemporary interpretation underscores the significance of engaging with the unknown and the uncertain, facilitating transformative encounters and a heightened acknowledgment of the complexity of individual existence and, therefore, encompassing the neurodivergent lived experience such as that of the dyslexic artist.

As discussed, Rothko's immersive canvases also reflect this approach, rejecting stable figure-ground relationships and instead fostering a perceptual openness that prioritises emotional resonance over the clear identification of forms. I concur, his perceptual openness is not unique to Rothko; it aligns with a wider artistic tradition in which the Sublime is approached through destabilisation, ambiguity and affect.

Many artists, regardless of neurological differences, have long explored themes related to the Sublime, such as vastness, disorientation, or the limits of perception (Morley, 2010; Zepke, 2017; Shaw, 2017). However, as I will argue in the remainder of this chapter, the dyslexic experience introduces a qualitatively distinct lens. Artists such as Newman and Rothko who worked within mid-century modernism and later contemporary artists like Turrell and Eliasson, mentioned here in a broader art-history context and not as examples of dyslexic artists, engage (whether intuitively or consciously) with a phenomenological and philosophical lineage that emerged during the late 19th to mid-20th century. Thinkers such as Edmund Husserl and Merleau-Ponty reframed perception as situated, embodied and affective. These philosophical shifts run parallel to developments within the arts that challenged objectivity, stability and fixed meaning. For dyslexic artists, these shifts are not solely philosophical: they are personal and experiential. Dyslexic artists inhabit a perceptual mode

that is already nonlinear, fragmented and emotionally attuned. I contend that their engagement with the Sublime is not a thematic or stylistic choice, but a condition of lived reality.

Moreover, this research itself reflects the evolution of the Sublime as a living, shifting concept, one that can expand to include neurodivergent modes of perception and, in doing so, generate new insights into the nature of creativity, cognition and affect. I assert, the Sublime is not fixed; it is constantly evolving. And in the hands of dyslexic artists, it becomes not only a theme, but a transformative method of engaging with the world.

As will be expanded on in the following section, the neurodivergent experience, particularly that of dyslexia, can radically reshape how the Sublime is conceived, encountered, and expressed in current art practice.

#### **D. Exploring Parallels: The Sublime and Dyslexic Artists**

Longinus' concept of the Sublime stands as a lasting foundation for integrating moral and intellectual freedom across literature, philosophy and spoken rhetoric, offering potential insights for artists who communicate through these mediums. Hence, I emphasise the significance of Longinus' Sublime, particularly on 'pathos' (passionate emotional appeal), for this research, distinctly with regards to how dyslexic artists convey feeling through their artmaking. Moreover, Longinus attributes great value to the emotional dimension of writing, equating it with greatness (Longinus, Grube (trans.) 1991). This theme is highly relevant, as dyslexic artists often navigate a unique and intensified emotional landscape, as outlined by Sturm and colleagues, whose research found 'heightened emotional reactivity' in dyslexic individuals, stating:

Being highly attuned and sensitive to the world around us can be an asset as well as a liability. Making people with dyslexia keen observers of salient cues in the environment yet potentially at risk of too many powerful feelings (Sturm, et al., 2021, p. 290).

In visual art, Longinus' Sublime can serve as a transformative force for dyslexic artists. This departure from linguistic limitations allows them to make visually compelling works, utilising the



power of the Sublime in various disciplines such as art installations, painting, sculpture, poetry and performance art. By transcending language, the Sublime becomes a tool for dyslexic artists to convey profound emotions and narratives, offering a distinctive avenue for artistic expression unrestricted by traditional writing or reading. An example of this can be found in Chapter VI, where I reflexively document my own art-making process through the spoken word in a video installation.

I argue that a sense of terror, as described in relation to the Sublime by Burke, may also be found in the work of dyslexic artists. The traumatic experience of humiliation and confusion, often endured from childhood into adulthood, can be equated with this sense of terror. This concept of terror might be evoked by engaging with darker aspects of life and a sense of the unknown, like the experiences of dyslexic individuals when encountering cognitive and perceptual differences in comprehension. At this point, one may consider whether the Sublime is an enduring underlying feeling or a distinct, one-time experience for these individuals. I propose the Sublime as a nuanced blend of both. While it can manifest as a single awe-inspiring moment, it can also be a lingering sensation that resonates beyond that initial encounter. I contend that the Sublime is not merely ephemeral but has a profound, lasting impact on one's psyche. This perspective arises from my own reflexive documentation of the artmaking process, my lived experience of dyslexia and of working with other dyslexic artists. Through workshops, interviews and shared conversations, many participants described their experience of the Sublime not as an isolated of single event, but a sustained or recurring emotional and perceptual state that informs their creative process and sense of identity. This is explored further and evidenced in Chapters V and VI.

The perceptual differences and alternate ways of processing of the dyslexic individual can offer a different perspective on the Sublime, diverging from more traditional notions. Furthermore, the ability of dyslexics to triumph and navigate challenges in adversity also aligns with the Sublime. For instance, Burke conveys how the Sublime can arise from the experience of overcoming adversity and danger (Shaw, 2017). I assert that the Sublime is something inherent in the dyslexic individual that can erupt when triggered. This emphasis on perceptual and cognitive difference resonates with

Merleau-Ponty's ideas on perception as fundamentally embodied and situated. As he argues, our body is not a passive receiver but an active subject of perception: "a natural self" that constitutes our experience of the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, trans. Smith, p. 239). For the dyslexic artist, sensory and cognitive experiences often differ from the norm, thus embodied means of perception might be key to how these individuals encounter and experience the Sublime. Thence, heightened visual-spatial awareness, non-linear and intuitive thinking can be indicative of a distinct way of being-in-the-world, one that chimes with Merleau-Ponty's view of perception as lived, affective and generative. A similar dynamic underlies the Sublime.

Burke states, "anguish, torment, is productive of the Sublime," further proclaiming, the strongest of emotion is "an emotion of distress" (Burke, Guyer (ed.) 2015, p. 71). This emotion is certainly experienced by dyslexic individuals, not just during their early years but also into adulthood, often leaving a lasting impact akin to classroom trauma, as discussed in the literature and elaborated upon in Chapter III. In his *Philosophical Enquiry*, Burke discusses terror, describing fear as "actual pain" (p. 47). Similarly, dyslexic individuals often encounter fear and anxiety, particularly in educational settings, yet these challenges can foster unique strengths such as curiosity, empathy and divergent thinking (Eide and Eide, 2011; Rankin and Riley, 2021; Griggs, 2021). In overcoming adversity, dyslexic individuals' experiences align with Burke's notion that intense emotions, such as fear, can foster profound personal growth. This is further supported by Alexander-Passe exploration of post-traumatic growth, discussed in Chapter III, which suggests that early-life difficulties can lead to increased resilience and creative capacity in adulthood (Alexander-Passe, 2020). Similarly, as touched upon earlier, Newman's concept of existential terror as a potentially generative force offers a parallel view, that for some individuals, deeply distressing experiences may lead to creative expression or transformation. Although many face issues such as depression, low self-esteem, attentional difficulties and reduced self-efficacy, research indicates that dyslexic individuals often demonstrate resilience equal to, or even greater than, that of non-dyslexic individuals (Kannangara, Carson, Puttaraju, and Allen, 2018). As Chapter III also highlights,

experiences of deep shame and humiliation may, in some cases, contribute to the development of this resilience over time. Furthermore, evidence suggests that dyslexics compensate for their difficulties with written language by becoming “good at communication” in the spoken word (Sepulveda, 2014, p. 671). This compensation is essential for their success in entrepreneurship, where strong communication skills are critical for persuasion and networking. As Patricia Sepulveda (2014, p. 686) explains, “dyslexics have such trait, since they find it a way to compensate their writing skills,” further reinforcing the idea that verbal communication becomes a strength developed in response to their challenges with reading and writing.

This theme of overcoming adversity through creative means leads into an exploration of the Sublime, as articulated by Lawley. Lawley (2009, p. 24) asserts that “a communication is sensed almost beyond the understanding of the human mind. But only almost.” He continues, “The Sublime scene offers itself to be heard and read; it presses to be met and recognised by the human imagination.” I argue that this resonates profoundly with the dyslexic experience. Dyslexic individuals often grapple with the challenges of traditional language processing, where written text can seem almost impenetrable. Lawley’s insight underscores how the Sublime, as an overwhelming yet accessible form of communication, parallels the unique cognitive strategies employed by dyslexic artists. The Sublime, in its vastness and emotional depth, might be a domain where dyslexic artists transcend linguistic barriers through their imagination and creative expression, as will be explored in Chapter V. Thus, the Sublime may serve not only as a transformative tool for expressing intense emotions, but also as a testament to the dyslexic artist's ability to engage with and reinterpret their world in innovative ways. This can be comprehended further through Burke’s notion of the Sublime as rooted in sensory engagement that challenges normal perception, such as darkness.

Burke’s conveys the concept of darkness in relation to things that are not inherently dangerous yet cause a sensation akin to terror. He expounds on how darkness may not pose a physical threat but can still induce unease and discomfort. Furthermore, Burke elucidates how things that are not necessarily dangerous can evoke a sensation like terror, noting that “terror or pain is

always the cause of the Sublime” (Burke, Guyer (ed.) 2015, p. 109). In addition, Burke relates darkness to the sublime, explaining how the iris within the eye retracts in darkness and states that “some allow darkness to be the cause of the Sublime” (Burke, Guyer (ed.) 2015, p. 117), further highlighting how the Sublime can be experienced through the body's perceptual sensory systems, such as the eye. Burke also speaks of the eye being pleased by “clear water, glass and such like transparent substances” (Burke, Guyer (ed.) 2015, p. 96). In terms of “vastness,” Burke asserts “a perpendicular plane has more force in forming the Sublime than an inclined plane” (Burke, Guyer (ed.) 2015, p. 59). These aspects of the Sublime, as discussed by Burke, will be further elucidated in Chapter VI, where I will explore how they are evidenced in my own art practice. Additionally, Burke points out that objects of vast visual dimensions can evoke a sense of pain and are thus associated with terror. He suggests that perceptually, grandeur and vastness can have an emotional impact, not only of fear but also of awe and admiration. This illustrates the complexity of the human emotional and perceptual response to the world around us and our sense of smallness and insignificance when confronted by such dimensional paradoxes. Alexander-Passe provides a contemporary perspective on this complexity, discussing how the trauma experience of dyslexia “can send many to a very dark place” (Alexander-Passe, expert interview, 2021). I argue that, in the context of dyslexia and in terms of cognitive processing, individuals may experience variations in how they perceive and emotionally respond to large or expansive visual stimuli. Additionally, the emotional impact of viewing large or expansive scenes may be more pronounced or different compared to individuals without dyslexia (Sturm et al, 2021). As with Burke, a comparable line of thought is relevant in modern times, where neurodivergence and alternative modes of thinking and feeling are slowly recognised as integral to human evolution.

I argue that despite the limitations imposed by society on dyslexic artists due to our neurological differences (Oga & Haron, 2012), we experience a sense of transcendence that comes from our ability to see the world in a unique and imaginative way, which can be a deeply transformative experience, leading to a new understanding of oneself and the world (Blake, 2018).

I contend that this is why many dyslexic artists are drawn to art where they can express heightened emotion, intuition and other visual spatial differences, finding inspiration in experiences that are outside societal norms (Herman, 2013). Dyslexic artists often describe a feeling of connection to the moment when making art. I will expand on this later in Chapter V and reflect on this in relation to my own experience as a dyslexic artist when making work in Chapter VI. I assert that this connection is an important and powerful feeling for us as dyslexic individuals, as it means being fully present in the moment and a concentration of effort in the act of making art can cause transcendent feelings of satisfaction and accomplishment (Vaughan, 1993). Indeed, as expounded by Ginis et al. (2022, p. 421), who found “psychologically beneficial effects of creative engagement,” a transcendent experience such as this can be felt by other artists when making work. However, I argue that for us, due to the often- traumatic experiences of failure and otherness discussed in Chapter III, our ability to surpass such difficulty and find connection is ever more profound. I further contend that, akin to Burke and Kant's philosophical exploration of the Sublime, dyslexic artists demonstrate unconventional thinking patterns, unique perspectives and artmaking processes that may evoke the Sublime in our work. Whether consciously or unconsciously, we may express and experience the Sublime through artmaking, navigating perceived limitations of language and traditional communication methods and in doing so, discover visual-spatial perception as a strength. This nonlinear approach to communication also resonates with postmodern conceptions of the Sublime, such as Lyotard's, particularly in relation to the notion of the ‘event’ discussed earlier in this chapter.

Stephen Zepke (2017, p. 105) quotes Lyotard as stating that the postmodern artist to be engaged in “extending new limits of sense perception.” I assert that the dyslexic artist plays a pivotal role in achieving this in the Postmodern world as evidenced in Chapter V and VI. When exploring Lyotard's Postmodern Sublime amidst the rapid advancement of technology, his conceptualisation revolves around the recognition of the limitations of language and reason. The role of technology as a facilitator for dyslexics is significant, enabling us to function independently and even excel in fields such as Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) (Taljaard, 2016).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is now seen as 'co-piloting', an empowering innovation for dyslexics, which Griggs describes as a “synergy between Dyslexic Thinkers and AI” (Griggs, 2023). Dawson (2019) highlights the significance of assistive technology in enabling dyslexics and fostering divergent thinking, critical attributes in navigating the complexities of the modern world. By embracing technology as a tool for empowerment and creative expression, some individuals with dyslexia can navigate and contribute to diverse fields, echoing the ethos of Lyotard's Postmodern Sublime, in confronting and transcending cognitive constraints.

### **E. Using the Sublime in Framing the Transcendent and Otherness Experiences of Dyslexic Artists**

Over the years, I have engaged in a retrospective analysis of my own artmaking and its possible leanings towards the Sublime. This has prompted further exploration into the principles of this aesthetic category. The extraordinary sensation of surpassing the predetermined boundaries of dyslexia can be considered a remarkable experience, as it paves the way for novel and innovative forms of human expression that transcend social expectations.

I assert that due to our neurological differences, dyslexic artists have a distinct relationship with language and use divergent forms of expression. Dyslexia, therefore, should not be seen solely as a disability, but also as a source of a unique way of seeing and experiencing the world, one that can lead to the creation of art outside conventional norms.

In this light, and as previously discussed, Merleau-Ponty's concept of the body as a “form of existence” that grasps the world through its own mode of intentionality (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, trans. Davis, p. 63) provides a powerful philosophical basis for understanding the dyslexic artist's creative process. It situates this process within a broader argument that all perception and thinking are embodied, a position developed in opposition to centuries of equating thinking with being and seeing with knowing and conveys how this perspective can resonate with the lived experience of dyslexia. Merleau-Ponty is not theorising the Sublime; rather, I draw on his account to construe the Sublime as a possible bodily intensification of perception. In works that invite circumnavigation or

off-centre viewing, distortions of scale and orientation can push perception beyond its usual patterns, suggesting a sublime effect experienced in and through the body. This is expanded upon further in Chapter VI.

I postulate that the Sublime, as an aesthetic category, can be understood as emerging from the unique experiences of dyslexia. Beyond difficulties with written and spoken language, dyslexic individuals often possess distinct strengths in processing information and perceiving the world in alternative ways. Dyslexic individuals frequently exhibit elevated creative thinking and an ability to form connections between seemingly unrelated concepts, a phenomenon explored in Chapter III as ‘interconnected reasoning’ (Eide and Eide, 2023). Furthermore, Stein describes a “holistic, artistic, seeing the whole picture” and “superior perceptual abilities” as inherent in the dyslexic (Stein, 2001, p. 13; Stein, 2021). These cognitive traits align with the concept of the Sublime, which involves perceiving and generating a sense of awe and wonder by integrating diverse and complex elements into a cohesive experience. This capacity to see the ‘global’ or ‘whole picture’ can contribute to producing art that evokes the Sublime, as also confirmed by Stein (2023) and characterised by its ability to inspire profound emotional and intellectual responses.

Kant’s distinction between the infinite and the suprasensible offers further insight into how dyslexic cognition can align with the Sublime experience. His framing of the suprasensible as something beyond empirical grasp, as expounded earlier in this chapter, resonates with the non-linear, perceptual experiences often described by dyslexic individuals, as will be evidenced in the following chapter. The dyslexic ability to see connections and patterns that others miss (Eide and Eide, 2023) may represent a kind of transcendence beyond conventional thinking. By engaging these cognitive differences in their work, dyslexic artists appear to exhibit a heightened sensitivity to sublime stimuli. Framing their work within concepts of transcendence and otherness also helps address how societal challenges such as stigma or marginalisation shape and deepen their creative expression.

I affirm that viewing dyslexia through the lens of the Sublime can provide a framework for acknowledging and celebrating the unique visual-spatial strengths often associated with dyslexic

individuals. Recognising this way of perceiving as a form of the Sublime helps shift the widely misunderstood narrative of dyslexia as a deficiency and instead reframes it as a valuable aspect of neurodivergence, celebrating the contributions of dyslexic individuals to society. By embracing the Sublime, dyslexic artists can highlight their strengths, which stem from their distinctive way of experiencing the world.

## F. Chapter Summary

This chapter has traced the historical trajectory of the Sublime, from Longinus in the first Century CE to later philosophers including Burke, Kant and Lyotard. Shifting the focus, this chapter then examined the Sublime as a conceptual framework for comprehending the experiences of dyslexic artists. Beginning with an exploration of philosophical contributions, the discussion then addresses the works of Romantic, Modernist and through to more current artists, whose work explicitly resonate with the concept of the Sublime. Within Modernism, Newman's notion of the Sublime frames as an existential confrontation, while Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012 [1945]), foregrounds the embodied experience of meaning. These ideas lay out an important foundation for understanding the perceptual and emotional dimensions of dyslexia in relation to artmaking. By emphasising concepts like transcendence and otherness, the chapter has expanded my argument on how the Sublime can shed light on the lives and artmaking processes of dyslexic artists.

Not every dyslexic artist inherently gravitates toward the Sublime. I assert the Sublime emerges as a useful lens for discerning and appreciating distinct perspectives and experiences of dyslexic artists. When considering the historical stigmatisation and pathologising of dyslexia and how recent research increasingly draws our attention to cognitive strengths such as visual-spatial abilities and heightened creativity, an emphasis can be drawn on the need for greater inclusivity and understanding, particularly in the arts.



## Chapter V

### Participatory Workshops and the Mind's Eye

#### A. Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I will discuss the drawings and findings of the workshops I conducted with a group of dyslexic artists. In the following subsections of this chapter, I intend to provide a comprehensive exploration of creative processes emerging from the dyslexic artists' participation in these workshops.

Firstly, this chapter presents insights into participants' responses to drawing tasks, including their imaginative interpretations and struggles with observational drawing. This subsection provides a detailed analysis of individual approaches, such as focusing on stimulating visual conversations and creating stylised representations, which sets the stage for understanding the participants' diverse perspectives. Moving forward, I introduce a drawing exercise involving the visualisation of the eye in water. This part offers a glimpse into the participants' imaginative faculties and their attempts to translate mental imagery into visual representations. This includes discussions on the challenges encountered, such as struggles to align interpretations with instructions and reflections on the creative processes, such as divergent thinking.

In the latter subsections, a broader discussion is held on the implications of dyslexia in relation to visual-spatial perception and artistic expression, exploring themes such as emotional experiences, navigation of societal norms and expectations and the pursuit of transcending limitations through art. This content includes insights into individual perspectives, such as desires to liberate ideas and challenges in interpreting instructions, providing a nuanced understanding of dyslexic artists' journeys.

Overall, I intend to convey diverse narratives, insights, and reflections that illuminate the complexities of dyslexic artists' engagement in participatory workshops and their art making.

## B. Overview of Workshop Activities

As another phase of data collection, I conducted these three workshops over a period of three months in 2022, each lasting one and a half hours. The purpose of the workshops was to explore visual-spatial perception and related concepts as strengths in dyslexic individuals, such as the mind's eye, mind wandering, spatial reasoning and divergent thinking during the processes of conceptual drawing and observational drawing.

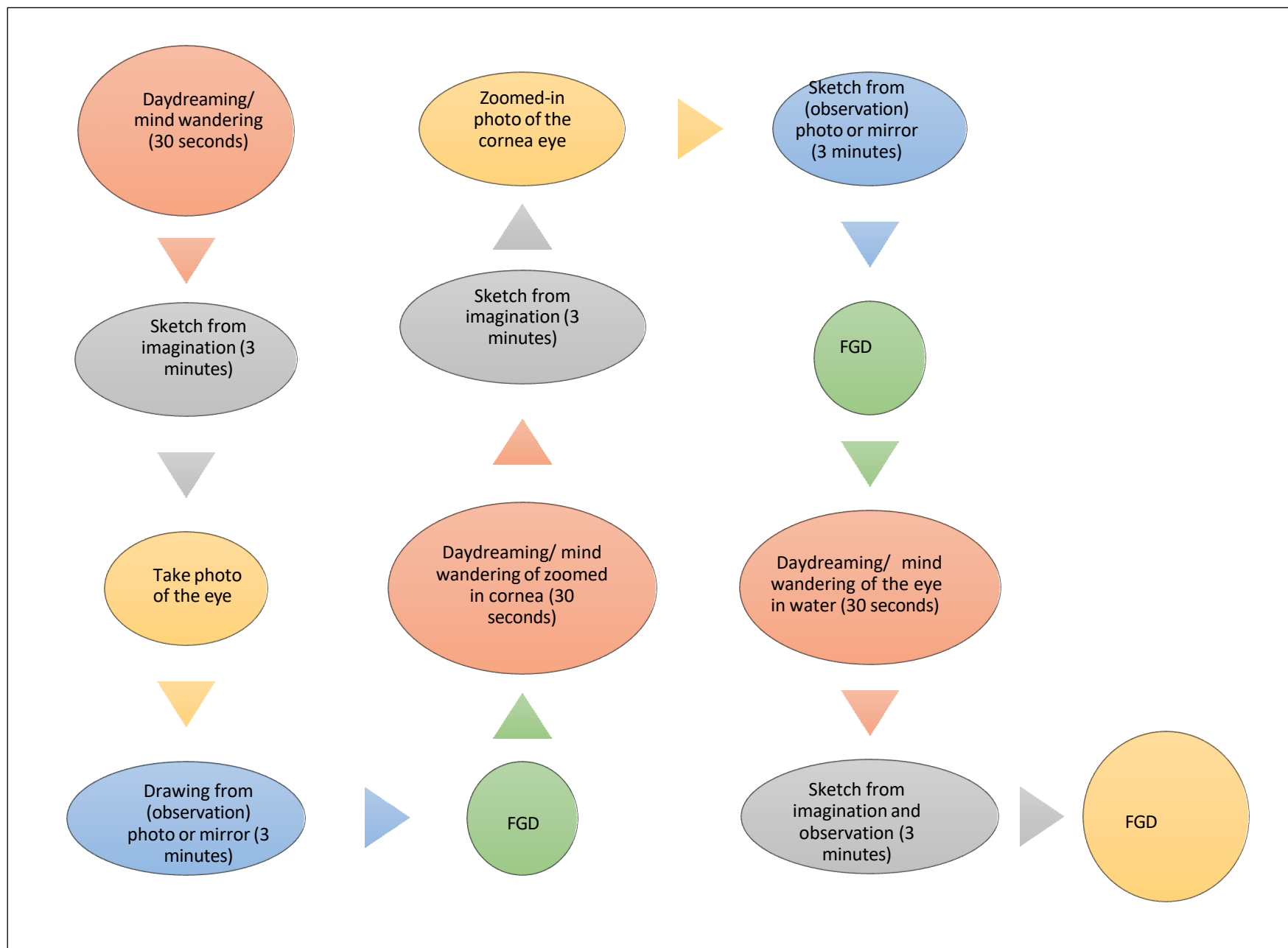
The rationale behind choosing the eye as the subject matter for these workshops stems from several key reasons. Firstly, the eye is a fundamental tool for both creating and viewing art. Additionally, as previously discussed by Stein, there are significant differences in visual perception and dyslexia. These workshops aimed to leverage the inner eye or mind's eye and the literal eye when exploring the participants' art making.

Each workshop session featured five drawing exercises and each with a strict duration of three minutes. These exercises were interspersed with intermittent focus group discussions and mind-wandering experiments. Some participants created only one drawing per exercise, while others produced multiple drawings, as will be seen. The rationale behind the tasks and timings was informed by my previous mind-wandering experiments, which are discussed in Chapter III and documented in the Appendix. From these experiments, I determined that thirty seconds is sufficient for participants to engage their imagination effectively without losing focus. The three-minute allocation for drawing was designed to ensure that participants did not become overly concerned with aesthetics, allowing them to capture the image succinctly as an experimental drawing rather than striving for an aesthetically pleasing artwork. This approach aimed to prioritise the process of conceptualisation and observation over artistic refinement. From these discussions, the following insights were derived.

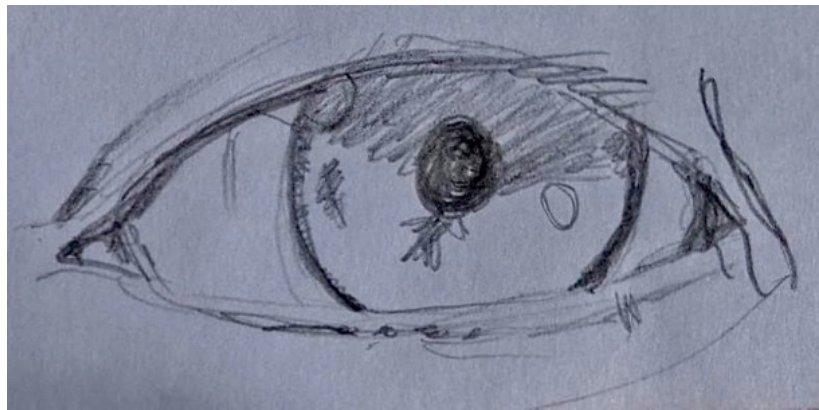
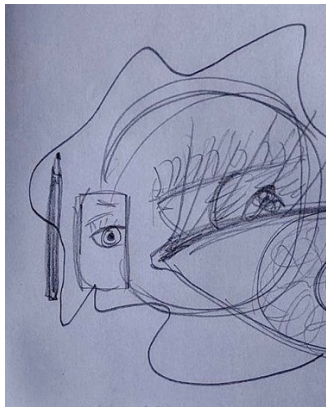
The first task was a mind-wandering exercise. Prior to this, participants were informed

that they would next need to execute a conceptual drawing of their eye in three minutes. Following the brief thirty-second mind-wandering period, participants proceeded to create the conceptual drawing of their eye within the allotted time. Participants were then instructed to take an actual photo of their eye or look in a mirror, followed by another three-minute observational drawing of their eye. The essence of this was to observe participants' drawings from their mind's eye (following a mind wandering exercise) and compare this conceptual drawing with an observational drawing of their eye from a mirror or photo.

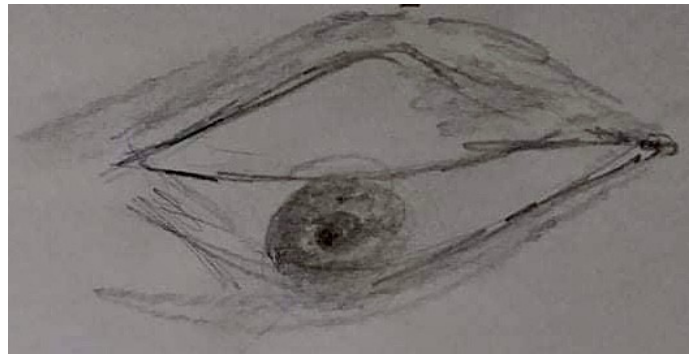
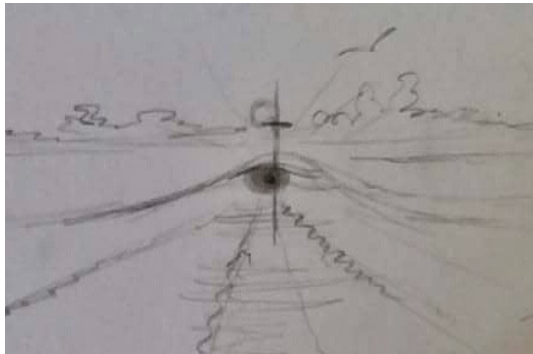
These drawing exercises were followed by intermittent focus group discussions (FGD). My instructions for the tasks as the researcher and workshop coordinator were intentionally not overly defined, allowing participants to explore their own interpretations of the tasks. Through the discussions throughout the workshop, I intended to gather evidence to address my research questions. The diagram below (Figure 10) outlines the workshop activities:

**Figure 10. Summary of Workshop Activities**

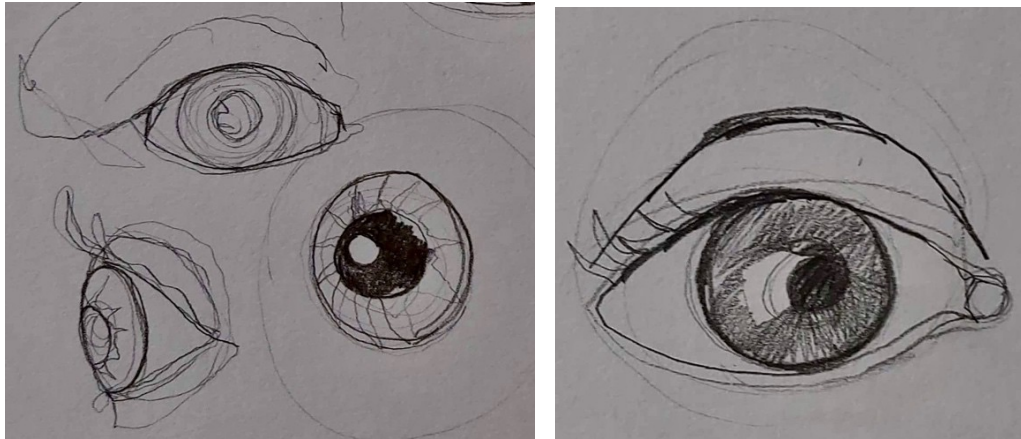
The following images from the workshops are presented together at the start of the chapter to maintain the flow of the text and provide a clear reference point for readers. These images are considered to best illustrate the set of tasks performed during the workshop. Please refer to this section in conjunction with the list of figures. Additional images are available in the Appendix.



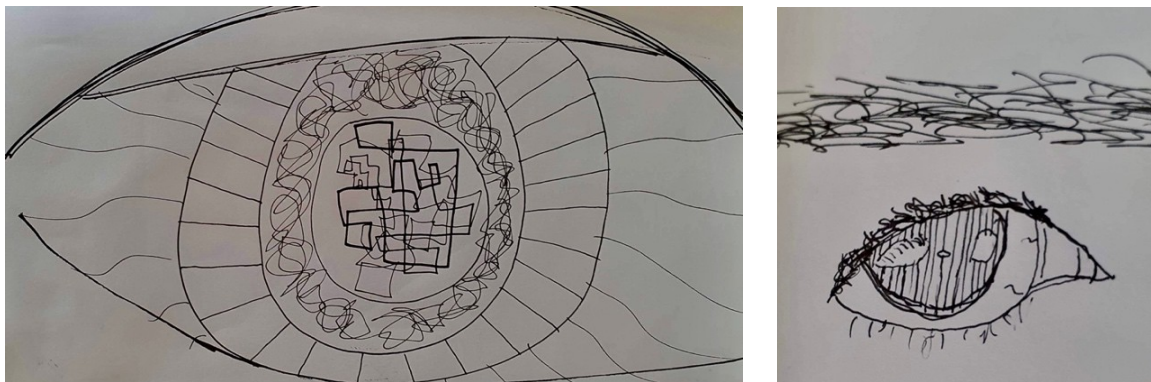
Figures 11-12. Participant FN. Conceptual drawing (left), observational drawing (right).



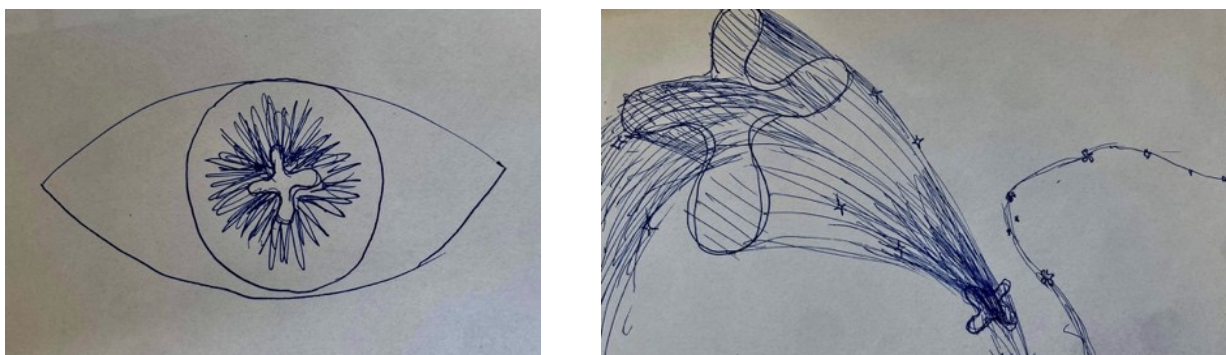
Figures 13-14. Participant NM. Conceptual drawing (left), observational drawing (right).



Figures 15-16. Participant BR. Conceptual drawing (left), observational drawing (right).



Figures 17-18. Participant DB. Conceptual drawing (left), observational drawing (right).

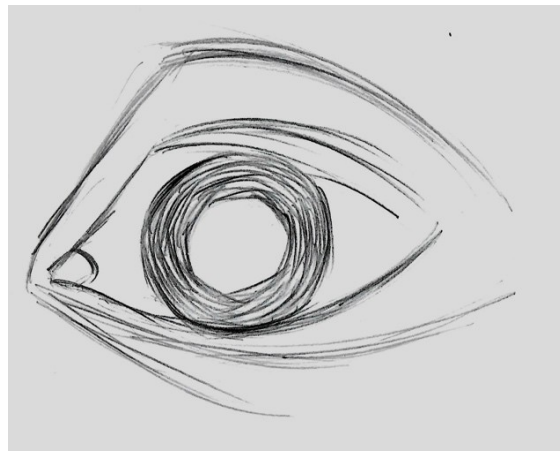
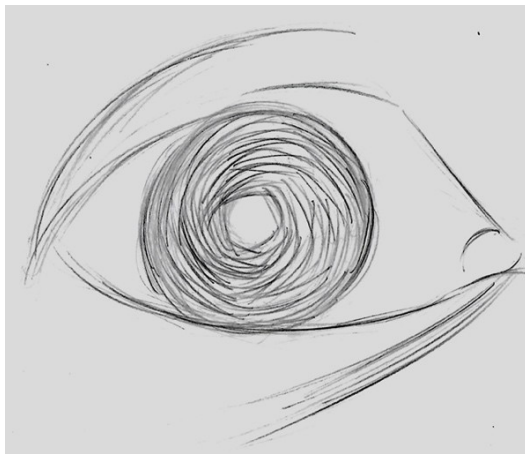


Figures 19-20. Participant CBN. Conceptual drawing (left), second conceptual drawing (right).

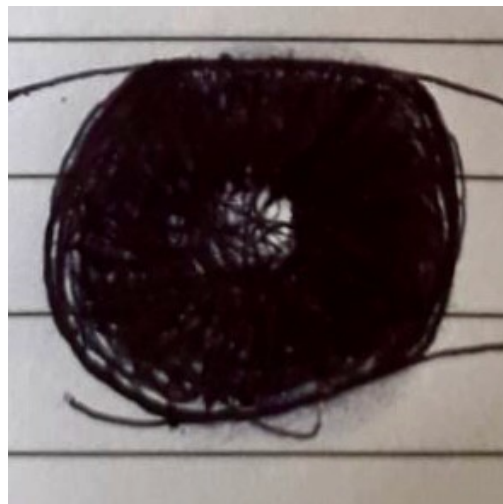
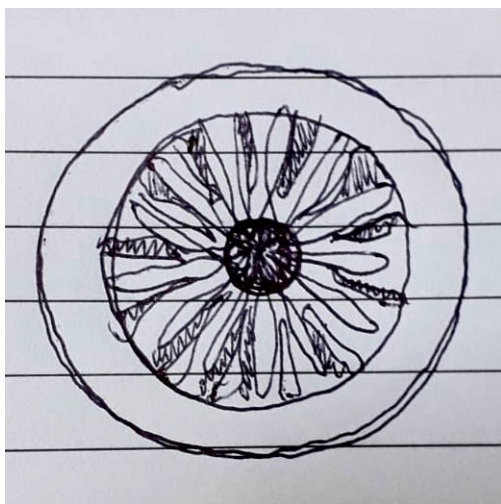




Figures 21. Participant LV. Conceptual drawing.



Figures 22-23. My own drawings. Conceptual drawing (left), observational drawing (right).



Figures 24-25. Participant ZS. Conceptual drawing (left), observational drawing (right).

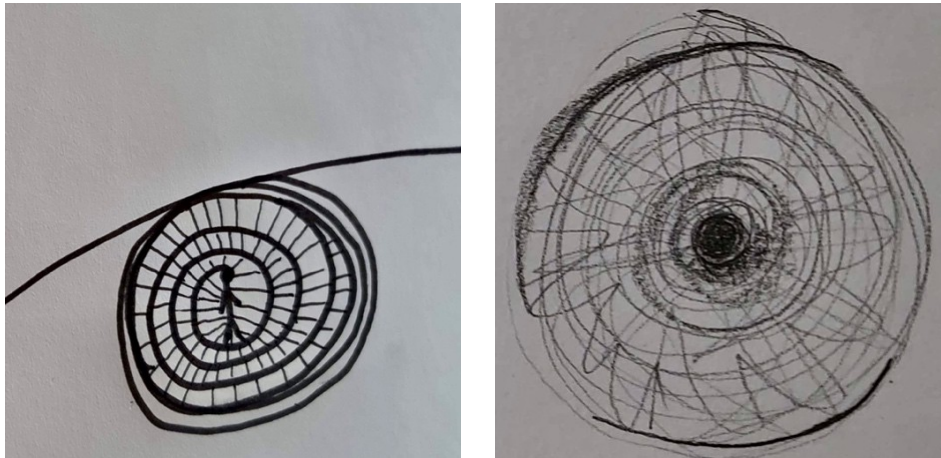
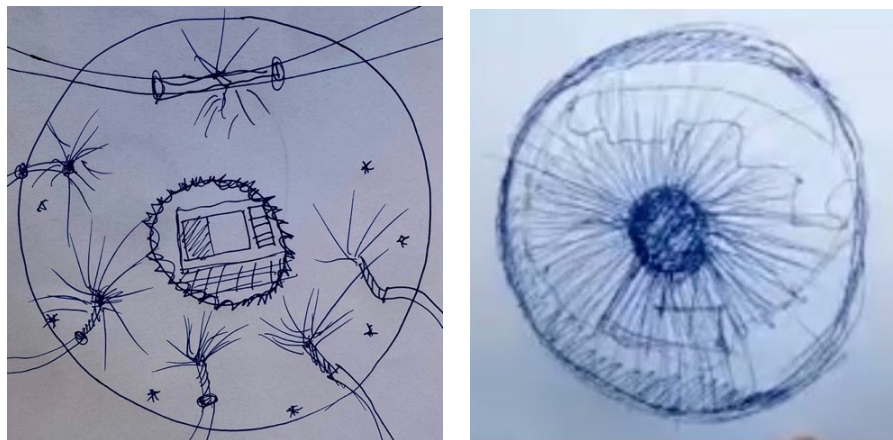


Figure 26. Participant DB. Conceptual drawing (left).  
Figure 27. Participant BR. Conceptual drawing (right).



Figures 28-29. Participant CBN. Conceptual drawing (left). Observational drawing (right).



Figures 30-31. Participant LV. Conceptual drawing (left). Observational drawing (right).



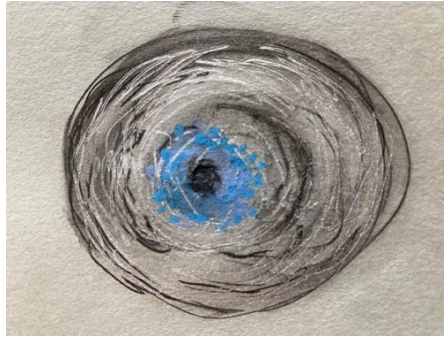


Figure 32. Participant FN. Conceptual drawing (left).

Figure 33. Participant KT. Conceptual drawing (middle).

Figure 34. Participant CBN. Conceptual drawing (right).

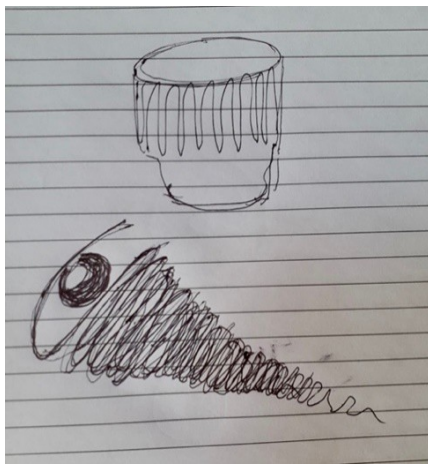


Figure 35. Participant ZS. Conceptual and observation (combined).

Figure 36. Participant LV. Conceptual and observation (combined).

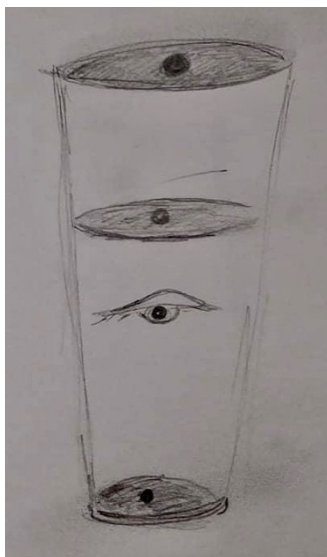


Figure 37. Participant NM. Conceptual and observation (combined).

Figure 38. Participant JB. Conceptual and observation (combined).

Figure 39. Participant DB. Conceptual and observation (combined).



Figure 40. My own drawing. Conceptual and observation (combined).

### C. Conceptual Drawing from Imagination

During the initial intermittent focus group discussion (FGD), participant FN talked of becoming confused when completing the first two drawing tasks. FN stated:

When you gave me the instruction, my brain very typically interpreted it as, ‘imagine yourself drawing your eyes’. So, I imagined the process of eye drawing. Then I got confused, because I thought of all the different ways of doing it and they all mashed together and then I was like, Oh, maybe that's not the question. So, this is an image of that, that confusion? I don't know if you can see it. I was imagining looking in a mirror. So that's the round there at the back and then imagining taking a photo on the phone and then seeing my hand. So, imagining myself doing the drawing. And then I was also imagining the eye at the same time.

FN's description in the first conceptual drawing reveals how she initially interpreted the task, only to become confused and merge different ideas (Figure 11), indicative of her unique thought processes. She overcame these obstacles by depicting everything in a holistic manner. FN's second observational drawing, a more prosaic approach is discernible, with increased attention to detail (Figure 12).

Another interpretation of these drawing exercises was provided by participant NM (Figures 13-14), who made an important observation during the intermittent FGD, stating, “my vision is completely different from vision [sic] he's just done. Same instruction, but it's

completely... both was interpreted in such different diverse ways.”

Participant BR spoke about her “imaginary eyes” and referred to being “weird,” indicating a sense of viewing the world differently and embracing her unique perspective. With an undertone of satire, she described her drawings by stating, “I’m from another planet.” This comment, along with describing herself as “an alien,” reinforces her feeling of otherness and her unconventional approach to art. BR’s preference for ‘imagining’ how the eye looks, over how the actual eye appears, is evident in her second observational drawing (Figures 15-16) and finding it more mysterious and engaging, suggests a preference for conceptualisation over that of observation.

Participant DB explained that when attempting to complete the first two drawing tasks (Figures 17-18), he was “caught up in the idea of trying to be good,” reflecting the tension between individual expression and conformity to norms. He described a struggle between rigidity and chaos in his drawing, attempting to balance these aspects, which mirrors his personal journey and challenges. Additionally, DB expressed, “feeling quite trapped in giving a literal presentation of it,” highlighting his struggle with the expectations of conventional accuracy versus his desire for personal expression.

In participant CBN’s conceptual drawings from the previous mind-wandering exercise, a ‘plus mark’ distortion of the centre of the iris appears in one conceptual drawing (Figure 19). The other conceptual drawing depicts the same ‘plus mark’ distortion, now enlarged and attached to a long tube which one is seemingly sucked into (Figure 20). CBN described this sensation when drawing his eye, “I have like a weird feeling, drawing it. Because it's like, it's like [sic], you know, like, it draws you in, inside the eye. And you don't know, like, what's in it.” This feeling of being drawn into an unknown, expansive space mirrors the experience of the Sublime, reflecting how dyslexic individuals might engage with their unique perceptual strengths, evoking both awe and disorientation.

Participant LV's first drawing (Figure 20) depicts a rendition of his imaginary eye. LV was unsure as to whether he had understood the task instructions. When discussing the latter observational drawing, he stated, "I just feel that its more just [sic] like everything locked up." The phrase "locked up" conveys a sense of rigidity in his observational drawing, similar to many others in the group.

As I was also an active participant in these workshops, I refer to Chapter I where I outlined my positionality. Given my prior knowledge of the tasks, I now share what I consider to be relevant insights. In the first two workshops, during the initial two drawing tasks, I depicted my imaginary eye as right-sided, while my observational drawings were left-sided (Figures 22-23). This reversal was purely coincidental, but by the third workshop, I noticed this pattern. It is intriguing that both conceptual drawings were right-sided, as the right hemisphere of the brain is associated with intuition and imagination, while the left hemisphere is linked to sequential, linear thinking, cognition and memory related to visual representation (Samani, 2019; Agor, 1985). This observation may suggest a connection between the way dyslexic individuals engage with creative processes and the hemispheric functions of the brain.

#### **D. Observational Drawing from Life**

After an intermittent focus group discussion, participants were asked to engage in a second set of drawing tasks where the same format was repeated. Participants took part in a thirty-second mind-wandering experiment. Beforehand, they were asked to imagine drawing the cornea area of their eye. This is the area of the eye encompassing the iris and pupil only, focusing on a more detailed section of the eye. This was followed by a three-minute drawing exercise where they were asked (using the mind's eye) to recall this image from their imagination and depict in a drawing. They were then instructed to zero-in on the previous photo image or look closer in the mirror and depict the cornea area of the eye as an observational drawing in three-minutes. This, as before, was followed by a focus group discussion. From

these discussions, the following insights were deduced.

When describing the process completing these second set of drawing exercises, participant, ZS explained how he was “going for a pattern, trying to stimulate that visual conversation” (Figures 24-25). Participant ZS spoke of a “floral” and a “vortex” pattern of the cornea. Furthermore, ZS made a comparison between the first drawing (conceptual) and the next (observational), reflective of his perspective on the creative process. Like the rest of the group, ZS talked about the difficulties faced when drawing from observation. When executing the conceptual drawing of the cornea, participant DB also executed a patterned spiral representation.

As seen in drawings by both ZS and DB, participant BR (Figures 24,26,27), in her first drawing, also detected a patterned ‘floral’ representation of the cornea from her mind's eye recollections (conceptual drawing). BR reflected on this image, stating, “I think I quite like the craziness that goes on here. Because this is like the spinning of planets and the world, isn't it.” Here, BR, along with others in the group, conveys movement, a trait found in dyslexia, as discussed in Chapter III.

Participants were asked in the second set of tasks to ‘zoom in’ on their eye. CBN interpreted this instruction to mean viewing from inside the eye looking out, thus drawing his eye from within rather than as a zeroed-in depiction, as intended in the exercise. In his drawing, a keyboard and computer screen can be discerned, as if one is looking out through the eye (Figure 28). This reversal element highlights how individual interpretations of instructions can lead to interesting, unique and idiosyncratic outcomes in art. CBN illustrates movement and describes a “weird feeling,” stating, “again and again, looking at that black hole. Or like the iris gives me a weird, weird feeling again. And I don’t know, it’s just like, it draws you in, that weird feeling.” This sensation of disorientation is evidenced in the participant’s second observational drawing (Figure 29).

Digital artist LV intimates' reversal when describing his conceptual drawing of his eye from his mind's eye recollections (mind wandering exercise) during the workshop, shared, "when I draw my imagine eye [sic], I just imagine myself looking at a mirror." Here, he is exploring various perspectives within the artmaking process. He went on to say, "I just imagine my eyes in 3D form where I saw this is my cornea area. Okay and inside is like a river [sic]." One can see he has laterally positioned the first drawing where the cornea, appearing to flow inward due to the horizontal placement, creates a sense of inversion (Figure 30). The second drawing from observation being more prosaic (Figure 31).

### **E. Eye-in-Water Drawing**

The fifth and final workshop drawing exercise began with asking the participants to place the glass, half-full of water, on top of the image of their eye for reference. I then engaged the group in another thirty-second mind-wandering exercise, where participants beforehand were asked to imagine their eye in water. There is no direct observational drawing involved here, but they do have the glass and eye image for reference, so this was a combinatory exercise of both observation and conceptualisation.

In the FGD, participant FN talked about her experience of conceiving her drawing during the workshop task, stating the following:

My brain did the same thing it did earlier. And when imagined drawing an eye and water and went, okay, an eye and a glass, being in a swimming pool, trying to draw something being on the other side of a, like, aquarium, and somebody looking at your eye through it. And then I kept going oh, but now I know what the instruction is, it was a thing about the water on top of the phone... I gave up trying to make my brain do what it was told to do. So, this is a collection of those different thoughts.

FNs description of confusion when approaching this drawing task mirrors how she approached the previous drawing exercises (see Figures 11, 32). FN's explanation of the process reflects how her divergent thinking enabled her to make sense of what she is doing by creating a holistic representation. Another participant, KT, described the drawing process,

stating, “I kind of tend to draw from the mind's eye anyway.” He talked of his fascination with swirling the water in his glass above a photo of his eye, stating, “some of the water would take the blue pigment sort of away, and it would be transferred to another part of the eye” (Figure 33). KT’s use of internal visualisations and pigment manipulation reflects a unique cognitive approach. This method underscores how dyslexic individuals might experience and express the Sublime through imaginative and transformative artistic processes.

Participant CBN conveyed spiralling swirls of movement in his drawing taken from task five of the eye in water (Figure 34). Again, speaking of this “weird feeling” when drawing his eye, elaborating on how, when he imagines things, they are “interesting and unique.” He explained how he “see things in a different way,” like things moving when there is no movement.

Participant ZS talked of finding inspiration in the detection of patterns on the surface of the glass and his intention to incorporate this into the eye, resembling a vortex, indicative of movement (Figure 35). Furthermore, Participant LV speaks of reversal, movement and seeing things in in three dimensions when he recalled his thoughts on the process of this drawing exercise. He states (Figure 36):

When I first saw the image of putting the glass of water on top of the phone to see my eye, I... was shocked actually, because I was like seeing another myself in another dimension. Because in the photo and then I do a sketch of the water, I feel like it's alive... I think it's alive. It's like, I'm really seeing myself in another dimension, seeing my eye in another dimension. And when I draw the eye, I just keep on imagining the image. I only saw this now. Everything is fairly 3D and my hand just draw this [sic].

Participant NM captured his eye in water by depicting the eye refracting several times in the glass, indicative of reversal (Figure 37). When describing the process of executing the drawing, he said, “that was my interpretation of your instructions.” He spoke of transferring these instructions “into a physical structure.” NM added, “I was using my visual language to

interpret your instructions.” NM reflected on the exercise by explaining how he was able to complete the task, “I’m using my artistic skills. I think it’s down to self-belief in your abilities as a creative artist. I back up my abilities of mine [sic] is having self-belief but that took some time to grow went on that grow stronger and stronger.” NM then spoke of utilising his “own natural talent to drive me on.” The mention of using his “own natural talent” to drive him is suggestive of his awareness of his visual-spatial strengths and unique perspective in the making of art.

Participant JB, in her rendering of recollections of the eye in water using the glass half-full of water as reference, depicted her eye in the centre of the glass (Figure 38). Surrounding the eye are patterns of turbulent wave formations. Reflecting on the drawing exercise in the FGD, JB said, “There are barriers when understanding the instructions. Sometimes I understand it differently. That’s why I’m doing it wrong. But the art that I’m making is beautiful.” Later in the discussion, JB stated, “Sometimes I feel weird about myself. I’m just doing art so that I can express my emotion and myself in my artwork”. JB communicates here how she surmounts problems through her art.

Depicted in participant DB’s drawing of the eye in water from his recollections is the movement of eyes seemingly swimming through the water (Figure 39). The participant demonstrates his perspective, saying, “I was just quite interested in the optic nerve, ,and it just made me think about how the eye would move. The eye could be so full of character and so full of life and movement.”

I will now briefly mention my own drawing as an active participant in the workshop (Figure 40). Since I devised this workshop and conceived the concept of depicting one’s eye in water, I acknowledge a degree of bias. At this stage in my research, I was also employing various other arts-based research methods, as detailed in the methodology in Chapter I, where I outline my positionality and demonstrated in Chapter VI. Having extensively experimented



with this concept, I was able to readily visualise my eye in water. In our final and extended focus group discussion (FGD), we explored in greater depth the significance of imagination and the creative process.

## **F. Artmaking of Dyslexic Artists**

During our final discussion, criticism regarding our school experience was touched upon, such as being called lazy or stupid, as elucidated in Chapter III and underscored in related literature. It was further evidenced within this group of dyslexic artists how we must work harder than others to prove our ability, particularly with the written and spoken word. As confirmed in the workshops, studies have shown that dyslexic artists also struggle with observational drawing due to cognitive and memory differences (Rankin, Riley and Davies, 2007; Rankin and Riley, 2021; Snowling, 2019).

In this final focus group discussion (FGD), we further examined the complex relationship between dyslexia and visual-spatial perception, exploring how dyslexia significantly influence the creative processes and experiences of artists within the context of the Sublime. Participants commonly spoke of losing themselves in what is termed 'flowed thought' during the act of creating art (Hewlett, 2018). We discussed how the ability to envision and interpret subjects differently from the norm can lead to the creation of unique and captivating art. For instance, participant LV shared his enthusiasm, exclaiming, "I feel very excited to see other artists drawing. I feel, oh, this is what you see." Moreover, in relation to mind-wandering and divergent thinking, LV said, "my mind will fly everywhere." I would argue that the dyslexic individual's differences in visual processing and propensity to mind-wandering, as previously discussed and elucidated by both Stein and Eide, may be causal to this preference for the inner eye and imagination, as is also evidenced in Hewlett's research (2018) discussed in Chapter II, III and touched on in Chapter VI.

In contrast to more conventional art making processes, participant DB's approach to the

drawing tasks reveals distinct characteristics. For instance, when describing his second drawing from observation, DB expressed a desire to capture the “pixelation in the photo,” showing an interest in incorporating elements of distortion into his artwork, indicative of a difference in perception. DB again describes “feeling quite trapped in giving a literal presentation of it,” highlighting his struggle with conventional (observational) representation and his inclination towards a more abstract (conceptual) approach. Similarly, participant SM reflected on these drawing exercises, saying, “there's this contrast, isn't there, of thinking outside the box... Letting the imagination run, but actually being able to pick out small details and reflect them as well.” Interestingly, SM expressed a preference to using his imagination and how this can enhance details found in observation, noting, “often those small details, dyslexic people will pick out that other people don't see.” This sentiment aligns with findings from a study by Macdonald (2010), where participants similarly emphasised this unique perspective of dyslexic individuals, a view also echoed by West (2017).

BR reflected on the tasks, stating:

Visual stuff. I remember very clearly. It's a very different world for me than the written word. I hold an image. Like, if I have to remember something, it's quite good to doodle it with an image. Because then, then it kind of holds a bit better for me.

This preference for visual memory aligns with how dyslexic artists often use the visual image as a means of retaining and expressing their experiences and thoughts. For the dyslexic, text can appear as a code and a barrier between the reader and information, wherein the dyslexic individual can sometimes find oneself looking at reversed letters and patterns in font style rather than assimilating the content of the text (Alexander-Passe, 2017).

By surmounting the challenges posed by dyslexia through their art, these artists embark on a formidable and inspiring journey. This transformative experience echoes Sally Olding's findings, where she states, “the focus is on potential rather than limitations,” motivating dyslexic artists to venture beyond their comfort zones and confront the complexities of the

world in a manner that is both humbling and inspiring (Olding, 2011, p. 257). I maintain that this experience aligns with my own, while reflexively documenting my artmaking, revealing that, when engaged in the act of creation, one is essentially engaged in problem-solving, a theme that will be explored further in the following chapter. It is through this divergent thinking that originality of idea is born. By 'divergent thinking', I mean the ability to generate multiple, unique solutions to a problem, a process that involves exploring various perspectives and ideas. This approach is particularly effective for dyslexic individuals due to their strengths in holistic processing, complex system detection and pattern recognition, as discussed in Chapter III (Griggs, 2021; Taylor and Vestergaard, 2022; Stein, 2022). These cognitive advantages enable us to perceive the bigger picture and make innovative connections, which is why divergent thinking is crucial for fostering creativity and originality. This is further evidenced in Chapter VI.

Our discussion illuminated the alternative creative outlets that dyslexic individuals, as artists, rely upon to express themselves and effectively communicate their ideas. These unconventional avenues become essential due to the challenges many of us encounter with traditional forms of communication, such as reading and writing, a topic extensively explored in Chapter III. Participants in these discussions openly shared their experiences within mainstream education and how this often failed to accommodate their needs as dyslexic individuals. This broader context is vital for understanding the journeys of dyslexic artists, as it undeniably shapes their artistic evolution, a theme also explored in Chapter III.

The conversation then shifted towards the emotional aspects of art creation. Dyslexic artists openly revealed their feelings of vulnerability, their need to overcome obstacles and the deeply emotional dimensions of their creative processes. For instance, participant DB candidly stated, "I always have an issue with understanding briefs," a sentiment shared by many dyslexic individuals due to differences in interpreting instructions. DB continued, explaining how he interpreted the task, "I felt really vulnerable; you're asked to do something differently and better

than everybody else." This experience rekindled memories of classroom trauma for DB, who typically employs a combination of drawing, Photoshop and photography to realise his work. However, during this workshop, he felt restricted to drawing only, amidst what he perceived as more skilled people. Reflecting on this, DB added, "I wanted to retreat to a corner and spend ages on my own and I'm sure I would have found a solution that would have ultimately worked." Of course, none of the participants were asked "to do something differently and better than everybody else" and it was made clear to the group that this was not about making what might be perceived as 'good art,' but about the process. Still, DB's statement of wishing to be alone where he would find a solution is certainly something I can relate to in my own art making and lived experience, as did the other participants. In this way of working that we have developed, beyond the perceived constraints of comparison and the pressure to compete, the possibilities become infinite. We feel, in our own time and space, anything is possible and that we can truly excel. This belief in oneself then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In response to my research questions, dyslexic artists are deeply motivated by their art, a drive that persists despite the constraints imposed by their differences and experiences of discrimination and marginalisation. While it could be argued that all artists are inherently driven by their art, the context of dyslexic artists adds a distinct and more profound layer to this motivation. For example, Participant ZS described how dyslexia has "enhanced everything" he does, indicating that his dyslexia contributes to a unique and intensified approach to his artistic practice. This quest for liberation and exploration can be seen as a sublime pursuit, involving the confrontation of human limitations and the striving to transcend them (Stokes, 2010). In this context, the drive to liberate ideas reflects not just a general artistic ambition but a profound engagement with the Sublime, marked by an effort to break free from traditional constraints and embrace a deeper, often ineffable, dimension of artistic expression. Furthermore, this quest to understand the ineffable can be viewed as a sublime endeavor, as this entails confronting something beyond our normal experience and comprehension

(Silverman, 2016). The Sublime often encompasses experiences that are both beautiful and terrifying and the pursuit of understanding the ineffable can similarly be fraught with both wonder and fear (Bethelmy & Corraliza, 2019).

While exploring the Sublime in the context of dyslexic artists reveals a complex and profound engagement with art, it is also important to address the additional challenges posed by Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs). Although the neurodivergent paradigm provides a broader perspective, failing to address SpLDs like dyslexia may lead to dyslexic individuals being perceived as not 'disabled enough' within neurodivergent communities, while simultaneously facing marginalisation in mainstream settings (O'Mahoney, expert interview, 2021). This paradox of invisibility is evident in the experiences of dyslexic artists, as demonstrated by CBN, who discussed the challenges of commercialising his unique artistic vision within a capitalist art world. This participant highlighted how dyslexic artists navigate the art-making process amidst marginalisation, particularly in terms of gallery representation and other arts-related opportunities and further explains why many dyslexic artists feel too vulnerable to disclose their dyslexia. Thus, this duality underscores the nuanced struggles dyslexic artists face, where their neurodivergence is both a source of creativity and a barrier to acceptance.

Regarding otherness and transcendence, as expounded upon in Chapter III, participants highlighted the challenges of categorisation and the stigmatisation associated with being labelled as "weird" or different. I argue that this struggle is particularly profound for dyslexic artists, who face a heightened sense of otherness due to their differences. Unlike non-dyslexic artists, dyslexic individuals often contend with not only societal norms but also systemic barriers that exacerbate their feelings of being different. Their experience of marginalisation is intensified by the frequent misunderstanding and misrepresentation of dyslexia, which can make their creative expressions appear even more divergent from conventional expectations. For these artists, embracing and expressing their individuality is a sentiment shared by non-

dyslexic artists, but it is experienced with a unique intensity in the context of dyslexia. For example, participant FN raised a significant concern, stating, "I always want to counter the narrative about it being okay to be weird [as an artist], within an acknowledgment of how dangerous it is to be labelled as weird because, generally, it can cause you to be quite harmed." FN's concern underscores the profound impact of such categorisation on dyslexic individuals. The pursuit of transcending conventional boundaries in their creative practice reflects the broader struggle that dyslexic artists face, as they strive to overcome both the invisibility and marginalisation associated with their characteristics, while deeply engaging with their art.

I propose that, in addition, the experience of otherness can serve as a powerful motivator for dyslexic artists to seek connections and a sense of community with others who share similar experiences (Blake, 2018). For example, participant KT expressed how "affirming" it is to be part of a group "where there is shared understanding," reflecting a pursuit of social connection and a sense of community. I concur, what once held these artists back in the traditional classroom environment, namely being different, now allows them, as artists, to thrive. This transformation transcends the limits of individual experience, forging a shared identity and purpose. By seeking out others who share their experiences, dyslexic artists can find validation and support often lacking in their encounters with mainstream society. Their collective efforts can also become a formidable force for social change, challenging the structures of power and oppression. Through solidarity, dyslexic artists can amplify their voices and work toward creating a more just and equitable society (Rawson, 1986).

In conjunction with the role of community support, it is essential to recognise how artistic transcendence intersects with the experiences of dyslexic artists. As outlined by Vaughan and Walsh, any artist, "through practice and technique," may experience transcendence (1993, p. 2). However, our experiences as dyslexic artists are shaped by a broad spectrum of factors, including individual circumstances, cultural and social contexts and the resources and support available (Samuelsson and Lundberg, 2003). While it is true that all artists, not just dyslexic,

have the potential to use their art to overcome past experiences and transcend their social conditioning, dyslexic artists bring a distinctive perspective. Our unique cognitive differences can offer new ways of seeing and interpreting the world, enabling us to approach art with a perspective that is both distinct and powerful. This does not diminish the universal potential of transcendence in art but highlights how dyslexic artists might uniquely harness their experiences to enrich their creative expressions.

## **G. Chapter Summary**

The chapter provides an in-depth examination of the workshops designed for dyslexic artists, detailing both the structure and the participants' engagement in various drawing exercises. The initial overview, supported by a diagram of the workshop plan, sets the stage for understanding the context of the activities. Through the observational drawing exercises and tasks involving drawing from imagination and observation, several key conclusions emerge about the participants' creative processes.

The eye-in-water drawing exercise, which combined imaginative and observational elements, revealed how dyslexic artists navigate and integrate their visual-spatial skills with creative expression. The analysis of these exercises underscores how dyslexia influence their artistic practices, highlighting a unique interplay between perception and creativity. Participants' experiences are indicative of how dyslexic artists can use distinctive advantages in artmaking, such as enhanced visual-spatial awareness and originality, despite presenting certain challenges.

The chapter explores the emotional dimensions of artmaking, demonstrating how dyslexic artists might confront and channel their vulnerability and resilience into their work. This emotional engagement is pivotal in understanding their journey as artists and the curative aspects of creativity. In a broader societal context, the chapter considers the implications of categorisation and stigmatisation of dyslexic individuals. This emphasises the need for greater

community support and solidarity to combat these challenges and foster an inclusive environment for dyslexic artists.

In conclusion, the chapter offers a nuanced investigation of dyslexic artists' experiences, revealing how their distinctive cognitive and emotional traits contribute to their artistic expression and sense of otherness. The insights gained highlight the complex relationship between dyslexia and artmaking, advocating for a deeper appreciation of the diverse ways in which dyslexic individuals engage with creativity and navigate societal perceptions.



## Chapter VI

### My Art Practice

#### A. Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I present and critically reflect on the artworks developed throughout this PhD research, placing them within a chronological and thematic trajectory, through in-depth examination of my evolving praxis. This work ranges from stylisation, montage drawing, experimental 3D forms to large-scale painting and more. I explore how conceptual inquiry and material experimentation inform one another.

A focal point of this discussion is of how visual-spatial perception, particularly in relation to scale, depth, movement and perspective, shapes the making and reception of my work. I investigate how perception becomes an active and embodied process; one deeply informed by my own neurodivergent experience of dyslexia. Rather than as a limitation, this chapter positions dyslexia as a distinct perceptual difference that opens new possibilities in art through pattern recognition and reversals, holistic and global thinking, spatial reasoning, intuition and engagement of form.

This chapter builds directly on the historical and contemporary survey of the Sublime set out in Chapter IV. Having considered artists from the Romantic period onwards there, I now turn to my own art making. The chapter proceeds by contextualising my practice alongside key artists who address perspective, scale and embodiment, before demonstrating how these concerns are adapted within my rotated square planes, drawings, paintings and installations. This shift from external exemplars to internal practice allows a reflexive analysis of how the Sublime and phenomenology inform my own making.

Furthermore, this chapter brings my practice in discussion with the work of these artists whose explorations of space, distortion and viewer interaction resonate to my own. These

references are situated within a broader theoretical context, revisiting phenomenology, in particular Merleau-Ponty's account of perception and on theories of the Sublime from Longinus, Kant, Burke and Lyotard.

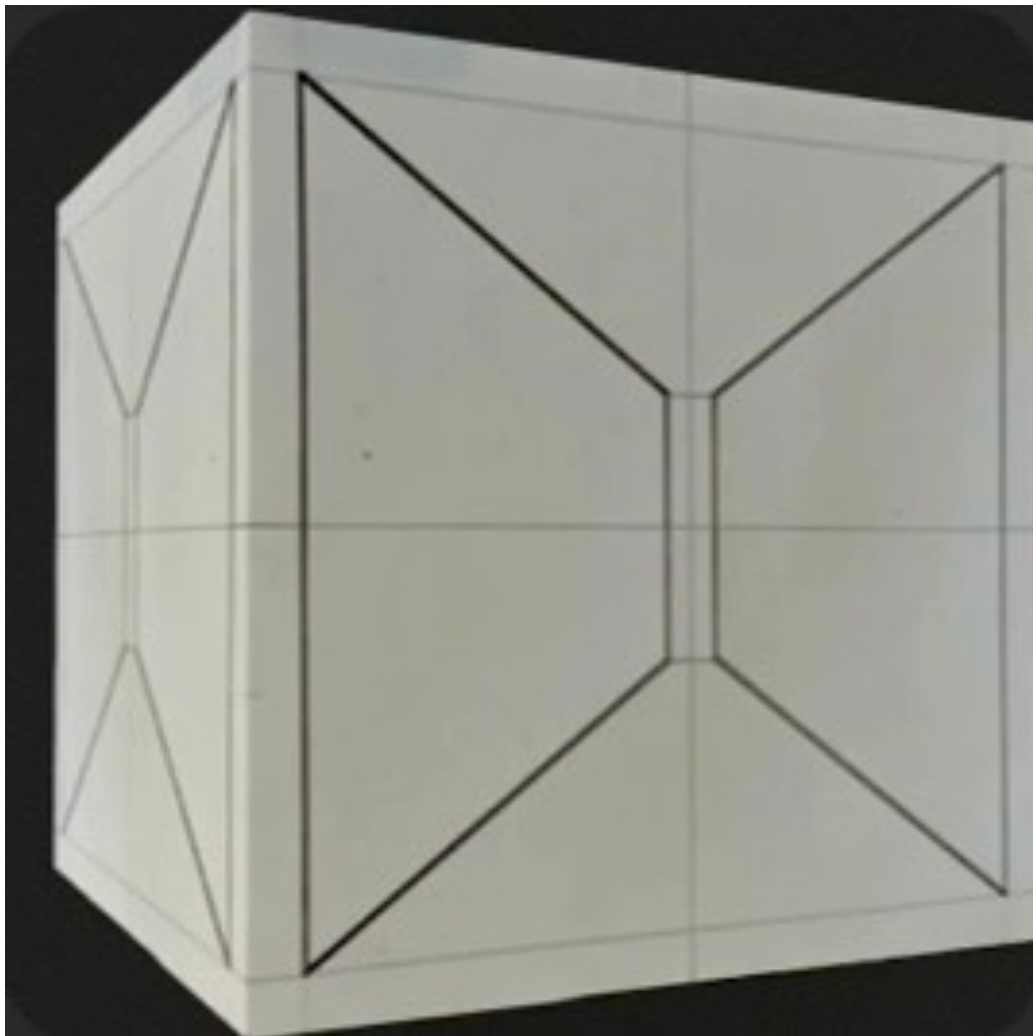
Through a personal reflection, theoretical analysis and reflexive documentation (video, audio, and photographic), I document a process-oriented approach in artmaking that is iterative, affective and dynamic in relation to space. This chapter aims to offer a nuanced perspective on how dyslexia, the Sublime and art practice intersect and how they collectively contribute to reimagining what it means to perceive, create and understand through art.

## **B. The Artworks**

### **1. The Perspectival Plane**

As an individual with dyslexia, I have come to realise my unique way of perceiving the world significantly influences my preferences and approaches in viewing and making artwork (Colgin, 2009). Here, I explore the plane from various vantage points, such as the off-centre perspective.

The plane, meaning a flat surface, is something many artists develop a visual image upon. Over the years, my own work has evolved on various planes, but more recently, a preference for the square plane has become paramount. In my work, I draw on the symbolism of the square as a representative of the physical world (De Beer, 2015). The very act of executing an idea from conception into the physical world, for example, pressing out an idea into paint on canvas, is symbolic of this. When the square plane is rotated on its axis, it can form two perpendicular planes (Figure 41), as I conveyed in the following work seen in the video below.



Click on the above image or watch here:

<https://youtube.com/shorts/c93T5NU4VP4?si=flUuACkGTfJdHx-2>

According to Burke, vertical structures can evoke a powerful emotional response in the context of the Sublime. He states that "a perpendicular [plane] has more force in forming the sublime," suggesting that such forms can intensify feelings of awe and terror in the viewer by emphasising grandeur and instability (Burke, Guyer (ed.) 2015, p. 59). This connection between form and emotional response aligns with my exploration of how certain spatial dynamics in my work evoke similar reactions, which will be extrapolated in succeeding paragraphs throughout this chapter.

In exploring this concept, I discovered that this process mirrors the challenges faced by individuals with dyslexia, as we organise and translate thoughts. This parallel evokes a powerful emotional response by highlighting the struggle and triumph inherent in overcoming such difficulties, thus touching on the essence of the Sublime.

The perspectival plane (Figure 42) has intrigued me for some time, particularly regarding how viewing a work from an off-centre perspective might impact its perception as sublime. Kant's analysis of the Sublime provides valuable insights into this question. According to Kant, the experience of the Sublime involves a specific mental state where our imagination and reason grapple with something that transcends our usual bounds. He argues, "the mental mood appropriate for a feeling of the Sublime requires the mind's susceptibility for ideas" (Kant, Walker (ed.) 2008, p. 94-95) and it is this struggle to comprehend something vast and overwhelming that evokes the Sublime.

Both Burke and Kant believed that dynamic perspectival planes, such as those found in off-centre perspectives, can have a greater chance to elicit the Sublime than the traditional frontal centre square plane, which offers a clearer depth. This dynamic perspective is thought to have an affinity with the Sublime due to its ability to challenge and engage our cognitive limits in a profound way. As Furio notes,

Returning to the Kantian perspective that a sense of the Sublime arises from that which is unbound, one can thus infer that visual manifestations of sublimity must likewise appear uncontained, the physical equivalent of which, in a work of art, is generality (Furio, n.d.).

Furio conveys that sublimity found in art might involve showing a sense of “generality” or vastness rather than focusing on detailed, contained forms. This aligns with the idea that the Sublime in art is enhanced by its capacity to evoke a sense of the unbounded (Furio, n.d.). Therefore, while Figure 42 shows that an off-centre perspective might indeed offer a transformative viewing experience and reveal different aspects of the work’s depth, it does not automatically render the work sublime. For a work to be sublime in Kantian terms, it must engage the viewer’s imagination and reason in a way that transcends their normal cognitive limits. Relative to this, my investigation of these perspectival concepts underscores the transformative potential of viewing art from different vantage points.

To further situate my practice historically, I turn to artists working across the past century, whose approaches reflect similar conceptual and spatial concerns. For example, this engagement with the perspectival plane has affinities with work such as *Enantiomorphic Chambers* (1965) by Robert Smithson, which uses paired mirrors to fragment and double the field of vision. Smithson’s manipulation of visual comprehension and reflection offers a useful point of comparison for articulating perceptual difference. My own experiments with rotated and suspended square planes (discussed further on in this chapter) likewise solicit shifting vantage points. Considered against Smithson’s work, this retrospective affinity clarifies how perceptual instability in my practice, arising from a dyslexic mode of seeing, operating as a lived, embodied strategy: viewing is negotiated bodily; perception emerges through movement rather than detached looking. Furthermore, Smithson’s manipulation of visual comprehension and reflection offers a useful point of comparison for the perspectival disruptions I explore in my practice.

Josef Albers, in his work *Homage to the Square* (1950-1976), used nested planes and subtle chromatic shifts to create perceptual optical effect, within apparent order. In retrospect,

Albers provides a clear language for understanding how small adjustments can unsettle figure/ground expectation. This is echoed, at a far smaller scale, in my own use of the square format, not as a static frame but as a surface charged with spatial tension. In my montage drawing and square-frame experiments I use tonal contrast, rotation and textural mark-making to produce a comparable (though much less systematic) ambiguity. The relation here is one of resonance rather than derivation: Albers' experiments clarify how my materials-led approach creates a shifting sense of depth within a square format.

Similarly, Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square* (1915) functions as both void and form, a kind of reversal, flat yet symbolically vast, embodying what Kant might describe as the Mathematical Sublime. Akin to my own experiments, but at a far smaller scale, rotated or off-centre square planes and floor-mounted presentations also resist neat resolution but retain material reference (water, shadow, surface) while bracketing stable representation and inviting contemplation of the unbounded. The link I draw is a conceptual comparison, not a lineage: placing my work in relation to Malevich helps situate it within debates about emptiness, framing and presentation, while my approach remains phenomenological and sensory.

Richard Serra's sculptural installation *Arc* (1980) is again a play on a perspectival vista. Here, seeing becomes a kinaesthetic event: as the viewer circumnavigates the work, balance, orientation, and time recalibrate perception. Considered retrospectively, Serra sharpens my account of embodiment; his focus on the body's position in relation to object and space clarifies why, in my own practice, floor-mounted drawings and rotated square planes invite viewers to move around the work so that perception is produced through bodily negotiation rather than a fixed gaze. The scale and means of my work are modest by comparison, and the connection is one of affinity rather than influence, but the operative principle is shared: perception as movement in space. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty (Chapter IV), I treat the perspectival plane not only as a visual construct but as an embodied situation in which ambiguity and spatial dissonance open perceptual possibilities.

Furthermore, my experimentation with the perspectival plane involves not only viewing artworks from unconventional angles but also photographing them to capture these dynamic perspectives. While I draw inspiration from Kant's notion of the Dynamic Sublime, I do not assume that this automatically classifies these artworks as Sublime simply because of a Kantian association. Instead, I propose that the experience of depth and perspective might enhance the viewer's appreciation of the work. My argument is not that all works of art manipulating perspective are Sublime but that a shift in perspective can potentially contribute to a Sublime experience. This exploration is part of addressing the broader research questions on how dyslexia influences artistic perception, without assuming that the Sublime automatically applies to such artworks.

In relation to this discussion on visual perception, my focus on the square plane, as noted by Willem A. De Beer, in *From Logos to Bios* (2015), as symbolic of the physical world, spans the conceptualisation of an idea to its material manifestation as a physical three-dimensional object and movement. This relates to concepts of anamorphism as expounded by Barbara Judovitz (1993), who quotes Oscar Wilde, stating, "the mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible" (Chapter II, p. 63). As defined by Simon Hansford and Andrew Collins (2007), "an anamorphic image appears distorted from all but a few viewpoints" (p. 211). Judovitz (1993) further discusses René Descartes and his theories on perspective, noting that "distortion is made necessary by the laws of perspective" (p. 73).

These ideas are illustrated in the works I will discuss later in this chapter. For example, in the work *Trees in Water*, I explore the themes of perspective and distortion. Similarly, these concepts are highly relevant to the experimental drawings and are further evidenced in the next work under discussion, entitled *Canvas Cube*. Both pieces engage with the viewer's perception, challenging them to consider different viewpoints and the resultant visual distortions, thereby connecting to the broader theme of how dyslexia influence artistic perception.

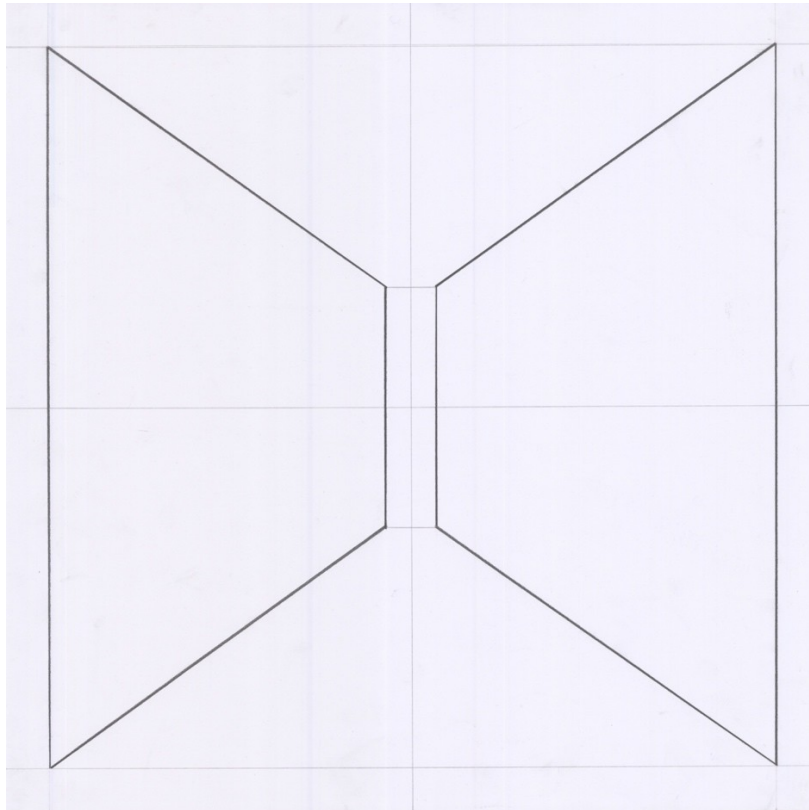


Figure 41. *Perpendicular Plane* (concept drawing). Graphite on paper. 50x50cm. 2022.

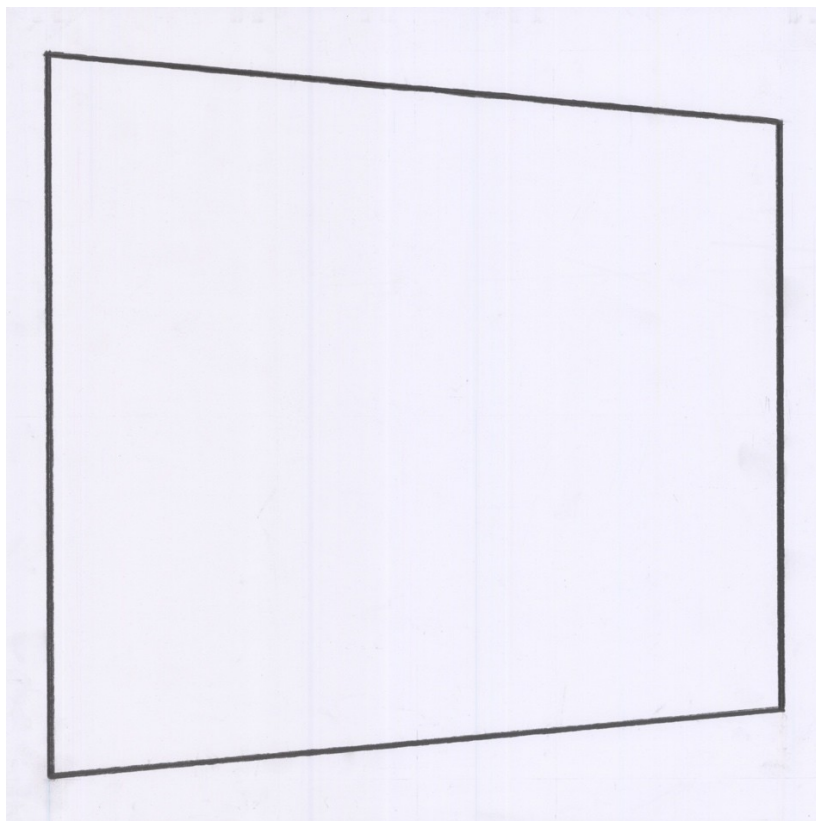


Figure 42. *Perspectival Plane* (concept drawing). Graphite on paper. 50x50cm. 2022.



## 2. 3D Spatial Reasoning and Transcendence: The Canvas Cube

The commencement of this research prompted me to reflect on a three-dimensional work I previously designed, titled *Canvas Cube* (2017) (Figure 43). This work was conceptualised through various sketches (see Appendix) and visualised in my imagination. I then collaborated with a bespoke art canvas company to realise the design physically. *Canvas Cube* is displayed suspended on its axis and can be rotated, which creates a dynamic interaction between the viewer and the artwork. This design emphasises movement and perspective, offering a continuously shifting visual experience of the square plane. It aligns with concepts discussed at the BDA Conference (2021), where “holistic thinking ability in dyslexics” and “3D visualisation” were highlighted (Stein, 2021). These ideas relate to 3D spatial reasoning, explored in Chapter III (Eide and Eide, 2023). Unlike a standard cube, *Canvas Cube* is distinguished by its artistic intent and execution. The six square canvas planes echo the square framing of my paintings over the years, but as a three-dimensional form, they encourage viewers to engage with the square plane from various perspectives. The *Canvas Cube* embodies holistic, global processing, a cognitive trait often found in dyslexic individuals, allowing them to see things in a more integrated and spatial manner (von Karolyi et al., 2003; von Károlyi & Winner, 2013). Thus, *Canvas Cube* serves as a tangible representation of these cognitive strengths, distinguishing it from conventional designs and underscoring its originality.

In this research, I am testing the extent to which the *Canvas Cube* might be evocative of the Sublime. While the concept of the Sublime is often linked to natural phenomena, this

work explores the Sublime as a reference through an interactive art piece, to gain new insight into dyslexia and artmaking. It is important to note that I am not asserting a definitive link between the *Canvas Cube* and the Sublime. Rather, I am investigating how the dynamic and immersive qualities of the cube may contribute to such an experience.

I experimented further with the work by recording the cube at various speeds on its axis in rotation, both in a studio setting with the physical object, as seen in the following video below.



Click on the above image or watch here:

[https://youtube.com/shorts/yhWn9sfz0o8?si=zIoz3zA\\_mf14h8dT](https://youtube.com/shorts/yhWn9sfz0o8?si=zIoz3zA_mf14h8dT)

Through the utilisation of digital tools, where I cropped and zeroed in on the cube in rotation, adjusting the speed using iMovie software, as demonstrated in the accompanying video.



Click on the above image or watch here:

<https://youtube.com/shorts/ppNiDTciASY?si=p3j5EC0IYk2SiUnq>

Additionally, I created four drawings where I analysed the cube in motion. These experiments also relate to transcendancy in form. As the *Canvas Cube* rotates on its axis, it undergoes an anamorphic transformation, shifting from a six-square plane cube to a spherical orb formation.



Figure 43. *Canvas Cube*. In situ: AVA Gallery, UEL, 2017. Photo credit, Sarah-Jane Clark

Through introspection, I engaged in the iterative processes of deconstructing and reconstructing as a means of further exploration of this work. By deconstruction, I refer to the process of breaking down and analysing the components and assumptions of the work to uncover new meanings and perspectives, rather than to the broader philosophical concept in post-structuralism (Furuhashi, 1996). In the work *Canvas Cube*, I employed deconstruction by exploring the square plane itself and then examining the plane from various perspectives. Prior to this, in my practice, the square plane was only something on which I made marks on. For example, painting or drawing. Through this introspective process, I analysed the very foundation of my art making. Initially, I examined the rotation of this cube in a circular motion on its axis. This led me to reflect on viewing the square plane from various perspectives and consider how spherical forms, commonly found in water such as bubbles and droplets, are also explored in my practice. As De Beer (2015, p. 29) notes, the sphere is "the universal form, containing all other forms." This idea resonates with my observations that, through rotation, the physical art object appears to morph in shape. Similarly, the square plane's transformation becomes evident when viewed from different angles. By 'different angles,' I refer to the changes in the visual and spatial perception of the square plane as it is viewed from various perspectives and orientations, such as top-down, side-on and rotated at various degrees. This morphing of perspective also occurs in water, an example of which can be recognised in these watercolour and graphite experimental drawings (Figures 44-45).



Figure 44. *Ripples*. Watercolour and graphite on paper. 50x50cm. 2021.



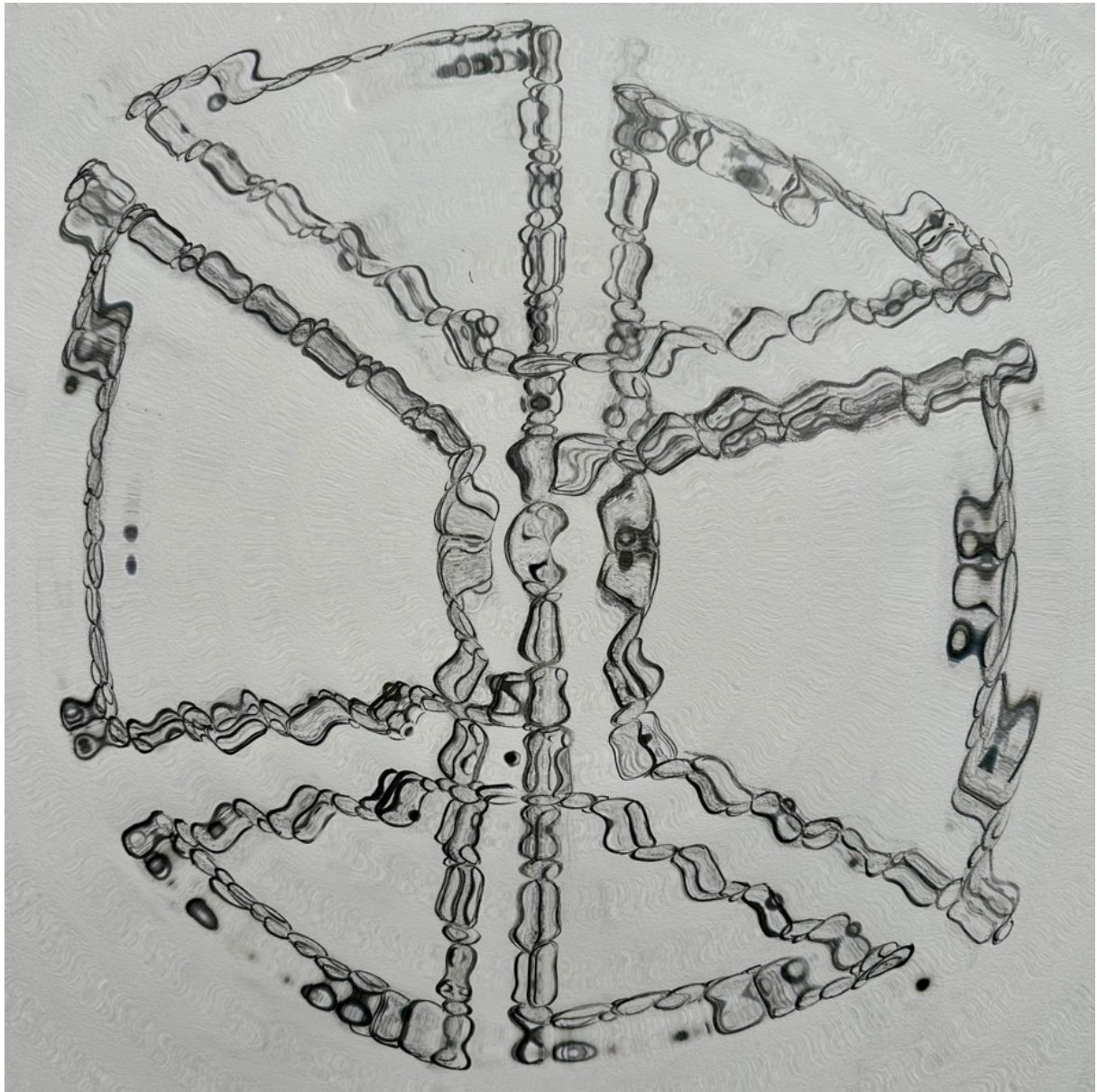


Figure 45. *Linea Cube in Water*. Digitally rendered using PhotoScape. Graphite on paper. 30x30cm. 2023.

In the work *Canvas Cube*, I've showcased a continuous process of rethinking and reconceptualisation. I envisioned in three dimensions utilising visual-spatial strengths such as spatial reasoning and holistic thinking within my mind's eye, which I qualify as the mental visualisation and manipulation of these images. This approach is consistent with how people with dyslexia are attuned to think and process information by grasping an overall 'global' mental picture rather than processing in a linear sequential way (Winner et al., 2001).

During this deconstruction process, I created a computer-generated image of the cube with the montage drawing entitled *Trees in Water* superimposed onto the cube, as seen in the following video.



Click on the above image or watch here: [https://youtube.com/shorts/-CMq6TYCG8M?si=3FeJU4D\\_rBvFGtAZ](https://youtube.com/shorts/-CMq6TYCG8M?si=3FeJU4D_rBvFGtAZ)



It was partly due to this process and after much editing, I realised that there are essentially four key angles from which a rotating cube can be viewed. These four angles represent the most significant perspectives that reveal different facets of the cube as it rotates on its axis. I began replaying the moving image of the cube repeatedly until I could discern which planes of the cube were most visible when in rotation and how they could be depicted. After much deliberation, I decided to put these observations on paper. I then sketched four conceptual drawings (Figures 46-49) to illustrate these angles, aiming to capture the cube from various perspectives during its rotation. This approach allowed me to explore and present the cube's changing appearance from multiple vantage points.

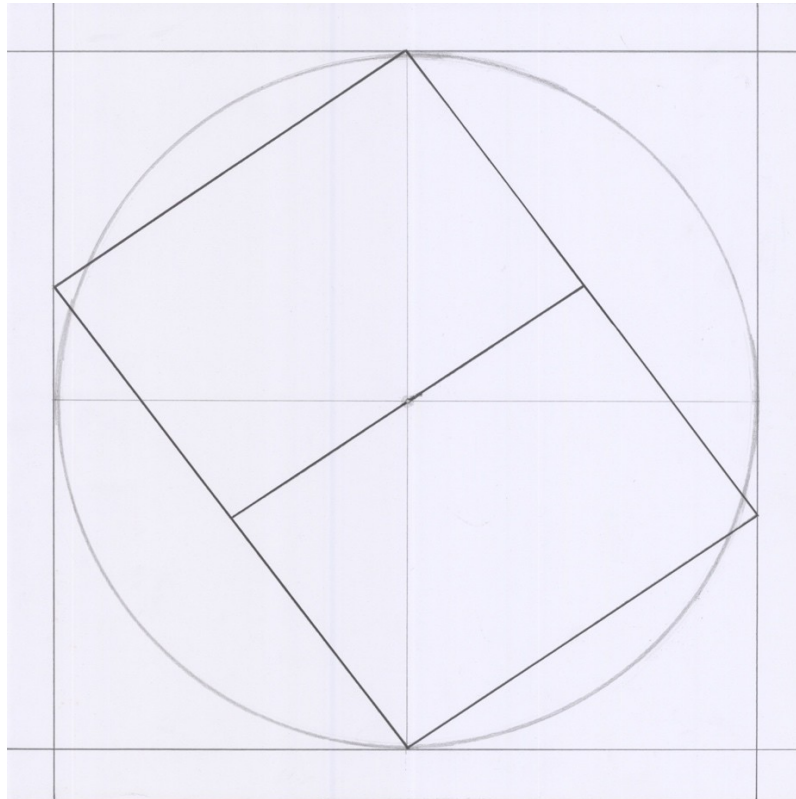


Figure 46. Concept Drawing of *Canvas Cube*. Graphite on paper, 50x50cm. 2021.

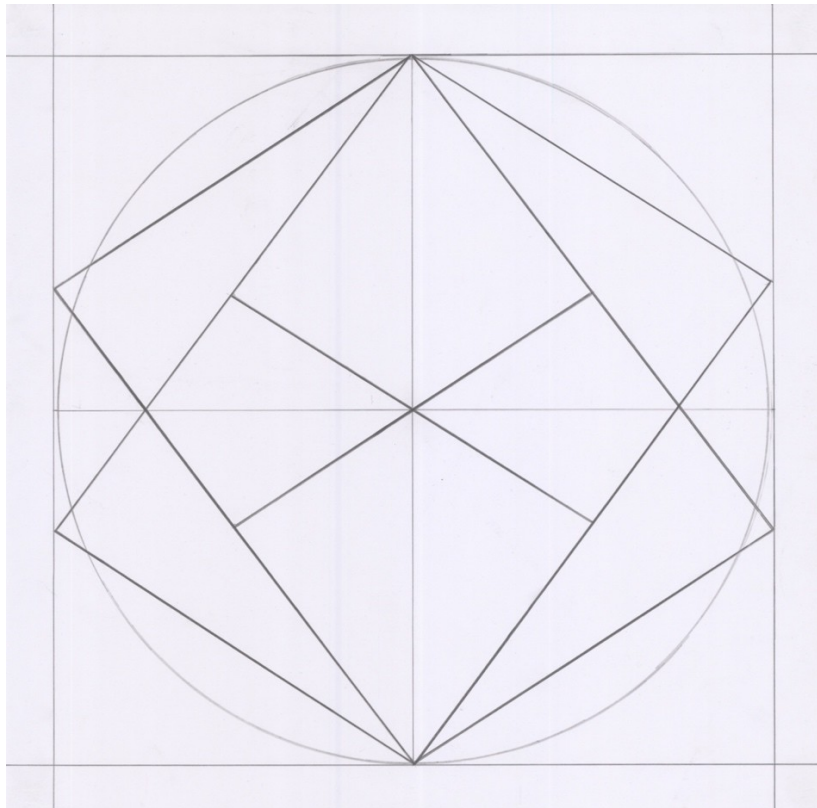


Figure 47. Concept Drawing of *Canvas Cube*. Graphite on paper. 50x50cm. 2021.

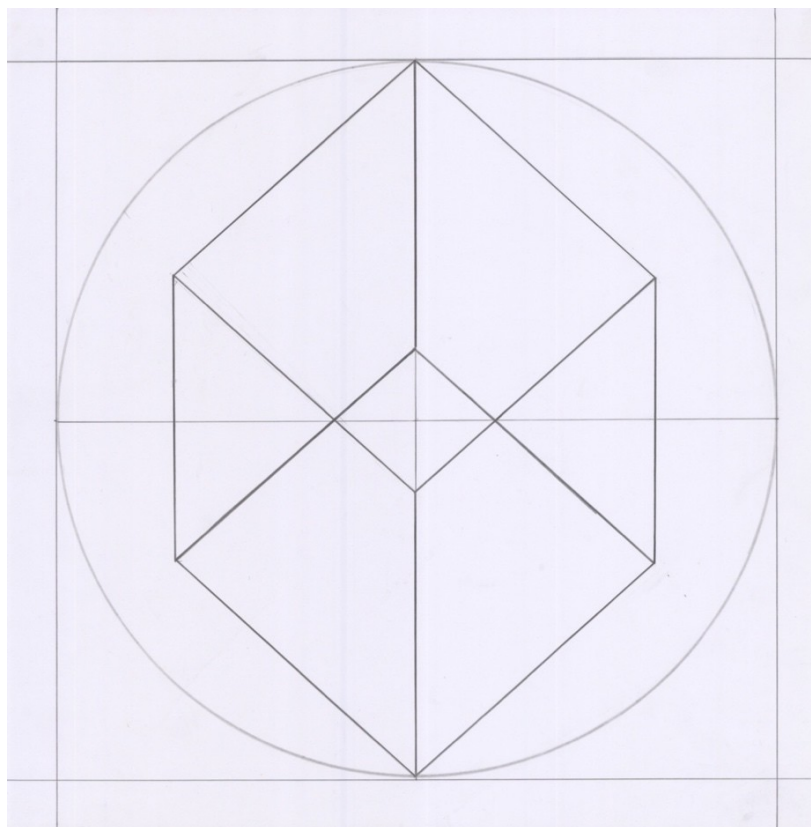


Figure 48. Concept Drawing of *Canvas Cube*. Graphite on paper. 50x50cm. 2021.

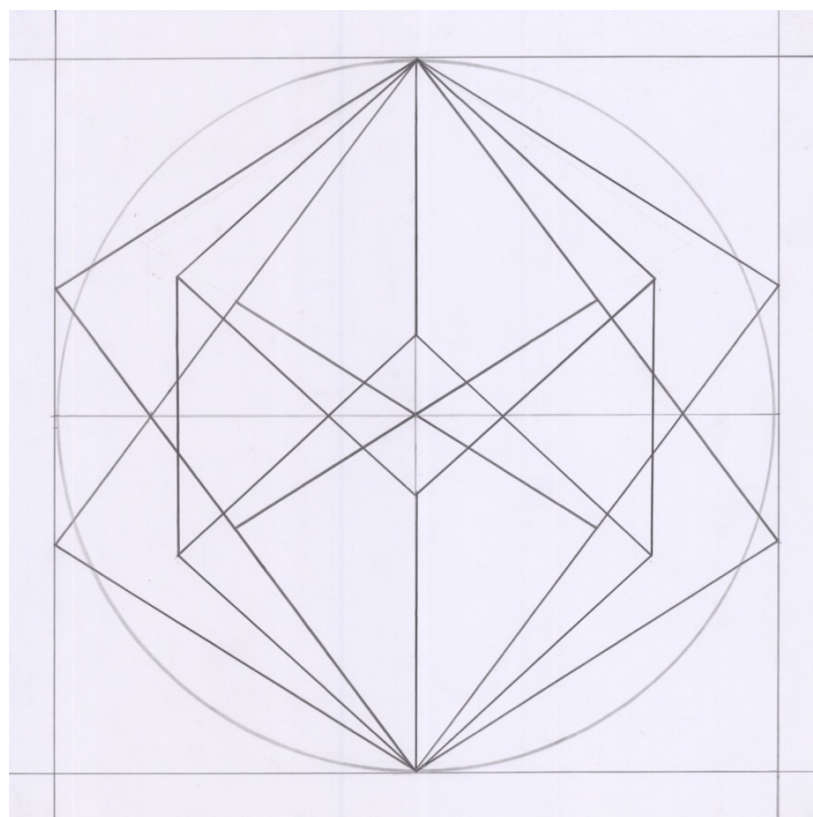


Figure 49. Concept Drawing of *Canvas Cube*. Graphite on paper. 50x50cm 2021.

What I have done here is essentially broken the drawing down into manageable chunks, enabling myself to realise the intended manifestation of depicting a cube on its axis in rotation. The first drawing reveals an oblique angle of the cube (Figure 46). I then asymmetrically superimposed the opposite oblique angle on top of the other, akin to two rectangles on their axis (Figure 47), conveying symmetry in the second drawing. The third drawing (Figure 48) is of the frontal-facing archetypal three-dimensional cube; this is inverted when the cube is rotated 180 degrees, also symmetrical. Finally, in the fourth drawing, I decided to replicate all drawings and layer them atop one another (Figure 49). Upon completing this final drawing, I realised I was able to render the vision in my mind's eye, capturing the cube in high-speed motion where it forms a sphere, as seen in the previous video.

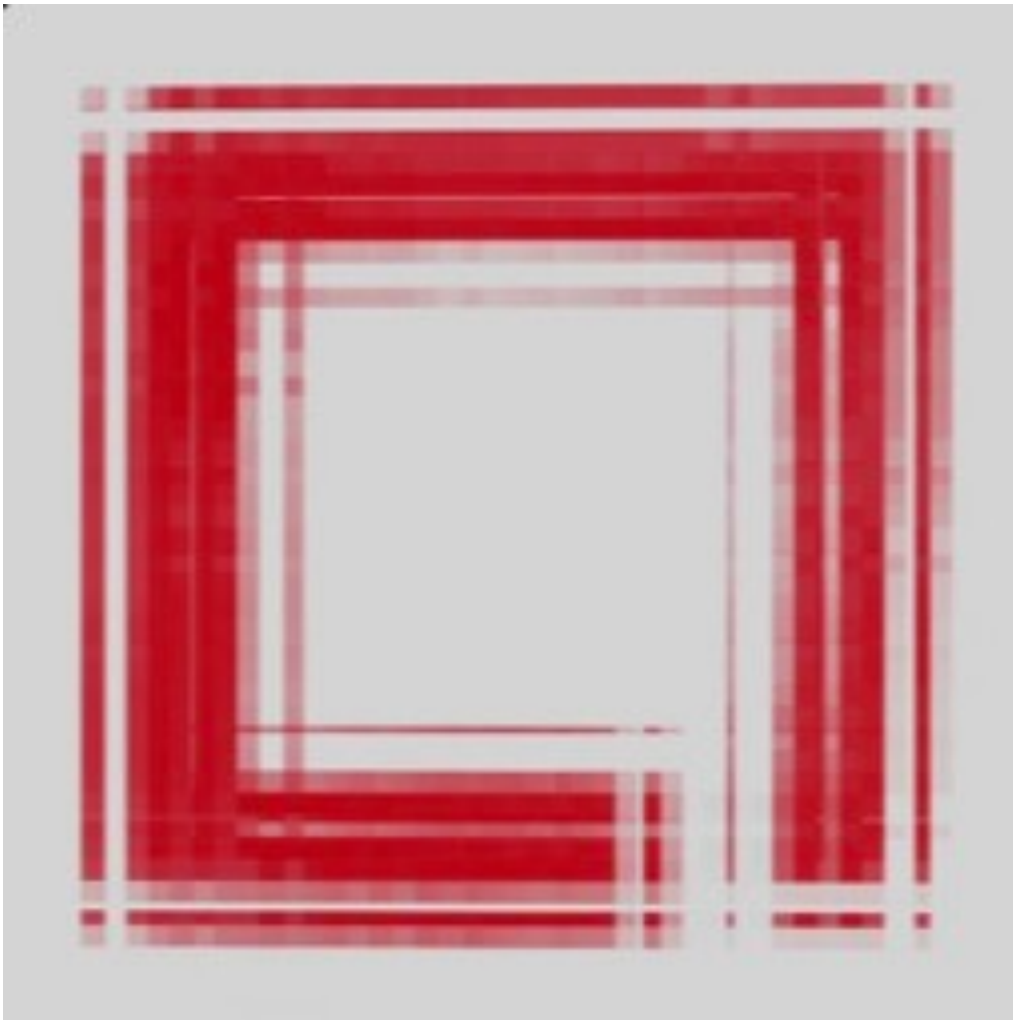
This process of breaking down a complex idea into manageable parts mirrors my broader journey as a dyslexic artist. As a young person, I experienced the repetition and trauma of failure associated with dyslexia. Now, as an adult, it is through this experimental and iterative approach to art-making that I have found a way to overcome these challenges. By engaging in this method, I develop not only the skills to solve problems but also the confidence to excel. This iterative process is often intuitive, as evidenced by my reliance on the mind's eye, a strength for dyslexics, as demonstrated by my participants in Chapter V and noted by both artist Abbey Gagne (2022) and author-scholars Hewlett (2018) and West (1997). Thus, each step in this process becomes a transcendent experience, transforming what could be seen as failures into successes.

Through these experimental explorations and in response to my research questions, I have developed a distinctive art-making process deeply informed by my experience of dyslexia, particularly in relation to visual-spatial perception. This process has not only enabled me to explore adaptive strategies and resilience in my work but has also naturally aligned with certain elements of Op Art. Op Art, or Optical Art, is an abstract style that emerged in the

1960s, characterised by patterns and shapes to create the illusion of movement or visual effects (Humphrey, 2008). While optical illusions have been extensively explored since the 1960s, my focus here is not on creating optical effects, but rather on how these experiments specifically inform and integrate within the context of dyslexic spatial cognition.

It is crucial to highlight the importance in understanding how dyslexia influence artistic practice, rather than positioning my work strictly within the framework of the Sublime. For instance, the rotation of the Canvas Cube, which transforms from a six-square-plane cube into a spherical form, symbolises how dyslexic individuals might navigate and transcend their communication challenges. Just as the cube shifts and changes its structure, dyslexic individuals often adapt their thought processes and perspectives to find new ways of expressing ideas, moving beyond traditional, linear forms of communication to more fluid and multidimensional approaches. This transformation reflects an adaptive and dynamic process, resonating with the concept of overcoming obstacles.

By examining the sphere as a universal form, as De Beer (2015) suggests, in relation to the cube, I've gained insights that inform my art practice and deepen my understanding of how visual-spatial dynamics can express both personal and universal experiences. Through this experimental process, I explored various related concepts attributable to the line, circle and square, as illustrated in Figures 50-51 and in the following video.



Click on the above image or watch here:

<https://youtube.com/shorts/CKjBggRwpgA?si=yvanCSbI9F5IosQP>

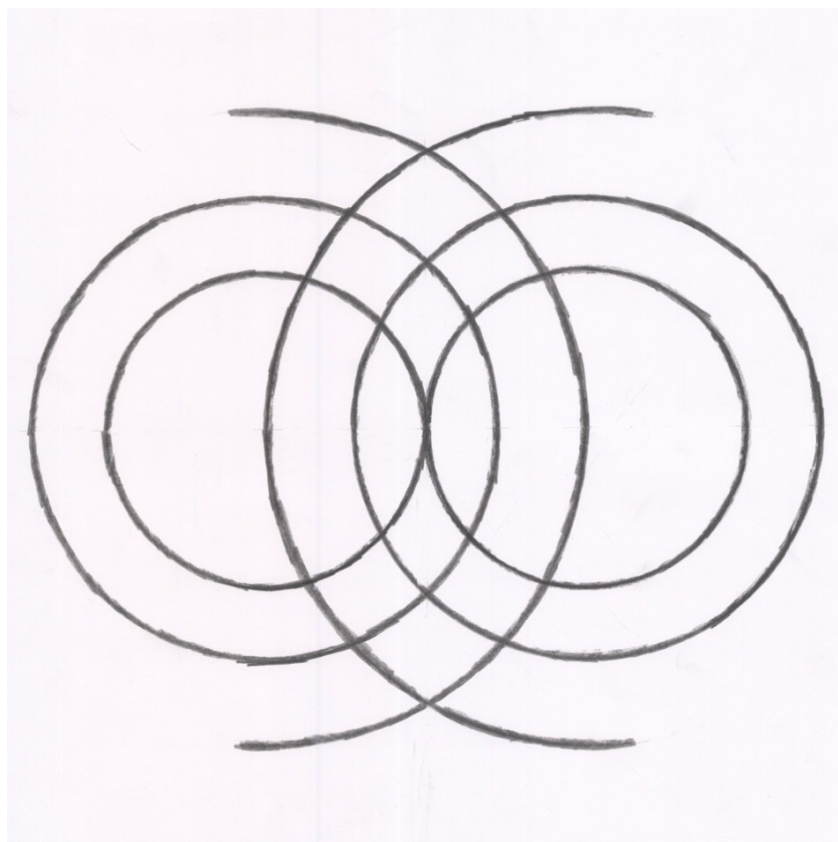


Figure 50. *Superposition of Circular Waves*. Graphite on paper. 50x50cm. 2023.

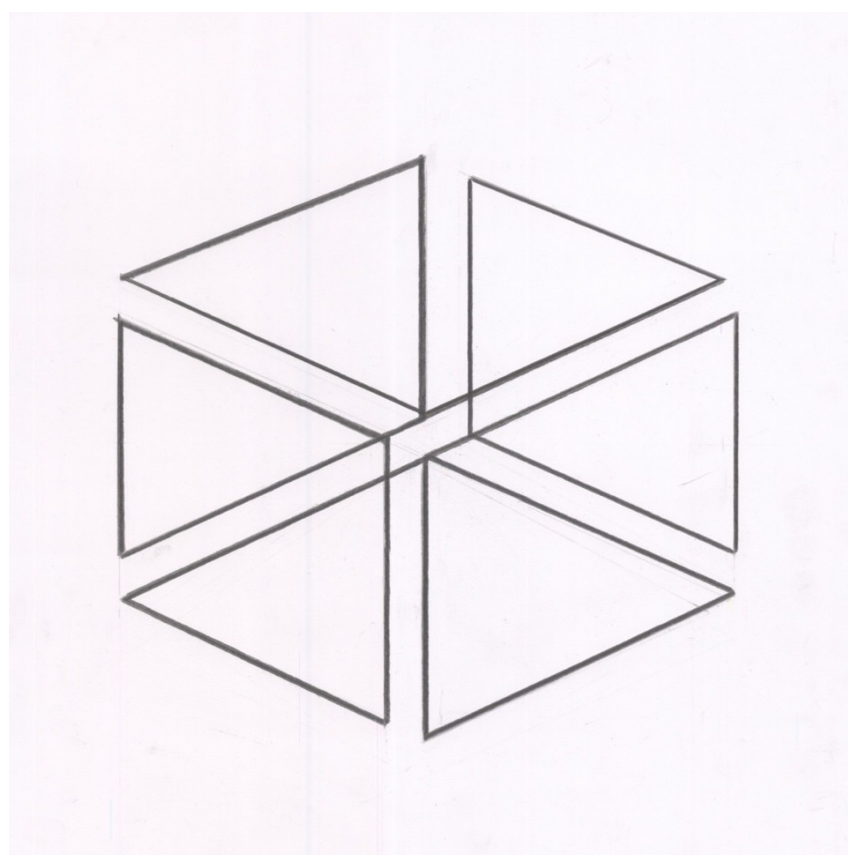


Figure 51. *Linea Cube*. Graphite on paper. 50x50cm. 2023.

In the next work and through these experiments with the plane, I realised that to display a work mounted on the floor, the image becomes distorted as one circumnavigates the work. Therefore, this accentuated the desired vantage point of perspective, which in this case enhanced the morphing and warping effect of trees reflected in water (Figure 52).





Figure 52. *Trees in Water* (floor mounted, black background). 2021.

### 3. Reversals, Mind Wandering, Sense of Awe: Trees in Water (90x90cm Montage Drawing)

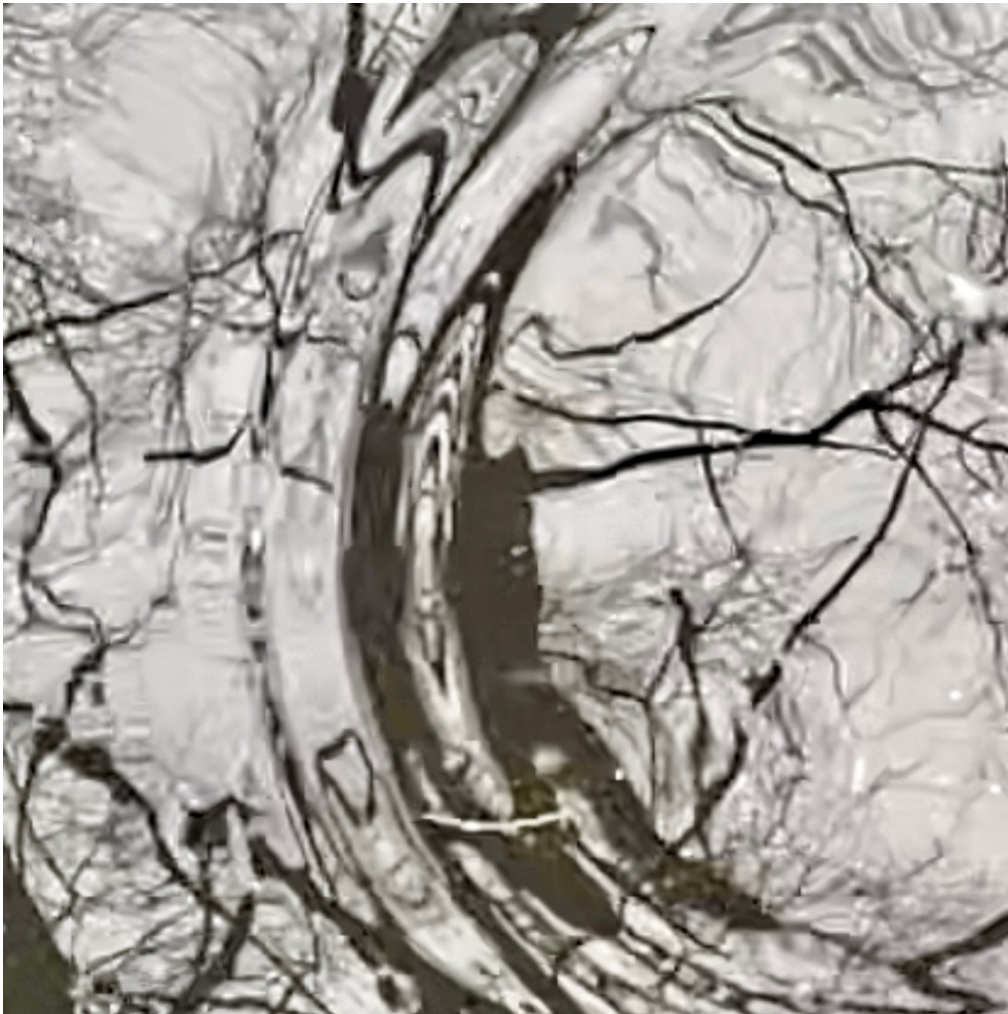
The work *Trees in Water* was intended to communicate awe and wonder, resonating with the artistic traditions of Romanticism. By exploring the morphing aspect of *Trees in Water*, the work aligns with Romantic artists' exploration of the ever-changing and transcendent aspects of nature. The inception of this work was devised by revising a photograph captured on the surface of a local pond depicting trees reflected in water. I also compiled various videos of the trees reflected in the water, an example of which can be viewed below.



Click on the above image or watch here:

[https://youtube.com/shorts/hhEJrPx\\_REc?si=FpxQS4Br3GW4XvVj](https://youtube.com/shorts/hhEJrPx_REc?si=FpxQS4Br3GW4XvVj)

Another example can be viewed below, where I installed the work as a video installation. A twenty-hour graphite drawing of this still from the video below can be found in the Appendix.



Click on the above image or watch here:

<https://youtube.com/shorts/OII0FD8Ambk?si=cvOJTK4OMTKz3ZVI>

Through reflexive documentation of this process by audio means, I found a considerable amount of time was spent sifting through images of photographs I had taken of trees reflected in water. During this iterative process, the crystallisation of a single image slowly emerged. By placing a grid upon this single image within a square plane, I created a montage of nine planes of smaller images. I then developed a one-minute video of these images superimposed on top of one another, as seen below.





Click on the above image or watch here: <https://youtu.be/l34zd-s-k1E?si=S-Yrs0O9-cDIJU7L>

Moreover, upon reflection, I found myself inspired by the dramatic intensity of the dark contours of the branches of the trees reflected in the water, framing the light as windows in a religious building, where I have often spent moments of contemplation and seeking inspiration. From this, I set to work on a large-scale montage graphite drawing based on the same image, depicting trees morphing, reflecting and refracting in water. Upon further reflection, I found that by rotating the square plane on which I am sketching, I am better able to capture the various distorted shapes in the water. Again, by audio means, I reflexively document how I usually work in an enclosed makeshift studio space and alone, away from distractions. This style of working was also evidenced by participant DB in the workshop discussion in Chapter V. These drawings took over three months to execute. I would often draw in the afternoon in the fading

winter daylight. I noted an analogy here: as light turns to dark, the light and dark I depicted in the work becomes more enhanced. Additionally, at times, I observe how I channel powerful emotions into the drawing. I am not only making work but also finding immense pleasure and a sense of connection with the elements in nature, often losing myself in the drawing. I observe how the act of drawing is a disciplined exercise in concentration and focus on the task at hand. This was my first montage in graphite and probably the longest time spent on a single drawing. At this stage in the work, I had a sense of concern and apprehension about knowing when the work was finished, fearing I might overwork or underwork it. However, I found that there was nothing else I could do except rework what I had already done. Engaging in the processes of undoing and redoing, confirmed this drawing was finished and I moved on to the next one. Perhaps due to the length of time spent on this montage, I was allowed more time for deeper reflection on the process of making a single work made up of multiple drawings.

After considering the completion of the entirety of the work, I noted how drawing is a part of my identity, mark making. I reflect further on how I will miss what has become a daily routine of drawing at twilight, before the sun sets. Additionally, I noted an analogy here again, of light and dark depicted in the work and the daily ritual of working on the drawing from daylight hours to sunset. While the construction of the work is complete, I now ask myself: How do I frame it? Photograph it? And in what kind of space and setting? I experimented with various perspectival viewpoints, such as placing the montage drawing on the studio wall (Figure 54) and then on the studio floor (Figures 52, 55). After much deliberation, I concluded that the work should be shown as a floor-mounted drawing, as this viewpoint allows for a more angular perspective. By angular perspective, I mean that viewing the work on the floor requires the viewer to engage with it from different angles and heights, rather than the single, head-on perspective typically used when viewing a wall-mounted piece. When one views a picture on the wall, we often unconsciously assume a standing position in front and in the centre of the image. However, when one is viewing a floor-mounted work, they must circumnavigate it,

viewing the work from various perspectival viewpoints. As previously mentioned, I concluded that this circumnavigation also enhances the distortion of the image of trees morphing in the water as depicted in the work. I experimented with projections of the image as a possible light installation (Figure 56). Here, I was able to enhance and accentuate the intensity of the perspective. All this experimentation accords with the way in which the work was finally installed in the exhibition entitled *Aldgate in Winter*, in the City of London (2021). As part of this exhibition, the work was displayed at St. Botolph's Without Aldgate Church for five days (see Figure 56 and Appendix).

When inquiring further into this work and the portrayal of trees transforming in water, I discern stylised patterns within the blurred interplay of light and shadow. In artistic discourse, 'stylised' encapsulates a deliberate, or as I posit, sometimes unintentional modification or amplification of reality. This approach entails an artist distorting reality to communicate their distinctive viewpoint. For instance, deviations from strict realism, such as abstraction or exaggeration, are common (Zou et al., 2021) and I argue that this alteration of reality in art, particularly among dyslexic artists, involves a manipulation of artistic elements to convey deeper meanings or evoke specific emotional responses. These alterations are not merely stylistic choices but are fundamental to the artist's process of engaging with and interpreting the world around them, offering unique perspectives shaped by the cognitive and perceptual differences associated with dyslexia (Snowling, 2019). I have explored in my artmaking; a stylised depiction often emerges. The layperson to the arts frequently perceives the ability of an artist to represent something photo realistically as indicative of artistic excellence. For a dyslexic artist, this emphasis may be perceived as implying that there is only one correct way of seeing, compelling all to conform and compete with this idealised vision, what David Levin (1993, p. 87) refers to as the "hegemony of vision" in image creation. This perspective can be a triggering factor related to self-esteem for the dyslexic artist, causing feelings of inadequacy and a sense of being 'otherly' and marginalised when their perceptual take is simply unique.

This was evidenced by participant DB in Chapter V and is something I can certainly attest to through my own lived experience as a dyslexic artist. Moreover, the concept of “pattern detection,” identified as a strength associated with dyslexia (Eide and Eide, 2011, p. 89), may find relevance within this stylised framework. I propose that for dyslexic artists, as evidenced in Chapter V, who encounter challenges when drawing from observation due to short-term memory limitations, as also outlined by Rankin and Riley below (introduced in Chapter II), this framework can be advantageous.

When you are drawing a representational picture, where you have to look from the subject of the picture back to the paper, you could find this difficult if you're dyslexic for similar reasons. So, working memory and processing times could be a factor affecting your drawings (2021, p. 25).

Therefore, a stylised approach may offer a means to express one's unique perspectives effectively. Thus, through intentional deviations from reality, the dyslexic artist can create compelling visual narratives that reflect their individual experiences and insights. In my own work, I observe a detection of patterns evident using stylised, monochrome coloration and the play of light and dark. The monochromatic aspect in my work reflects my personal perception of black and white text on paper, which, for me as a dyslexic individual, can sometimes appear to morph. This phenomenon is referred to as ‘visual stress’ (Alexander-Passe, 2017). However, it is important to note that this experience may not be universal among all dyslexic artists, as individual experiences of dyslexia can vary widely (Wood, 2005). Over the years, I have explored patterns in the interplay of light and dark within my own artmaking, known as chiaroscuro. Chiaroscuro involves the careful arrangement of light and shade to create depth, volume and atmosphere within an artwork. This technique is fundamental in constructing images, particularly paintings, as it adds three-dimensionality and realism to what is otherwise a two-dimensional surface. Through the manipulation of light and dark, artists can imbue their artworks with a sense of depth, drama and mood, enhancing the overall visual impact (Ross, 1947). Again, I contend this might be useful to the dyslexic due to cognitive differences.

*Trees in Water* is a doubling, as the drawing reflects the trees both above and below water, conveying the principle of symmetrical perception. Consistent with the previously discussed idea of the vantage point, the image must be viewed from a certain distance to be apprehended and appreciated. From this experimental process, I then zeroed in on the central plane, see detail (Figure 53), as I had explored each individual plane and found this to be the most interesting, as will be discussed in the following work.



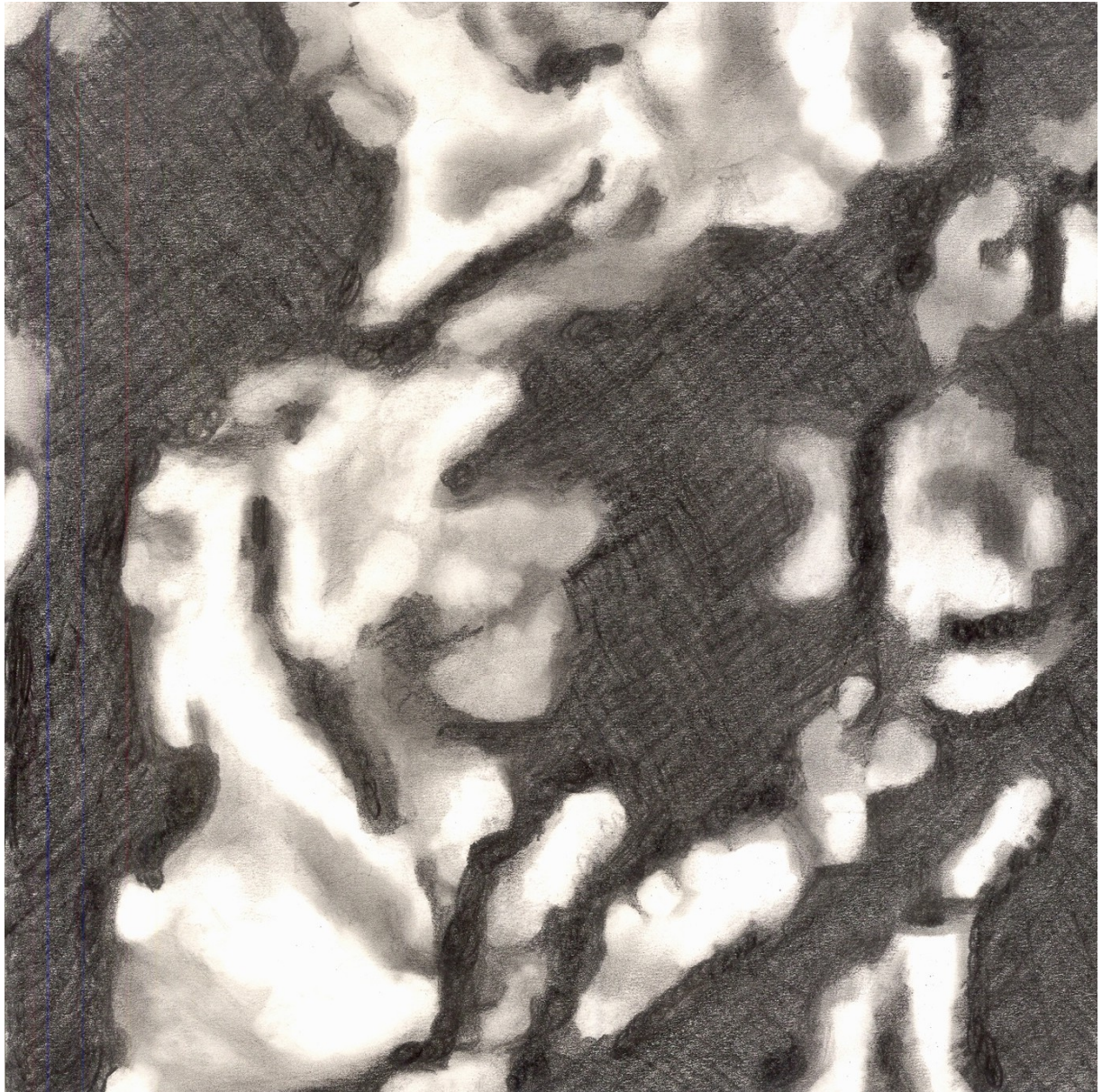


Figure 53. Detail. Central plane. *Trees in Water*. Graphite on paper. 30cmx30cm. 2021.





Figure 54. *Trees in Water*. Wall mounted. 90x90cm Graphite montage drawing. 2021.



Figure 55. *Trees in Water*. Floor mounted. 90x90cm graphite montage drawing. 2021.





Figure 55. Perspectival projection. *Trees in Water*. 90x90 montage drawing. 2021



Figure 57. In situ. *Trees in Water* (90x90cm montage drawing) St Botolph's Without Aldgate church. City of London. 2021.

#### 4. Otherness: Mind's Eye in Water

The experiments conducted in the works *Canvas Cube* and *Trees in Water* revealed intriguing insights into the relationship between movement and spatial perception. Through these works, I observed a correlation between perception and the concept of the mind's eye. This connection prompted further investigation into the visceral experiences often associated with artistic expression (Wiebe, 2011). Building upon this notion, I explored this concept further, particularly in relation to the Sublime as discussed in Chapter IV and in the following work.

This section draws upon part of an audio reflexive documentation process I went through whilst making the work *Mind's Eye in Water*. Again, I explore the processes such as the thoughts and feelings associated with the challenges encountered when attempting to execute a large-scale canvas painting, but not simply as artistic expression, rather as part of an investigative process in which I was engaged. The purpose of this work was part of an experimental exploration of the visual-spatial. The work itself was conceived intuitively through numerous mind-wandering exercises, during which I envisioned the painting resembling the glistening cornea of an eye when one is seemingly staring into space, daydreaming or letting their mind wander, as discussed in Chapter III. This analogy captures the reflective and somewhat detached quality of the work, akin to the way the cornea reflects light and seems to glisten when the individual is lost in thought. Often, when our minds wander, we engage the 'mind's eye' in visual-spatial terms, allowing us to see and imagine things beyond our immediate surroundings (Eide and Eide, 2011). This internal visualisation process involves constructing mental images and spatial relationships, which in this instance, influenced the conceptualisation of the artwork. The resemblance to the glint of light on the cornea serves as a metaphor for this introspective, imaginative process, where the work becomes a reflection of both the external and internal worlds.

To put this into practice, I began by morphing the central plane of the previous montage drawing into a subtle circular lens using PhotoScape software. By zeroing in on a specific section and enlarging it, I accentuated spatial dynamics within that section, further enhancing the overall visual experience. I then executed a second drawing (Figure 58) and reflexively documented the process as a video diary, using time-lapse, as can be seen in the following video.



Click on the above image or watch here:

[https://youtu.be/9bAHsWZn\\_OU?si=i4yjSt0Z48Rya\\_IR](https://youtu.be/9bAHsWZn_OU?si=i4yjSt0Z48Rya_IR)

Mixing different mediums, from graphite drawing to digital rendering, opened new possibilities, such as different ways in which the work can be viewed. After putting the drawing aside and reflecting on the video diary, I decided to rotate the image at variable speeds. I was then able to determine a speed that caused the rotating image to morph into a more discernible, round, cornea-like shape. Furthermore, to the right of centre in the rotating image, a seahorse shape can be distinguished, as seen in the following video.



Click on the above image or watch here:

[https://youtube.com/shorts/9M\\_BrgEldmc?si=pFAvITdo8cGhKbB](https://youtube.com/shorts/9M_BrgEldmc?si=pFAvITdo8cGhKbB)  
[C](#)

Mind wandering occurs in the central hippocampus area of the brain (Corballis, 2012). The significance of this is notable, as the hippocampus plays a crucial role in memory formation and recall, both of which are essential elements in the creative process (McCormick

et al., 2018; Fox and Beaty, 2019). Through further observation and experimentation, reflexively recording my thoughts and allowing my mind to wander, I realised that I was indeed often reflecting on the creative process. The concept of mind wandering was introduced in Chapter I, where I outline my methodology and was discussed and analysed further in Chapter III. This mind wandering facilitated access to a reservoir of stored experiences and knowledge, which I approached holistically, essentially problem- solving through divergent thinking. This highlights how involuntary thoughts can spark creativity and innovative solutions.



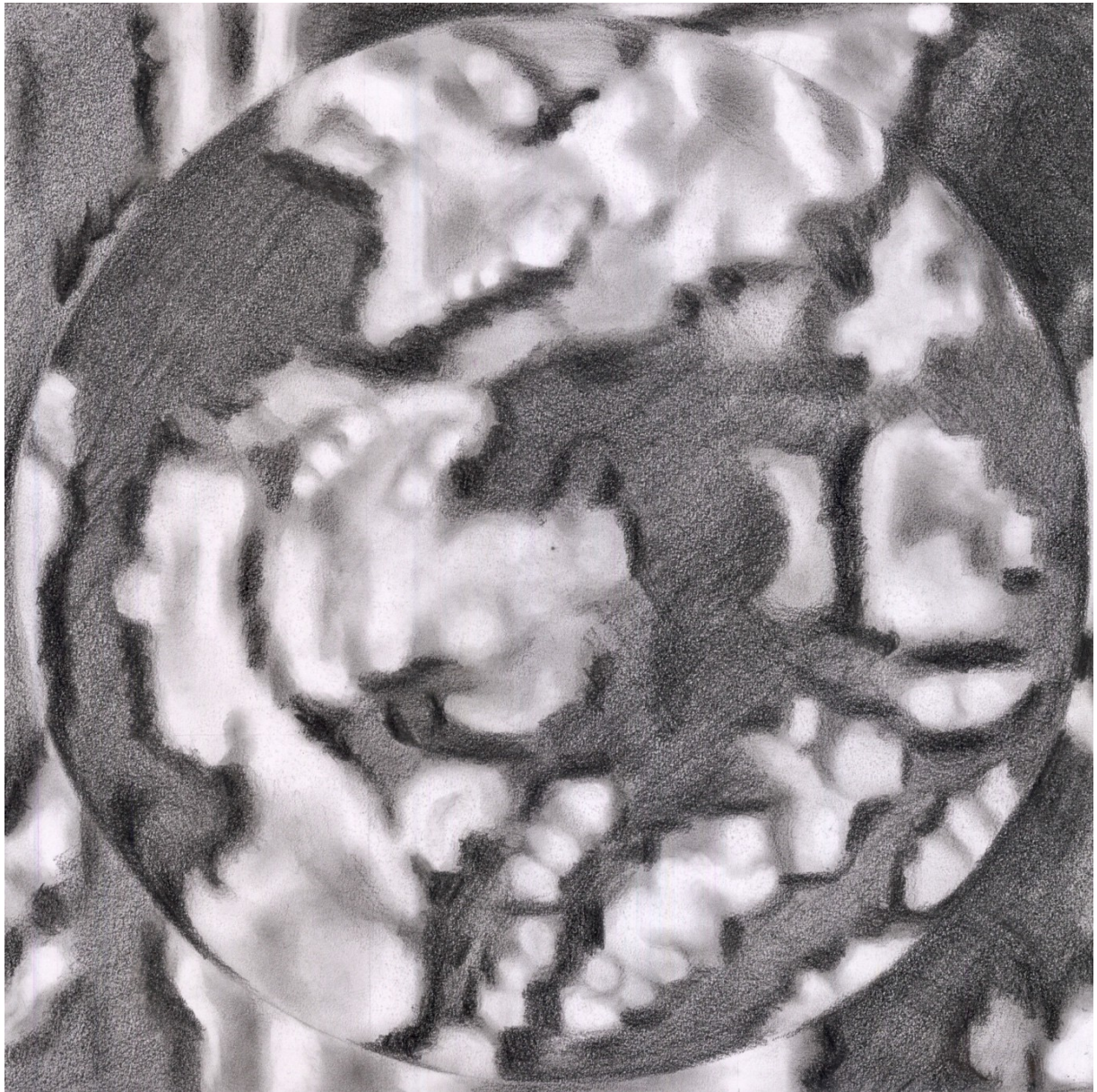
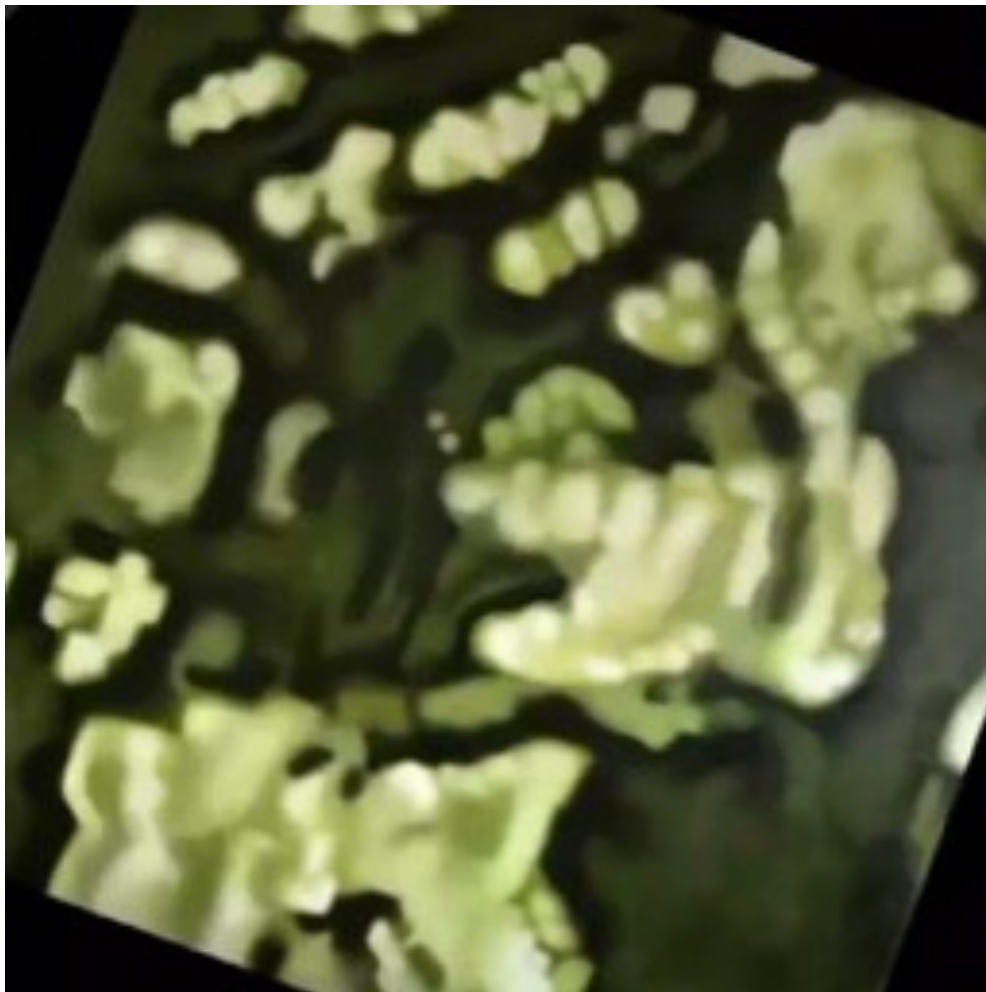


Figure 58. *Mind's Eye in Water* (ocular). Graphite on paper. 50x50cm. 2022.

From the previously discussed drawing, I commenced work on a large-scale, five-foot square oil painting on canvas, focusing on both frontal and perspectival views, as seen in the completed work (Figures 59, 60). After considerable measuring and further experimentation with rotating the original reference photograph, I realised there was no need to paint a morphed execution into a magnified (ocular) lens, as I had done in the second drawing discussed earlier (Figure 58). Simply rotating the image at a particular speed morphs the painting into a cornea shape, where a pupil and iris can be discerned, as shown in the video projection of the completed five-foot canvas entitled *Mind's Eye in Water*, seen here.



Click on the above image or watch here:

<https://youtube.com/shorts/kbWs3JeBdrw?si=GYgGCmqDEYuePilb>

This is further evidenced in the reflexive audio documentation I conducted during the execution of Mind's *Eye in Water*, where I reflect on the works conceptualisation, which can be seen in the following video.



Click on the above image or watch here:

<https://youtu.be/yvpRBUp5Ur4?si=3IKiW2EfSLYUCSiS>

When in the process of painting, I recall from audio reflexivity, intensified emotions, which come in a sort of ebb and flow and which I will expand upon in succeeding paragraphs. Moreover, I find myself questioning at times whether this is of any use to research or even as a work of art; this dichotomy was propounded by Biggs (2010) in Chapter I. I reflect further that this is a kind of working through negative narratives of doubt and from that thinking comes a negative brushstroke. This is often later countered by a positive thought, a positive brushstroke, feelings of ecstasy and excitement in the making of the painting and a sense of

reassurance that one is finding one's way as layers are built on layers and the work evolves.

By means of audio reflexivity, I sometimes recall feeling as though I have no idea what I am doing and that I am simply relying on intuition to find my way. Later, I find that this is accurate. Even during times of lacklustre mark-making, when one puts the work away and looks at it at another time and state of mind, progress can be discerned. This uncertainty and reliance on intuition can feel overwhelming. I seem to find this painting more challenging than others I have executed. Additionally, I note that when my mood is different, my painting is different. I experience high energy while painting, followed by what I describe as a lacklustre feeling. I find myself questioning: am I putting in enough effort? Am I good enough? Is it good enough? Can I pull it off? I realise that at times, I just need to take myself out of the painting, take a break and reflect. These struggles resonate with many artists, but I contend that they hold particular significance for dyslexic artists, where resilience and adaptive strategies are often necessary to transcend these barriers, as has been evidenced in the literature (Rankin & Riley, 2021; Taylor & Vestergaard, 2022; Clewis et al., 2022) and by participants, particularly in the workshop discussion in Chapter V. Ultimately, self-belief in one's abilities becomes a positive driving force. These struggles serve as a testament to the resilience and determination cultivated over years of perseverance in the face of adversity (Agahi, 2015).

Through further analyses, I reflect that I am following a process I have developed over many years. For example, the handling of paint involves techniques such as the translucent layering of oils and the angling of the brush. This layering of paint involves a succession of numerous corrections until they become final adjustments from subsequent efforts. The different techniques involved in angling the brush and the confidence in handling the paint are evident. For example, in the following video, I apply final translucent glaze of paint.





Click on the above image or watch here:  
[https://youtube.com/shorts/OyyiIjw0Ve0?si=DLhzSwFcpi\\_G8aO2](https://youtube.com/shorts/OyyiIjw0Ve0?si=DLhzSwFcpi_G8aO2)

Again, I find it necessary to rotate the painting on the easel as I work on the canvas to depict the refractions accurately from all angles, a technique I learn in retrospect, used by dyslexic artist Chuck Close (Gobbo, 2014).

At this stage, I find myself faced with an obstacle in questioning whether the painting is a realistic or a stylised depiction. The work is abstracted due to it being a zeroed-in perspective. Even if the work were an exact mirror image, it would still be difficult for the viewer to discern what it is. Rendering the image stylised will only accentuate this. Therefore, I decide to stay on track and try to convey what I see in the photo. In retrospect, my own stylised and somewhat biased interpretation is evident, but it simultaneously offers a unique perspective. I have always been a studio artist and experimented with photorealism and stylistic rendering in painting and drawing. Depicting something like trees in water in a natural environment is not typically my approach. I conclude that if I aim to replicate a photograph, that is all I will achieve. Therefore, I am using a combination of observation and conceptualisation to execute this work, which was simultaneously explored in the final drawing exercise in the workshops, as expounded upon in Chapter V.



Figure 59. *Mind's Eye in Water*. Oil on five feet canvas. 2022.

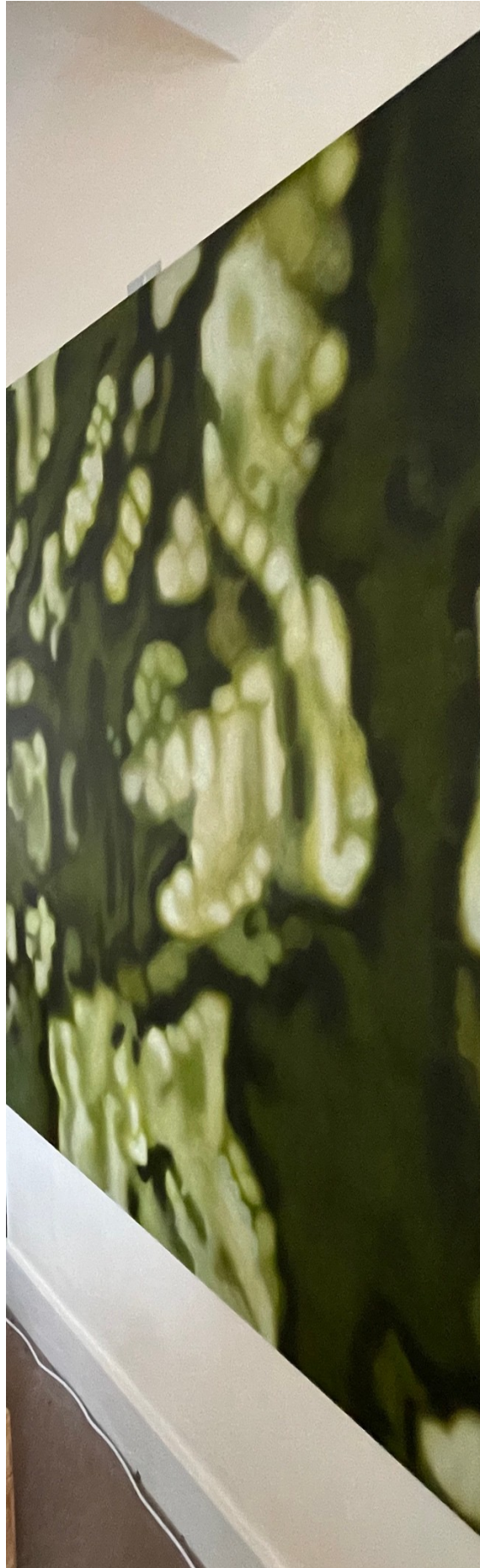


Figure 60. *Mind's Eye in Water* (perspectival). Oil on five feet canvas.



The final stage of this work was to further explore the concept of movement and morphing. As discussed, I explored rotating the image of the completed painting at variable speeds. From this, I identified a particular speed at which a cornea might be discerned. I then took a video recording of this moving image to a studio space and projected it as a video installation, shown below.



Click on the above image or watch here:

[https://youtube.com/shorts/vxUY1\\_ElQdY?si=mcqoX1-GFCjpT6z0](https://youtube.com/shorts/vxUY1_ElQdY?si=mcqoX1-GFCjpT6z0)

I utilised this studio space to capture various perspectival angles of this moving image, another of which can also be viewed below.



Click on the above image or watch here:  
<https://youtube.com/shorts/GR0XMhjN9XQ?si=PL6sx>

Techniques such as rotating the work at variable speeds introduce transformations that alter its appearance and spatial relationship within the composition. The use of digital rendering further amplifies this exploration of concepts in both virtual and physical spaces, as with the initial concept drawing (Figure 58). Lastly, a time-lapse video of the work *Mind's Eye in Water*, documenting its inception to execution, can be seen below.



Click on the above image or watch here:  
[https://youtu.be/fppyWcSJd2o?si=CSEPi\\_AJB6f34pks](https://youtu.be/fppyWcSJd2o?si=CSEPi_AJB6f34pks)

## 5. Reversals: Trees in Water (macro)

The second painting, entitled *Trees in Water* (2023), is a macro image of the previously discussed montage drawing of the same title (Figures 61, 62). Once again, I employed the grid method, which I believe symbolises the fact that the image I am depicting originated from a digital photo. The square grid is reminiscent of pixels, which becomes more evident when one zooms in on the digital image. This aspect was also discussed earlier in relation to distortion, pixelation and perceptual differences regarding fine detail, as was talked through in Chapter V.

Again, as with the previously discussed work, I rotated the canvas initially at 180-degree

intervals initially, which gradually increased to 90-degree intervals. Quite literally, I was rotating the square canvas as I worked on it, as can be in the video below.



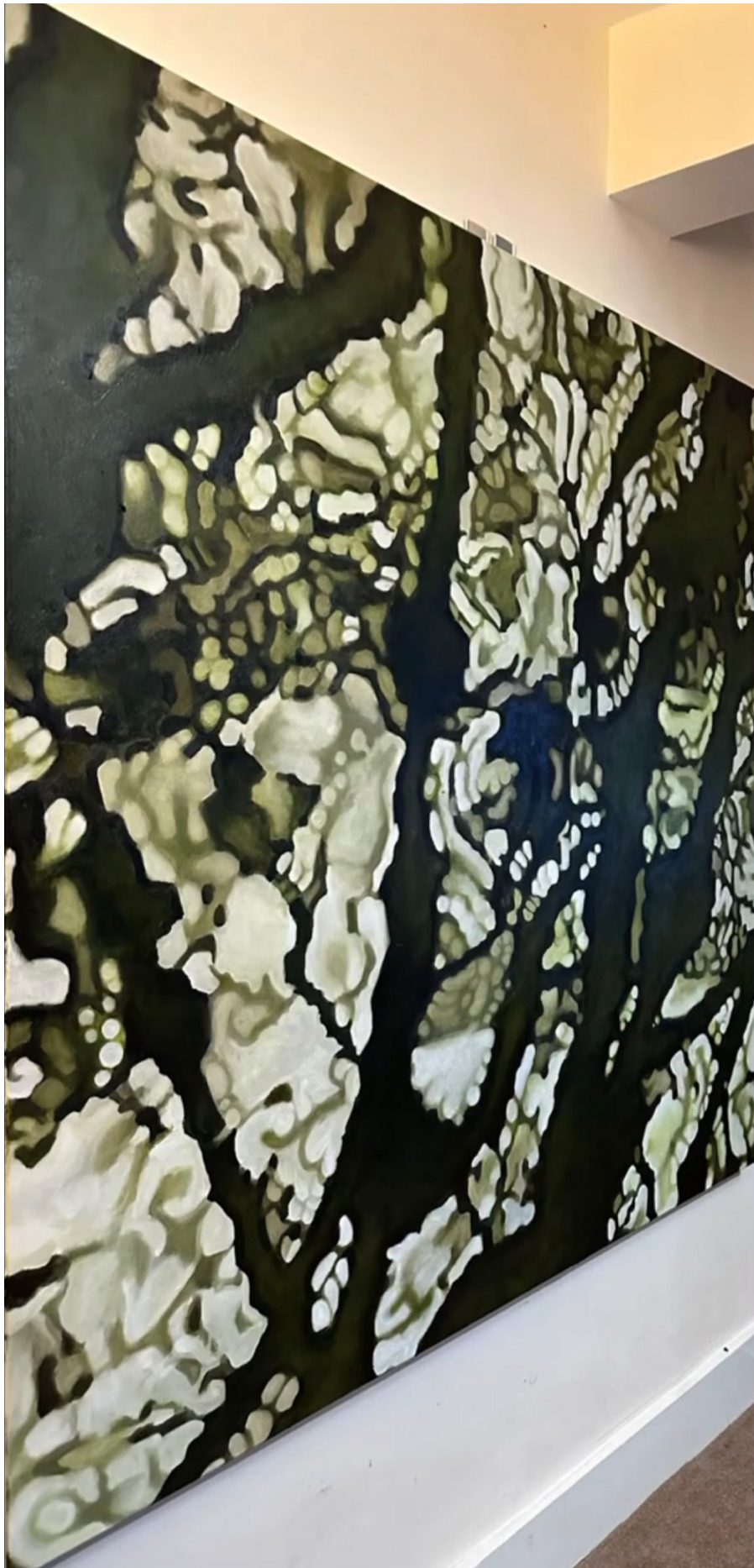
Click on the above image or watch here:  
<https://youtube.com/shorts/eZoaFBFvhQc?si=ihqhsVR37Ipzugnq>

I find that this approach provides a truer depiction, as one can sometimes bias one's gaze from a horizontal perspective only, whereas rotating the canvas counters this bias. In terms of the visual-spatial, this emphasises the importance and the use of multiple perspectives. This method altered spatial relationships and challenged conventional representation, allowing me to engage with perspective. Here, I am exploring structural orientation and making a conscious decision to counter biases in gaze. By exploring different perspectives and challenging the conventional gaze, new ways of seeing and making art are discovered.

As I progress further with the application of paint, I increasingly notice how perception becomes a significant factor. With the grid removed, I must rely on the spatial distance of each defining mark. Working on a large-scale canvas allows the viewer to zoom into the detail akin to the micro, which can later be appreciated from a macro perspective, or by viewing the large-scale canvas from a distance, as conveyed in the video below. This shifting engagement of perception recalls the earlier discussion of Smithson's *Enantiomorphic Chambers* (1965), where one's relationship to mirrored distortions changes with where one is positioned and in relation to movement. More specifically, Smithson's paired enantiomorphic mirrors require the viewer to reposition their body between angled reflectors, producing left-right inversions that disorient the field of vision. While Smithson's apparatus foregrounds optical reflection, my practice pursues related effects, including inversion and reflection, through materially driven strategies (rotation, scale, tonal modulation) and the bodily negotiation of installation, rather than through mirrors per se (e.g., circumnavigation of floor-mounted drawings and rotated square planes). In this sense the parallel is one of embodiment, not of apparatus: viewers are still asked to move, but the perceptual shift is triggered by paint, surface and scale. Like Smithson, I am interested in how the act of viewing becomes an embodied experience and how metaphorically and literally where one is situated influences the experience. This again connects to phenomenological thinking, particularly Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on perception as a situated and lived encounter, rather than a detached visual act (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 147), "the body [being] our general medium

for having a world.” Accordingly, my emphasis is on material, embodied perception rather than optical apparatus.





Click on the above image or watch here:  
[https://youtu.be/eJb7UJFpRYU?si=jdu4vR9ueCj0d\\_zv](https://youtu.be/eJb7UJFpRYU?si=jdu4vR9ueCj0d_zv)



I am hopeful and it appears true that by enlarging this image onto a five-foot canvas, I accentuate the morphing and warping of the trees reflected in water.

When analysing reflexive video documentation, I notice how slowly it appears I paint, see below. Conversely, when I am in this act of this mark making, it does not feel or seem to be slow, but a very fast and intense cognitive processing.



Click on the above image or watch here:  
<https://youtu.be/k4tfOtOO2eQ?si=hT9AtTXc24P2m1Oj>

On further inspection, it appears that I am carefully processing where to place the brush and continuously establishing spatial reference points. Due in part to the scale of the painting, I find myself metaphorically and literally absorbed in the work to the extent that I seemingly forget what I am painting (trees in water); I am simply depicting form. For example, the detail I am working on and the sky in the background of the trees, is reversed to signify form rather than

the dark stems and branches of the depicted trees. I am also perplexed as to whether I am somehow inverting this already reversed image, bringing the background (sky) into the foreground and the foreground (trees) into the background. This depiction of a reflection, with its shifting and elusive boundaries, resonates with Kant's notion of the suprasensible, explored in Chapter IV, as it challenges the distinction between form and formlessness and engages the viewer's intuition to grasp something beyond sensory experience. The formlessness of the image, which emerges as a reflection, also aligns with Lyotard's concept of the Sublime. By destabilising conventional representation, the image embodies the unrepresentable, evoking an impression of an apparition or phantom rather than a clear, definable form.

Through further audio reflection, I note how, over the years, I have developed a technique where one need not lift the brush from the canvas so often but rather be precise when directing the brush for optimal results. I find this occurs during flow states, or 'flowed thought' (Hewlett, 2018), especially after painting for several hours. I reflect that painting is not always an enjoyable process; it is a discipline, hard work and an arduous endeavour. However, once in the swing of it, there are moments of absolute bliss and satisfaction. The repetitive motions of brush strokes, the focus required to capture details and the immersion in the creative process can lead to a state of flow, where time seems to disappear and the artist becomes completely absorbed in the act of painting. Hewlett (2018) describes this phenomenon as "flowed visual cognition" (p. 295). I concur, for those with dyslexia, this immersive and transcendental engagement with art might resonate more profoundly.

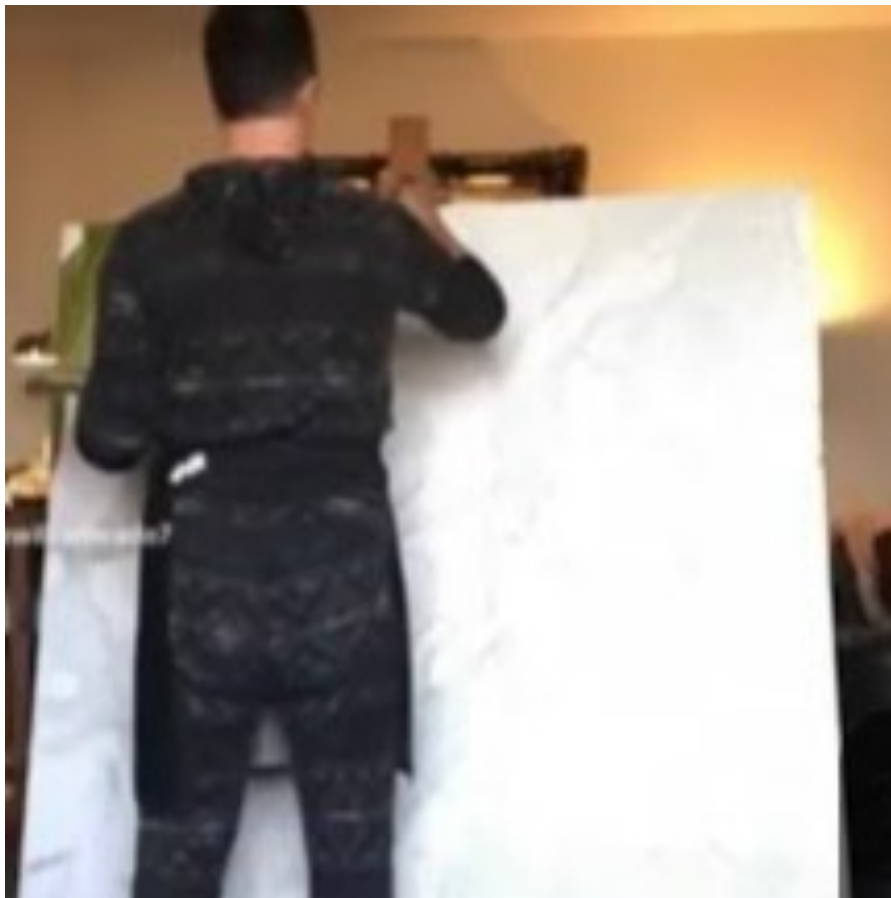
I note further how my painting slows as I approach the final stages of defining the mark-making. These are almost final corrections before applying several glazes of colour and adjusting the contrast between light and dark. In painting, I have chosen in deliberation a palette of raw umber, sap green, lamp black, and titanium white. Raw umber has proven useful in capturing the nuanced depths and shadows of which are essential in portraying light and dark, particularly evident in the depiction of the work *Trees in Water*. Lamp black serves a crucial role in providing weight to the composition. When combined with raw umber, it deepens the

chiaroscuro effect, as previously discussed, accentuating both light and dark contours in the work.

This attention to tonal play recalls earlier discussions in this chapter concerning Albers and Malevich, whose work similarly engages questions of spatial balance and perception. In *Homage to the Square* (1950–1976), Albers stages nested squares with minute edge contrasts and chromatic increments; these small adjustments recalibrate figure/ground and apparent depth within strict order. Albers' *Homage to the Square*, previously referenced in relation to perspectival instability, also resonates here in terms of how subtle chromatic and spatial shifts alter the viewer's experience (Albers, 2013). While I draw accord to Albers' exploration of how visual elements interact, my approach differs in its muted, earth-based tones and in its grounding in observational and material processes rather than pure abstraction or optical theory. This is a retrospective affinity, not a lineage: Albers' experiments articulate the spatial tensions my materials-led process produces. *Black Square* (1915) by Kazimir Malevich, earlier a point for considering the symbolic and conceptual power of the square, also provides a useful point of reflection. Although his aim was to eliminate representation in pursuit of pure feeling or spiritual essence (Malevich, 1959), my own use of the square remains anchored in the physical world, particularly in how it frames the elemental forms of landscape, water and shadow. Whereas Malevich sought a non-referential void, a space emptied of material reference, I retain reference and work the edges of legibility: the square becomes a site for suspending stable representation while keeping surface, mark and tone in play. The link, then, is conceptual and my orientation remains phenomenological and sensory. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, "I am my body" (2012, p. 151); accordingly, the square in my practice functions as an embodied mode rather than as a claim to a void.

Finally, it becomes clear, in comparison to the early stages of the painting, when one is mapping out the canvas, that the process is much faster. Throughout this reflexive process, I have experimented with video documentation by angling the camera from as many viewpoints as possible. I have recorded both real-time and timelapse footage of the work's inception to

execution, culminating in a yearlong painting; an example of which can be viewed below.



Click on the above image or watch here: <https://youtu.be/MvSqMMVH4Ns?si=iuxPa-NAZAT3BhU3>

As touched upon previously, the timelapse recording reveals high levels of concentration evident in the hand/eye coordination and the movement of the body. This level of concentration is not noticeable in the real-time recording. These experiments reveal the complex and often unnoticed aspects of the painting process, emphasising the physical and profound cognitive processing demands of such mark making on the dyslexic individual. An example of this can be seen below.



Click on the above image or watch here:

[https://youtube.com/shorts/EKjmbFqhIME?si=9ms96\\_oM8a38ooi5](https://youtube.com/shorts/EKjmbFqhIME?si=9ms96_oM8a38ooi5)





Figure 61. *Trees in Water*. Oil on five feet canvas. 2023. Work in progress...





Figure 62. *Trees in Water* (macro). Oil on five feet canvas. 2023. Completed.

## 6. Inverted Droplet

I have captured many water droplets over the years and depicted them in oil on canvas and graphite pencil. One specific drawing (Figure 63) is one of four 'inverted' experimental drops of water in this study; the remaining three can be found in the Appendix. I began this drawing inspired by a droplet I captured on camera inside a Perspex container half-filled with water. The droplet was approximately four millimetres in size and enlarged onto A2 paper. Initially, I aimed for a photorealistic observational drawing. However, I soon realised I was struggling with this approach. I reflexively recorded the process during three separate drawing sessions via audio and time-lapse video. An example of this process can be viewed below.



Click on the above image or watch here:

<https://youtu.be/XivzbMqRtaE?si=gb5icWqxlbAV4xB9>



On analysis of the data acquired through audio reflection, I noted that during the first drawing stint, I wrestled with the idea of creating a photogenic replica, which proved to be a significant challenge. In the second drawing session, approximately a week later, I hoped that taking a break would offer a fresh perspective on the work. While this did help somewhat, I found myself prioritising completion over meticulous detail. Upon returning to the drawing a third time, after two more weeks, again I felt compelled to make it resemble a photograph. Yet, throughout this process, I had begun questioning the purpose of this struggle. I started contemplating what truly intrigued me about the image and it became apparent that it was the circular shape. The small detail of bubbles surrounding this formed a three-quarters (horseshoe) impression. Additionally, in retrospect, I realised it was an inverted raindrop, captured from the outside of the clear Perspex, which added a reversal element. Reflecting on my workshop analysis, I recognised that our strength lies in our imagination and perceptual differences and attention to specific often unique idiosyncratic details, as evidenced by participants in interviews and workshops. I deduce that, while references are valuable at times, our ability to holistically combine observation, representation and imagination is where our strength can be found. This again is evidence of divergent thinking another inherent strength in the dyslexic, as previously discussed. Therefore, I decided not to fixate on creating a naturalistic or photorealistic image but allow a more stylised depiction to evolve, as often the participants did in Chapter V, I understand that my imagination is my asset and that through these workshops and self-analysis, I have gained valuable insights that have enhanced my own practice.



Figure 63. *Inverted Droplet II*. Graphite on paper. 50x50cm. 2023.

## 7. Symmetry and Asymmetry

On reflection of my work, I noticed how an emphasis on symmetry and asymmetry is omnipresent and how this aligns with the concept of reversals found in the dyslexic cognitive process (Simpson, 1991). I have noticed the exploration of symmetry and asymmetry, akin to these reversals, to be a recurrent feature in the artmaking of dyslexics, as expounded in Chapter II, and can be utilised as a strength. When the dyslexic individual becomes aware of their potential to visual-spatial perception, this use of reversals can be developed into their work. Symmetry has been an area that I have frequently explored in my work over the years, particularly in water reflections, refractions and diffraction. Since starting my PhD, I have developed several related experimental works, including *Asymmetric Eyes in Water* (Figure 64) drawing, as seen below and the previously discussed cube drawings, as well as the themed work *Trees in Water*.



Click on the above image or watch here:

<https://youtu.be/lvrCgTja4kM?si=A3qubeNrOs8i0ch9>

As previously outlined, this exploration of symmetry and asymmetry is akin to the common understanding of how dyslexic individuals often perceive things in reverse, such as words, letters, numbers and names (Lachmann and Geyer, 2003). I argue that by delving into concepts like reversals and symmetry, a sense of awe can be conveyed in the artwork. Reversals and symmetry challenge conventional perceptions and invite viewers to experience the artwork from a perspective that disrupts their usual understanding. As Cohn and Stricker (1976, pp. 163-165) observe, reversals create visual tension, such as “distortion,” that forces viewers to confront and reconsider their assumptions about form and representation. Although this article is of a broader context, the ideas remind one of such cognitive issues often experienced by dyslexic individuals as previously outlined. While symmetry often evokes a sense of balance and harmony that can be profoundly engaging (Hargittai, 1989), it may also be linked to perfectionism and dyslexia. As noted by Stoeber and Rountree (2021), the “hiding of imperfections” for fear of being “less socially acceptable” or seen as having “an identity perceived as undesired” is a trait often found in dyslexic individuals (Stoeber & Rountree, 2021, pp. 63, 65, 74). I contend that this resonates with the experience of stigma and feeling like an outsider. Furthermore, I found through the making of art that this sense of otherness experienced by dyslexic individuals can be counteracted by unique differences in perception, such as the conscious utilisation of reversals in artmaking. This is evident in the drawing *Asymmetric Eyes in Water*, which captures the eerie and otherworldly aspects of refracted water while also showcasing its uniqueness. Furthermore, the work conveys a sense of the uncanny and a doubling effect, as reiterated in Chapter V, where participants discussed this aspect. The original image was captured in a glass half full of water and the concept was initiated through workshops as part of an experimental process, as also expanded upon in Chapter V.

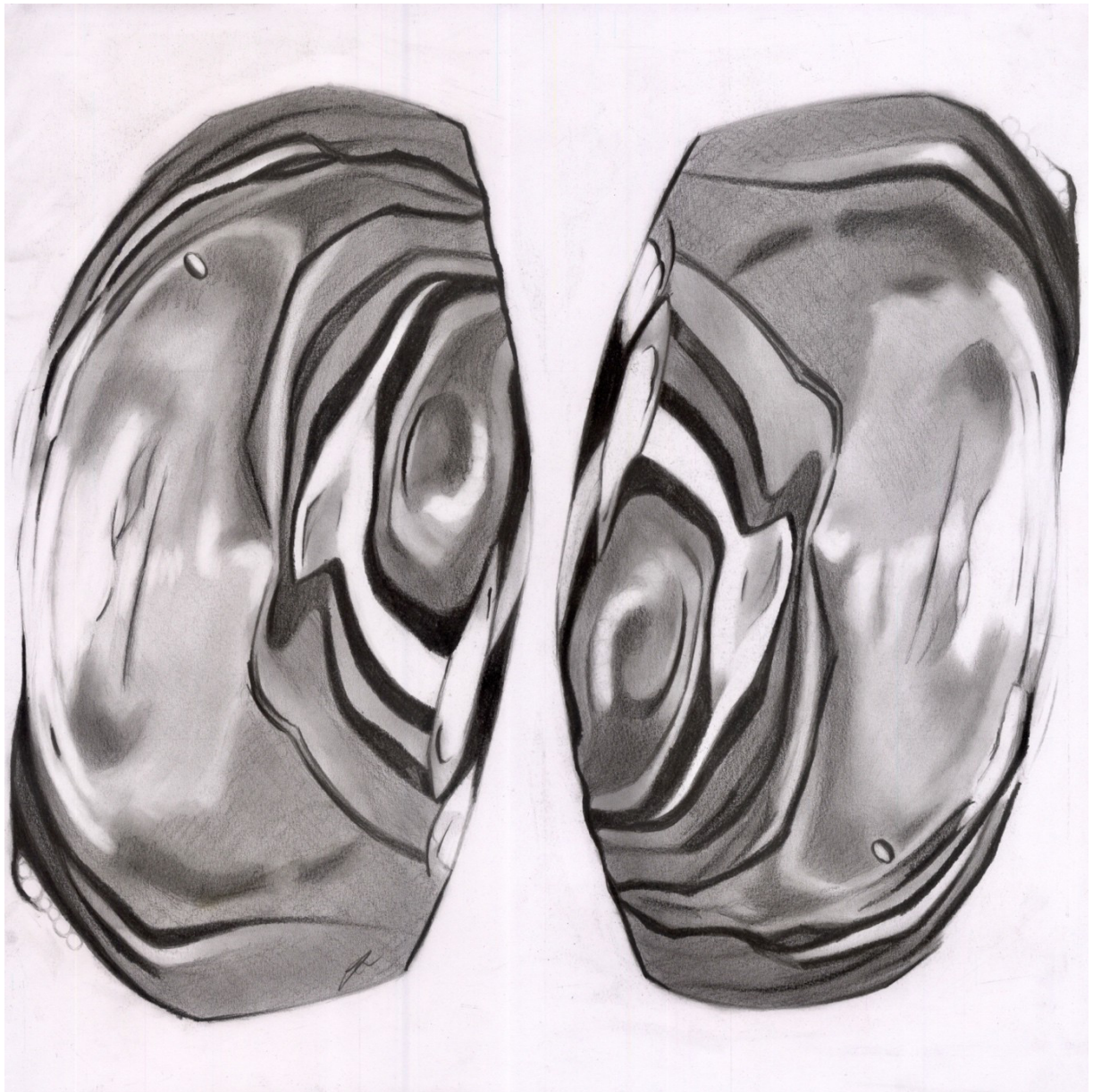


Figure 64. *Asymmetrical Eyes in Water*. Graphite pencil on paper. 50x50cm. 2022.

### C. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have reflected on my own art-making process during the research period, chronologically tracking the development of artworks through a combination of experimentation, theory and personal insight. Executing a range of techniques and mediums, and time-based documentation, I have explored how dyslexia might inform visual-spatial perception and creative expression. A key area of focus has been the role of perspective in shaping both the making process and the experience of viewing. I have examined how perceptual shifts, such as off-centre vantage points, the transformation of planar forms and kinaesthetic engagement can evoke the Sublime. Drawing on the work of artists whose practices are relatable to my own, I have positioned my work in a dialogue with a broader historical context of visual experimentation and perceptual complexity. At the centre of this discussion is phenomenology, particularly Merleau-Ponty's notion of perception. This philosophical lens, revisited in this chapter, has facilitated a nexus of my own neurodivergent experience and spatial dynamics within my work, evidencing how decisions in the making of art emerge not only through intellect or theory, but also through movement, sensation and the body. This chapter has demonstrated how the experience of dyslexia can serve as a powerful and creative force, conveying how dyslexic perspectives contribute to individual artistic processes but also contemporary understandings of art practice and discourse.



## Conclusion

### A. The Dyslexic Sublime (Noun)

From the start of this PhD, I have actively sought opportunities to present my research at various conferences and exhibitions. By utilising an interdisciplinary approach and engaging in dialogue with my audiences, I introduced the concept of the Dyslexic Sublime as the central finding of my research. These invitations, spanning diverse contexts and audiences, motivated me to develop the Dyslexic Sublime as a new framework that connects dyslexic cognitive processes with the profound experience of transcendence traditionally associated with the Sublime. Drawing from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and situating my practice within a broader art-historical context, I present the Dyslexic Sublime as both a philosophical and creative contribution. Through these engagements, it became evident that there is a significant need for new approaches in both artmaking and training that embrace neurodiversity, particularly in the field of dyslexia and creativity.

I have discovered that the unconventional nature of 'divergent thinking' can introduce unexpected elements into the art-making process; this mode of thinking is also well-documented in the literature on dyslexia, where it is frequently associated with creative strengths or what Nicolson (2015) termed 'positive dyslexia' and non-linear approaches to problem-solving as I examined in Chapter II. I argue that this can evoke a sense of awe in the artist, often accompanied by heightened emotional sensitivity (Sturm et al., 2021), offering unique insights into creativity. As shown in Chapter III, along with evidence from Chapters V and VI, it is apparent that dyslexic artists are frequently creative problem-solvers who push the boundaries of artmaking through their willingness to think outside the box.

These insights, drawn from the narratives and experiences shared by the participants, reveal intriguing connections between the dyslexic experience and principles of the Sublime.

Dyslexia often leads to a sense of otherness, stemming from struggles to fit into traditional educational moulds. This feeling resonates with the concept of the Sublime's unreachability and Kant's notion of the suprasensible, which extends beyond the senses, as discussed in Chapter IV. Dyslexic artists, through their often-unique approach to artmaking, reinforce this connection, allowing for the expression of both transcendence and otherness in their work.

Participants frequently discussed engaging in 'mind-wandering' to gain insight and inspiration when making art, a process that is supported in the literature, in Chapter III. This approach allows them to take a holistic, reflexive approach, momentarily escaping the constraints of detail-oriented thinking, much like the ambiguity of the Sublime. Furthermore, this approach often evokes a transcending of ordinary experience (Doran, 2015). These moments offer a cathartic outlet for exploring and expressing complex emotions and ideas.

Dyslexic individuals frequently express heightened empathy (Eide and Eide, 2011) and recount traumatic experiences related to their learning difficulties, a connection that resonates with Burke's discourse on trauma and the terror of the Sublime. I assert that dyslexic visual-spatial perception aligns with Kant's Dynamical Sublime, as these individuals are adept at appreciating and navigating the vastness and complexity of spatial environments, as expanded upon in Chapter III. Additionally, Lyotard's concepts of the 'differend' and 'event' underscore the importance of recognising moments of injustice, misunderstanding or miscommunication, which can yield important insights when explored rather than dismissed (Silverman, 2016).

The Dyslexic Sublime, a central concept in this PhD inquiry, can be defined as the active utilisation of dyslexic perspectives to explore transcendence in the art-making process. By deliberately manipulating form and spatial relationships, as seen in works like *Trees in Water*, I explore the complexities of visual dynamics and perception. The Dyslexic Sublime, as a framework, amalgamates distinct cognitive processes and deepens our understanding of neurodiversity in art. Reversals, symmetry and asymmetry in artmaking, integral to dyslexic



experiences (Simpson, 1991), align with the Sublime's transcending of sensory limitations. Holistic thinking underscores the importance of the bigger picture in dyslexic creative processes, as noted by Stein (2023). Through conducting workshops, I have observed that imagination can serve as a powerful strength for dyslexic artists, particularly when freed from the constraints of realism. Unlike approaches that often coerce these artists into conforming to hegemonic visual norms through observational drawing (Levin, 1993; Rankin and Riley, 2007, 2017), the Dyslexic Sublime encourages the use of imagination as a legitimate and valuable tool. This shift enables dyslexics to tap into their visual-spatial abilities, engage in open-ended problem-solving and build creative confidence through exploration rather than replication.

This research reveals a profound relationship between dyslexia and artistic expression, especially through perception. Participants shared idiosyncratic perspectives, highlighting the diversity of thought and the significance of their unique ways of perceiving the world. The language of art provided a sense of liberation for these individuals, allowing them to break free from traditional constraints and align with the ineffable and otherworldly aspects of their lived experience of this otherness.

Informed by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and the broader art-history canon, this framework is situated at the intersection of theory and artistic practice. In linking philosophical and historical contexts to specific aspects of dyslexia, the Dyslexic Sublime offers nuanced insights into how dyslexic artists navigate their practice. By focusing on cognitive strengths and aligning these with to principles of the Sublime, as outlined by Longinus, Burke, Kant and Lyotard, this concept not only guides creative practice but also informs a broader understanding of the Sublime in contemporary art.

Through dialogue with other dyslexic artists and reflection on my own work, I have uncovered insights on this intersection of transcendence and otherness. Dyslexic artists create works that challenge traditional notions of neurotypical expression, highlighting the richness

of their perspectives. In reframing art made by dyslexic artists through the lens of the Sublime, we amplify their voices and foster positive conversations about dyslexia, helping to destigmatise perceptual differences. The Sublime, for the dyslexic artist, is not just an object of intellectual inquiry but a lived, embodied and perceptual experience.

## **B. The Dyslexic Sublime and Art Practice**

**Research Question 1: What insights can be found by establishing an artmaking process that focuses on the experience of dyslexia, specifically in relation to visual-spatial perception?**

In my exploration of this question, I have found that dyslexic artists' perceptual differences serve as unique sources of creativity. Dyslexic individuals often grapple with a sense of otherness, but this perceptual vantage point offers creative possibilities. Research by Stein (2021, 2023) suggests that dyslexic visual-spatial perceptual strengths, such as “superior perceptual abilities”, align with the Sublime’s exploration of the ineffable. By tapping into these strengths, dyslexic artists push the boundaries of representation, moving beyond the conventional to evoke awe and wonder.

Moreover, stylised and conceptual representation have emerged as a central strength, as expanded upon in Chapter V. Participants experienced a shift in their artistic processes when they embraced imagination and individuality, rejecting the conventional emphasis on realism. This approach promoted a sense of ‘open exploration and creativity, highlighting the importance of embracing perceptual differences.

**Research Question 2: Through such processes and dialogue with other dyslexic artists, how does the experience of discrimination, stigmatisation, and marginalisation shape artmaking by dyslexic artists, viewed from the perspective of transcendence and otherness?**

Dyslexic individuals often face the harsh reality of being labelled as outsiders in a world that values conformity, as evidenced in the literature and in the data from the participants in this research. However, these experiences catalyse a powerful transformation, shifting from otherness to uniqueness, resonating with the Sublime principle of transcending adversity. The Dyslexic Sublime represents resilience and the celebration of diversity, defying societal norms and showcasing the extraordinary achievements of dyslexic artists, as explored in Chapter III.

Works like *Trees in Water* explore how dyslexic artists harness visual-spatial perception, utilising strengths like the mind's eye, divergent thinking and mind-wandering as tools for artistic expression. These works transcend individual creativity and serve as evidence of how dyslexic artists overcome challenges and navigate the intersection of neurodiversity and art.

**Research Question 3: How can concepts such as transcendence and otherness provide new insights into notions of the Sublime and how might this understanding inform and inspire artistic practices?**

Transcendence, in the context of dyslexia, suggests the ability of dyslexic artists to move beyond the limitations imposed by their differences and that due to such unique experiences a transformation occurs. This awareness and use of their unique cognitive processes align with the ineffable qualities of the Sublime, as expounded in Chapter IV. Similarly, otherness deepens their exploration of the Sublime by engaging with themes of isolation, marginalisation and the quest for belonging.

Through the exploration of the Dyslexic Sublime, dyslexic artists may contribute new insights into the Sublime, informed by their lived experiences and processing differences. Their work transcends traditional boundaries, challenges conventional norms of representation and fosters inclusivity while promoting greater appreciation for diversity in the arts.

### C. The Dyslexic Sublime: Envisioned Impact

The concept of the Dyslexic Sublime offers a framework for future exploration across the fields of art, neurodiversity, cognitive science and philosophy. This framework has the potential to empower dyslexic artists to leverage their unique visual-spatial strengths and divergent thinking, thus expanding their creative potential in artistic expression. By adopting the Dyslexic Sublime as a critical lens, both researchers and scholars can explore further the intersectionality of creativity and dyslexia, thereby enhancing our understanding of how these elements interact.

Educational practitioners can utilise the Dyslexic Sublime to contribute to more positive narratives about dyslexia, motivating and inspiring individuals to embrace and harness their cognitive strengths. By grounding the Dyslexic Sublime in tangible experiences and aligning it with established theories of the Sublime, this framework stimulates philosophical reflection on creativity and perception, enriching contemporary discussions on neurodiversity. The enthusiastic reception and insightful feedback encountered at various conferences and exhibitions throughout this PhD journey underscore the growing need for this framework. A few examples include: *Painting Salon*, ArtQuest, University of the Arts London (UAL), an online presentation of two five-foot canvas paintings entitled *Mind's Eye in Water* and *Trees in Water (Macro)* (11 September, 2024); *Trauma Experience in Dyslexia*, Resource Speaker, University of the Philippines Manila (13 December 2023, and 6 May, 2024); *The Dyslexic Sublime, Dimensions of Dyslexia*, BDA International Conference (June 20-21, 2024); and *Share Art*, OutsideIn, Phoenix Arts Centre, Brighton, an installation and talk of the work *Trees*

*in Water*, a montage drawing, to a live audience (April 16, 2024); and **my presentation at the 22nd Conference on Transformational Teaching & Learning (London Metropolitan University), which situated the Dyslexic Sublime within current pedagogical discourse.**

These events highlight the potential of the Dyslexic Sublime to inspire innovative practices, deepen scholarly understanding and promote inclusivity across fields. A full list of these and other events where this work is beginning to make an impact can be found in the Appendix.

In future research, I aim to explore how the Dyslexic Sublime can be applied in practical educational settings, collaborate with interdisciplinary teams to refine the framework and examine its impact on enhancing creativity and divergent thinking in dyslexic individuals. These efforts will further expand the scope of the Dyslexic Sublime and solidify its place in both academic and practical applications. Its growing recognition is already evident, as it has been discussed in two forthcoming books by Dr Neil Alexander Passe, one currently in press and one under review, demonstrating how this is beginning to influence published scholarship as well as practice. This is also evident in Percy's doctoral research and exhibition, where she presented a painting titled *The Dyslexic Sublime* (2025). Further still, this emergence of visibility will also be reflected in a forthcoming special conference edition of the journal *Investigations in University Teaching and Learning*, based on my presentation at the *22nd Conference on Transformational Teaching & Learning*. Such references illustrate the emerging influence of this concept within academic discourse and creative practice, confirming the potential and relevance of the Dyslexic Sublime as a significant contribution.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Additional Artworks in My Practice-Based Research

### Circle and Square

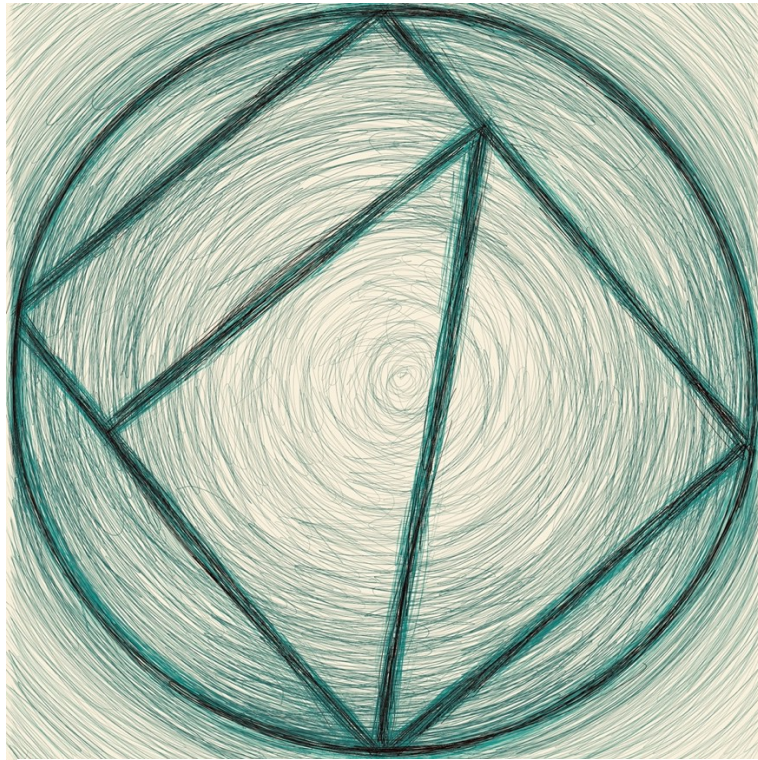
The first three works listed below are symbolic of the square and the circle in my art. Each piece reflects my introspection on working with a square canvas over the years and the circle. The circle manifests in much of the subject matter, such as circular bubble formations and water droplets. Additionally, I convey experimental work exploring three-dimensional aspects, with the square represented as a cube and the circle as a spheroid.



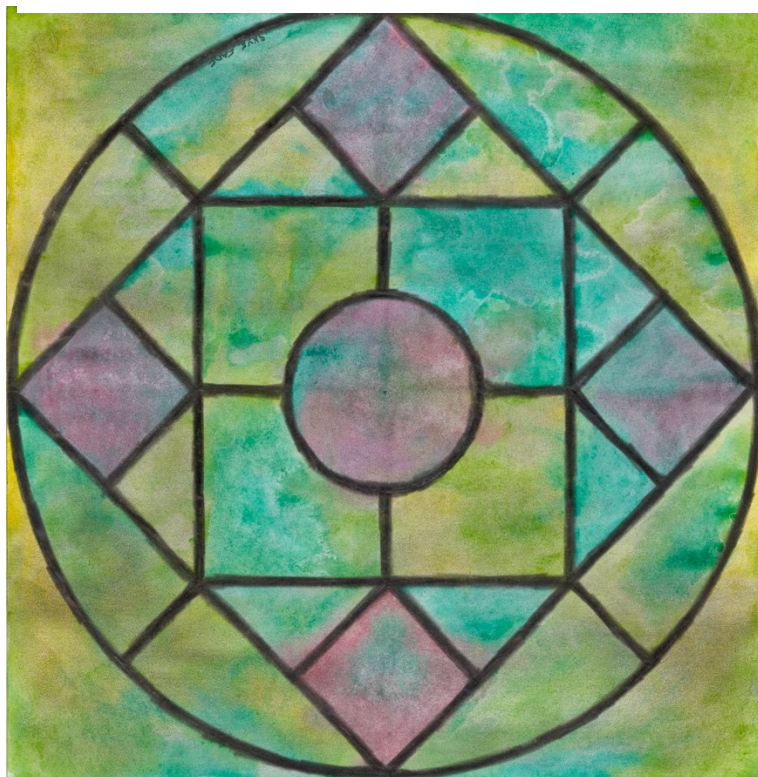


*Nebulous Spheroid*. Skywards gaze of a single raindrop X 1 million in scale. Oil on canvas. 150x150cm. 2020/21.

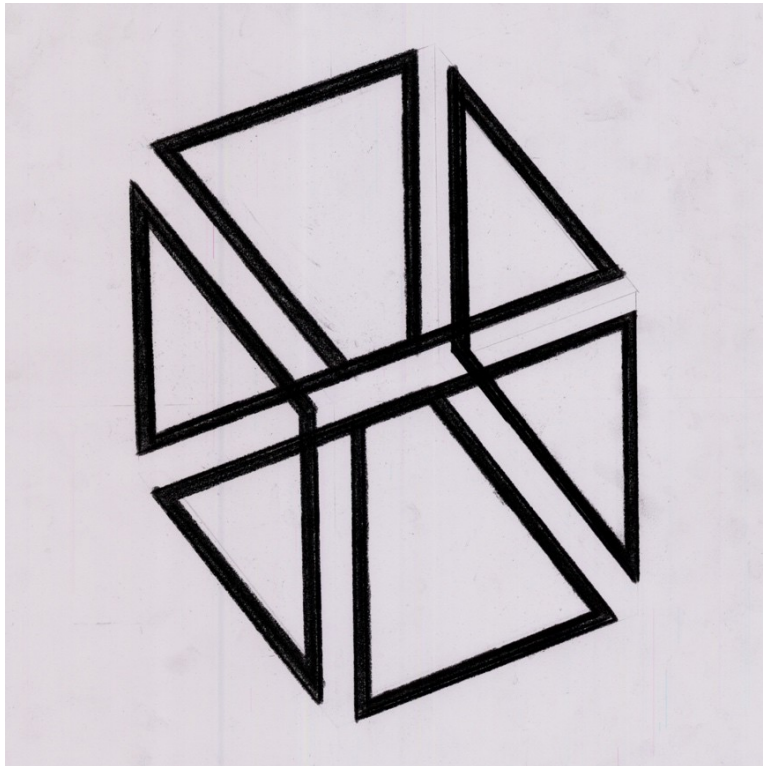




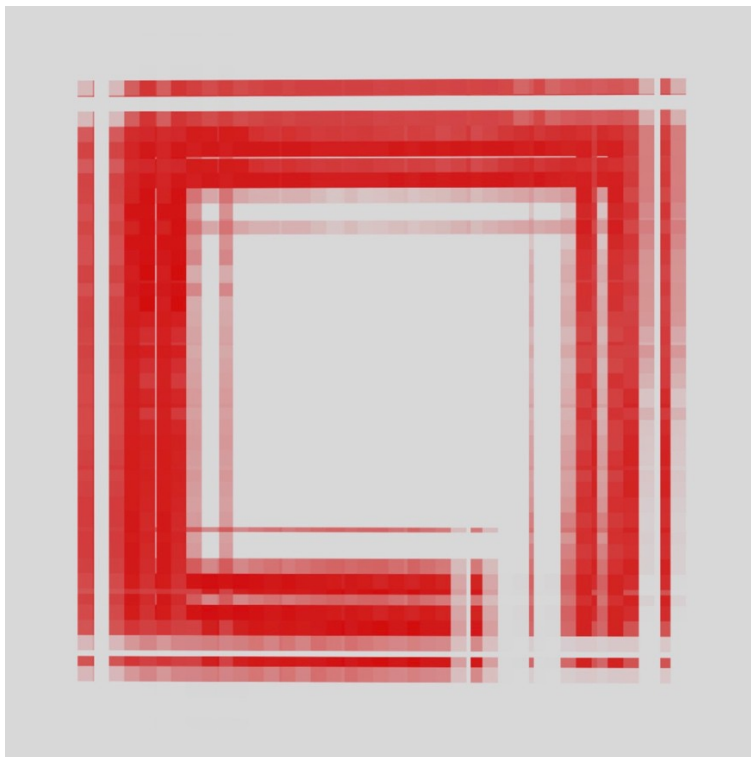
*Cube in Sphere*. Digital drawing. 2020.



*Church Window, Dover, Kent*. 50x50cm. 2020.

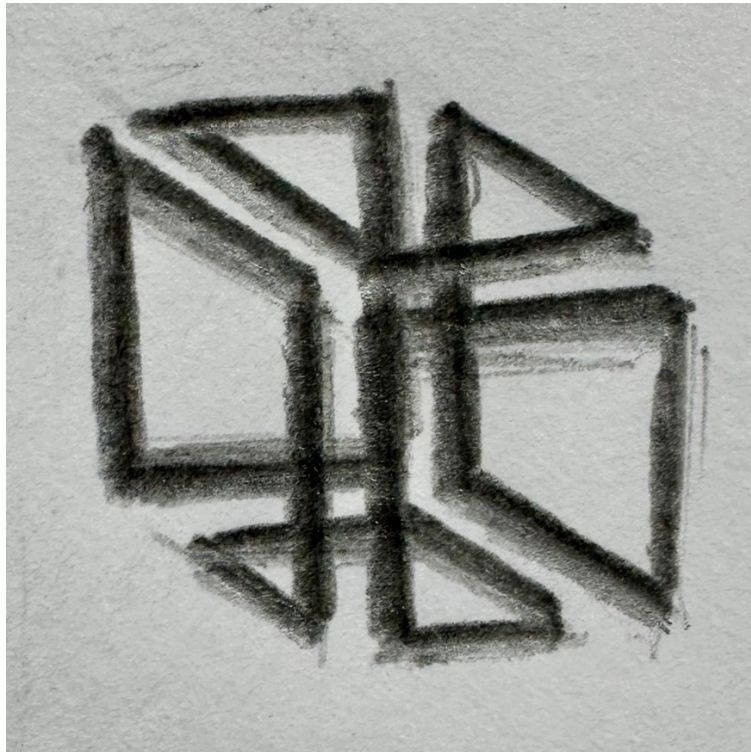


*Linea Cube No. 2.* Graphite on paper. 30x30cm. 2022.

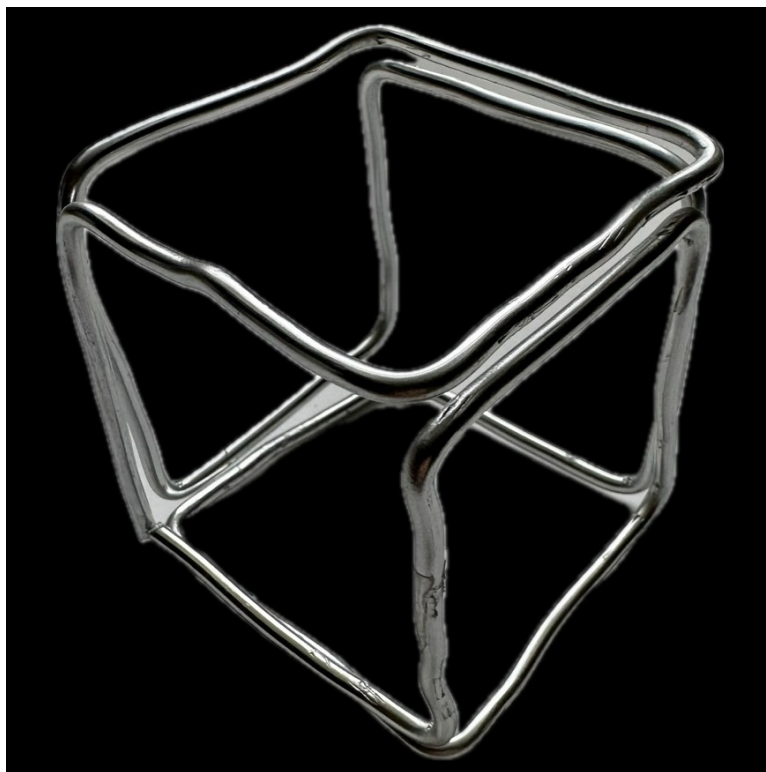


*Linea Cube.* Digital drawing. iPad and stylus, PhotoScape, iMovie. 2022.

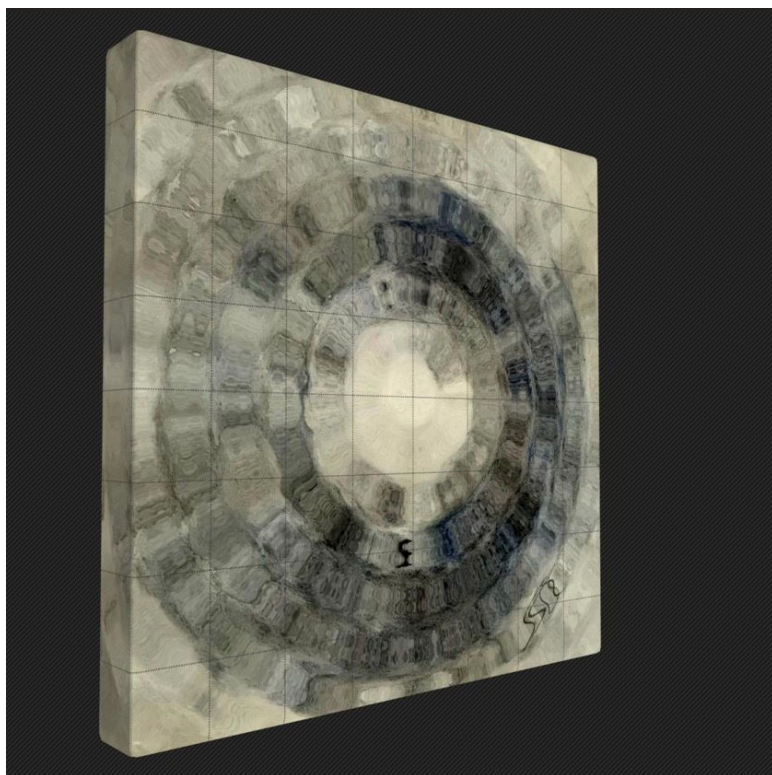




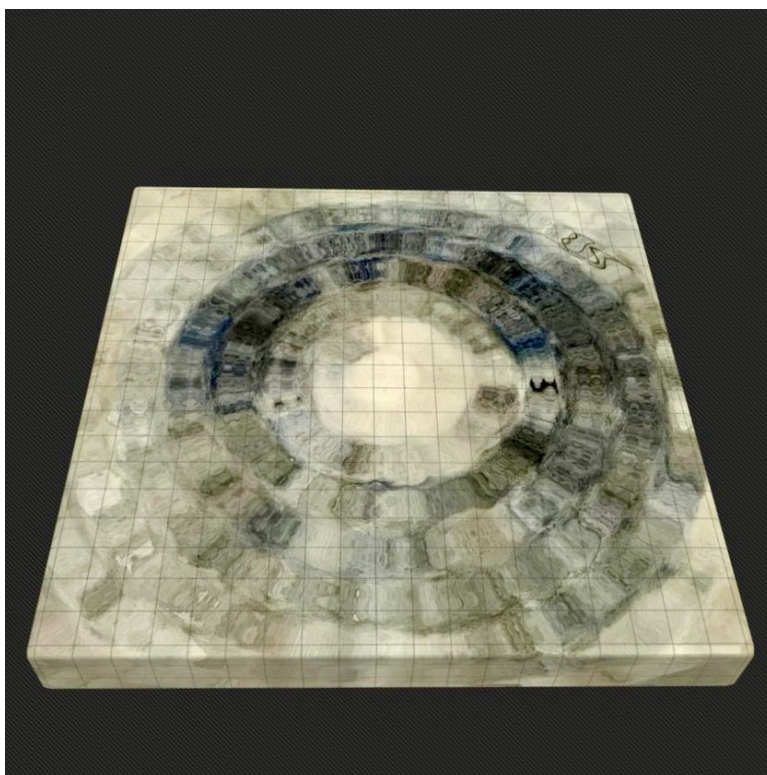
*Linea Cube*. 5x5cm. Initial concept drawing. 2022



*Linea Cube*. Wire sculpture. 10x10cm. 2022.



*Nebulous (Raindrop) Diffraction*. George Blunden Prize (entree). Watercolour and Digital rendering. 2021.

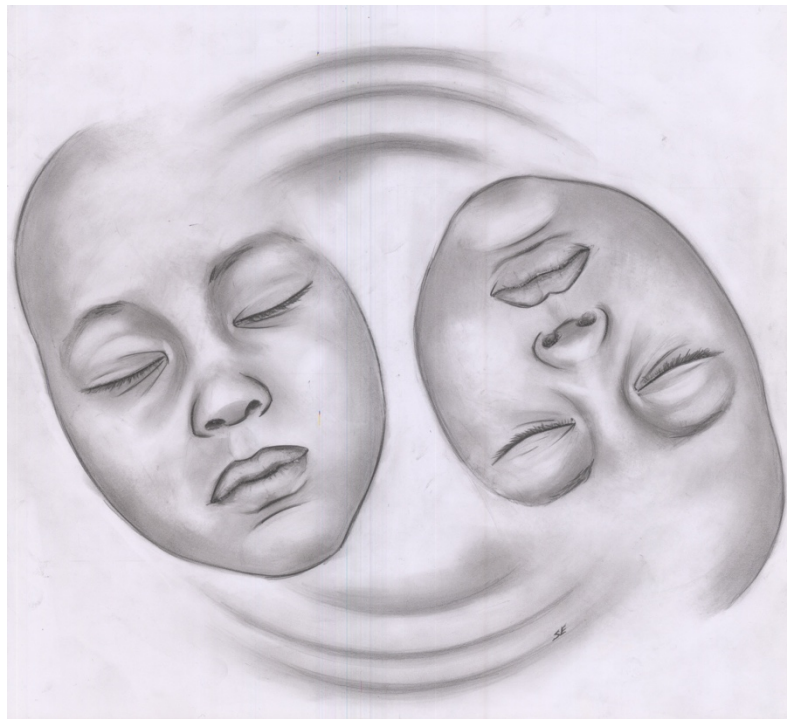


*Nebulous (Raindrop) Diffraction*. George Blunden Prize (entree). Watercolour and Digital rendering. 2021.

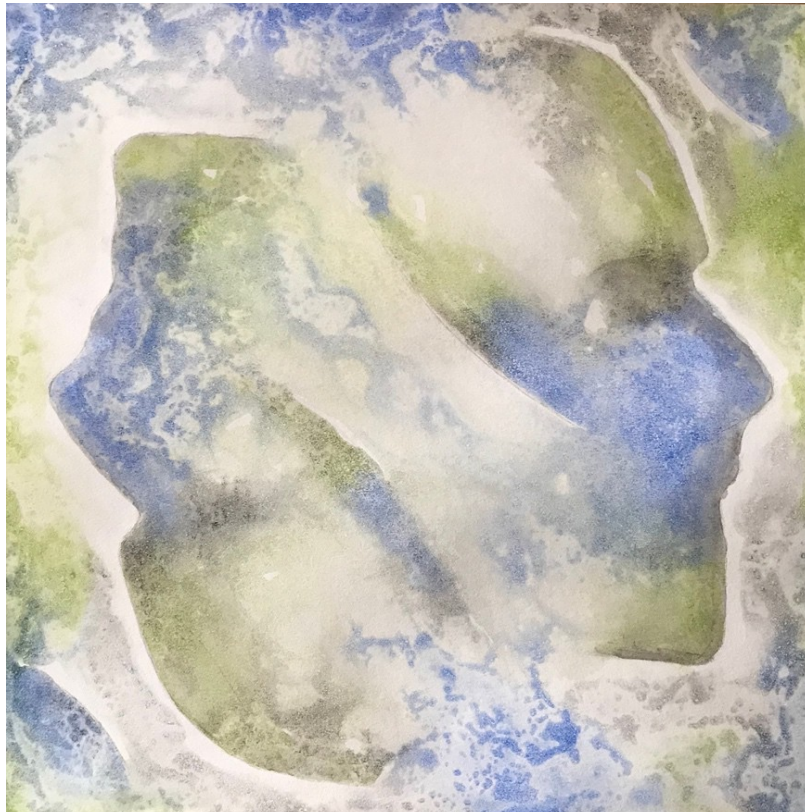
## **Portraits and Physiognomy**

In the following work, I experiment with physiognomy and the representation of the face in water. I also explore symmetry and asymmetry. Lastly, there is a self-portrait executed with my left hand, an approach I am new to exploring, adding a reversal element to the work.

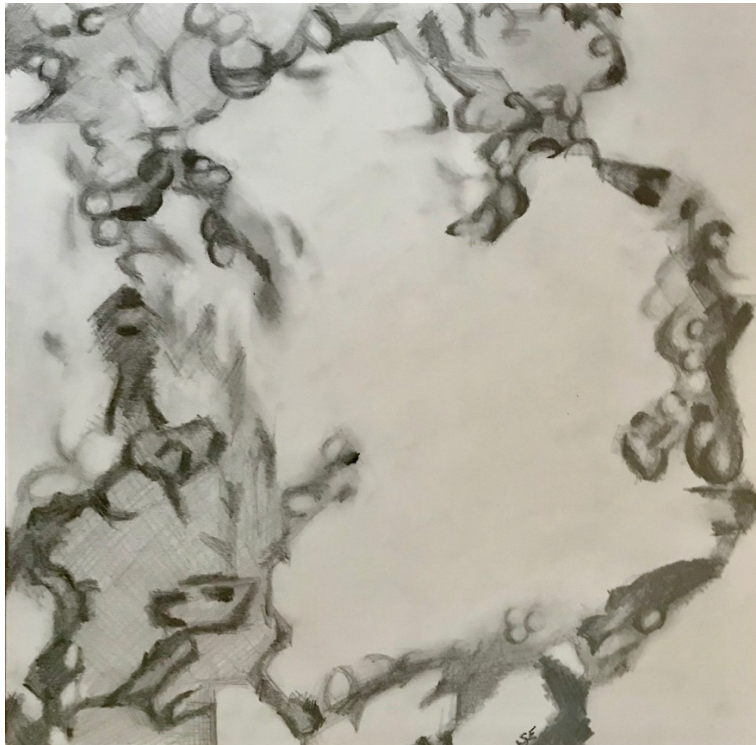




*Oscar Asymmetry*. 50x50cm. Graphite on paper. 2021.



*William Asymmetry*. 50x50cm. Graphite on paper. 2020.



*Physiognomic Refractions in Water*. Graphite on paper.  
30x30cm. 2020.



*Physiognomic Refractions in Water (symmetry)*.  
Digitally rendered. 2020.



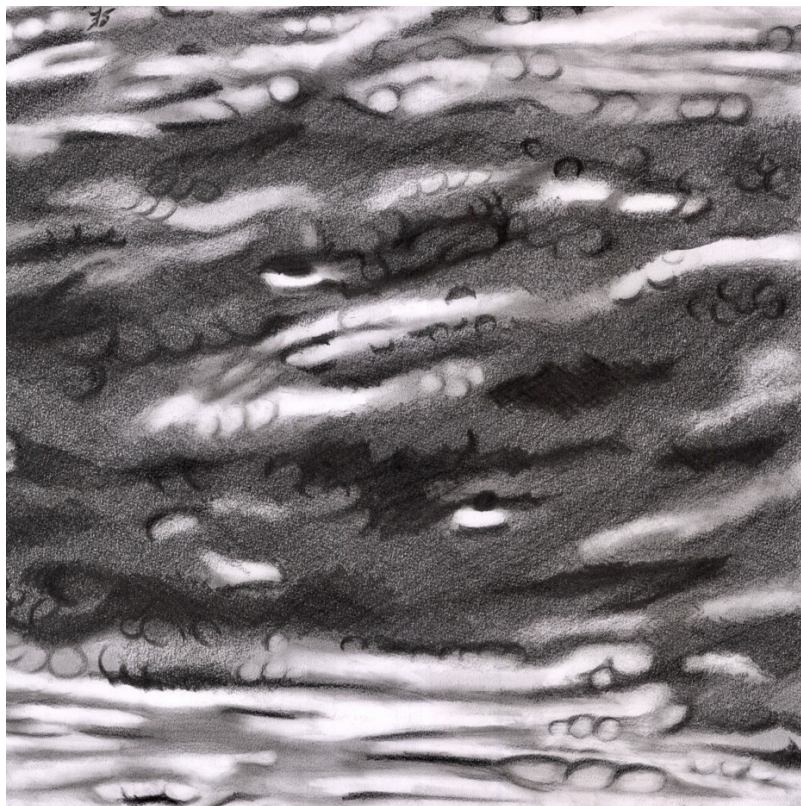
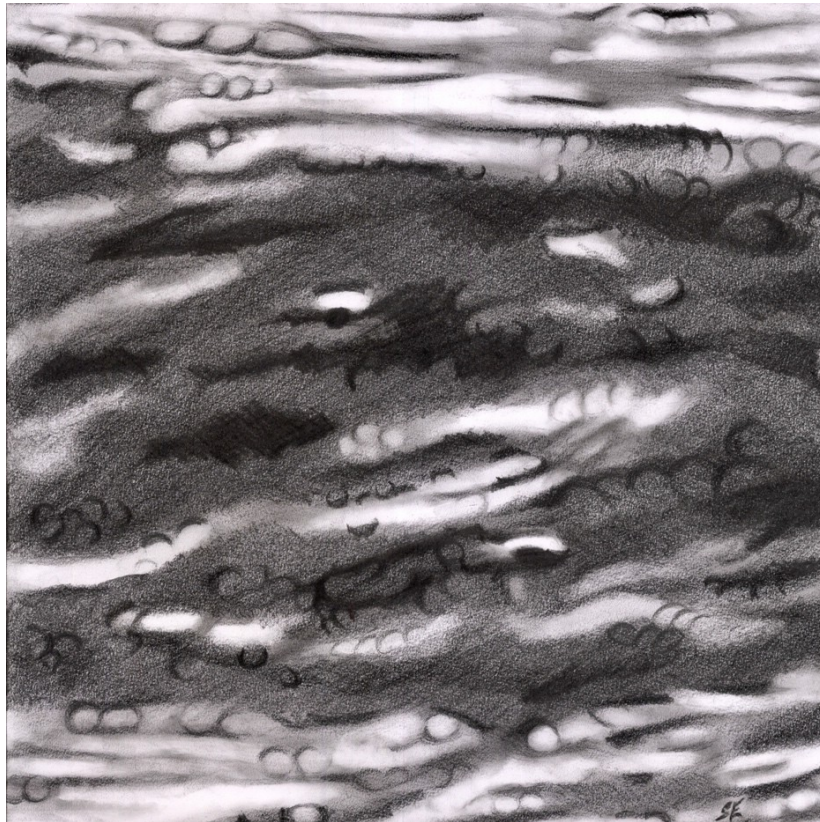


Drawn with my non- dominant (left handed) self-portrait: reversal90. Graphite on 50x70cm (A2) paper. 2024.

## **Ocean and Reversals**

Seen in the following, I convey the ocean. First, a close-up perspective in graphite on paper, where a reversal and stylised element is evident in the work. Following this, a digital photo of the ocean shows a reversed image, making it difficult to discern its orientation due to the symmetrical reflection.





Oceanic Reversal (stylised and zeroed in). Graphite on paper. 50x50cm. 2023.





*Oceanic Reversal.* Woolacombe Beach, Devon. Digital photo.  
2023

## **Plein Air and Landscape Painting**

Seen in the following works are two examples of landscape watercolour paintings. I sat outside during the summer of 2023 to immerse myself in landscape painting. I was also exploring the connection between my own work and that of the Romantic landscape artists and the Sublime.



Landscape study (untitled). 50x70cm.  
Watercolour on paper. 2023. 2023.



Landscape study II (untitled). 50x60cm. Watercolour on  
paper. 2023.

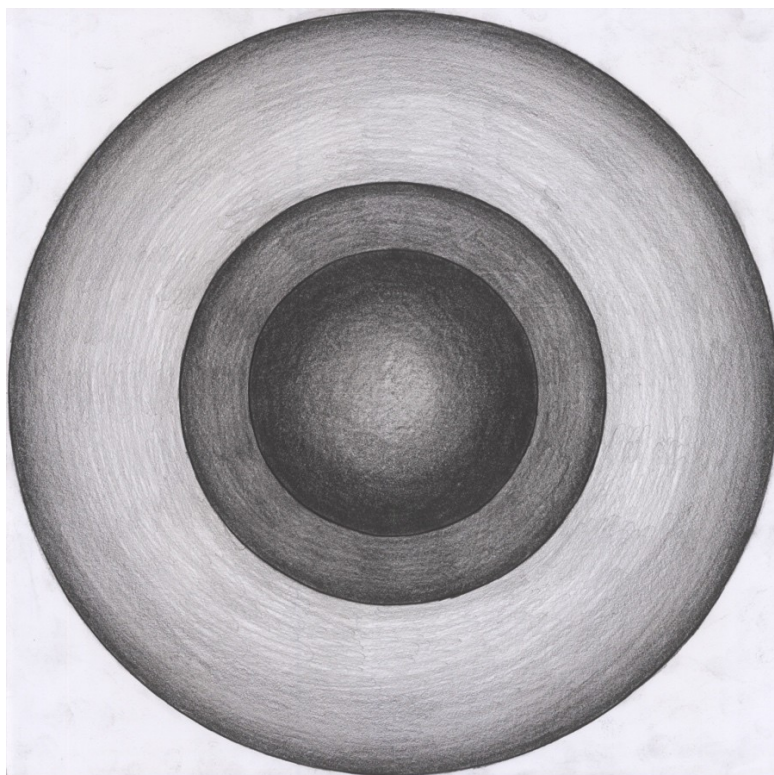
## The Eye Experiments

Seen below, I am experimenting with various aspects of depicting the eye: a close-up shot of my own cornea, the circular eyeball, an eye found in a glass of water, and various AI renderings of my oil-on-canvas painting *Mind's Eye in Water*. Lastly, there is a left-hand drawing conveying intuition and the mind's eye.

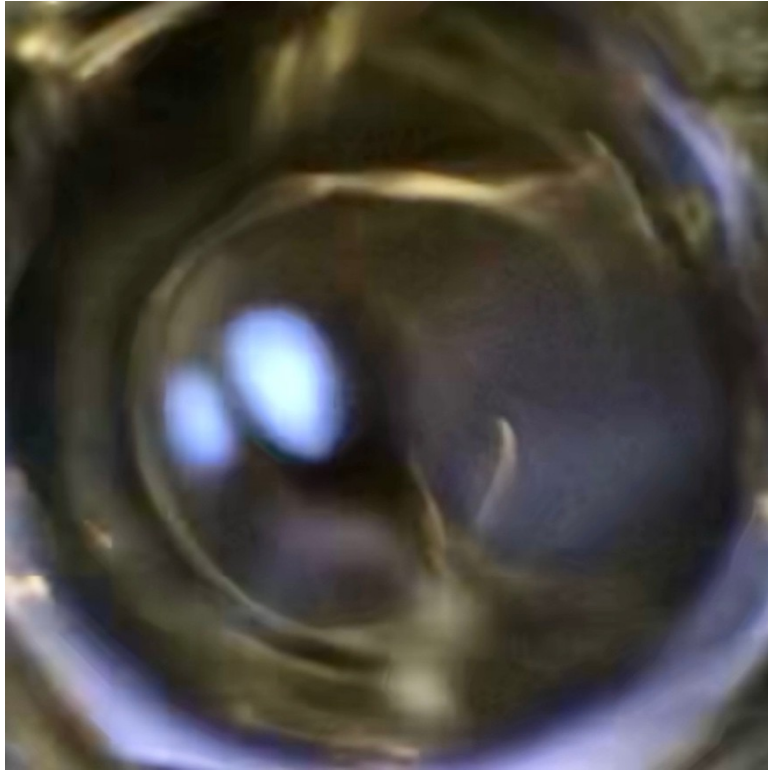




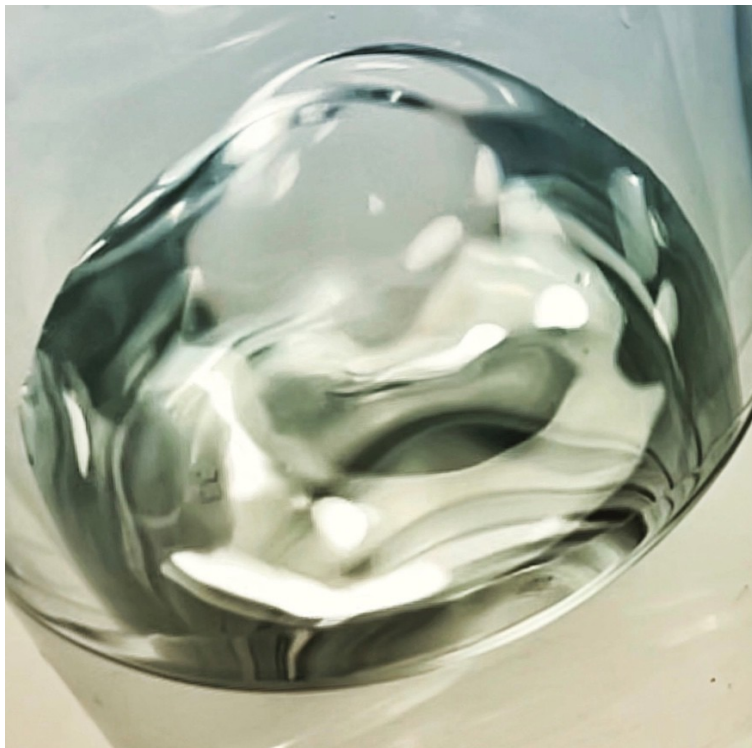
*My Cornea (perspectival)*. Digital photo. 2022.



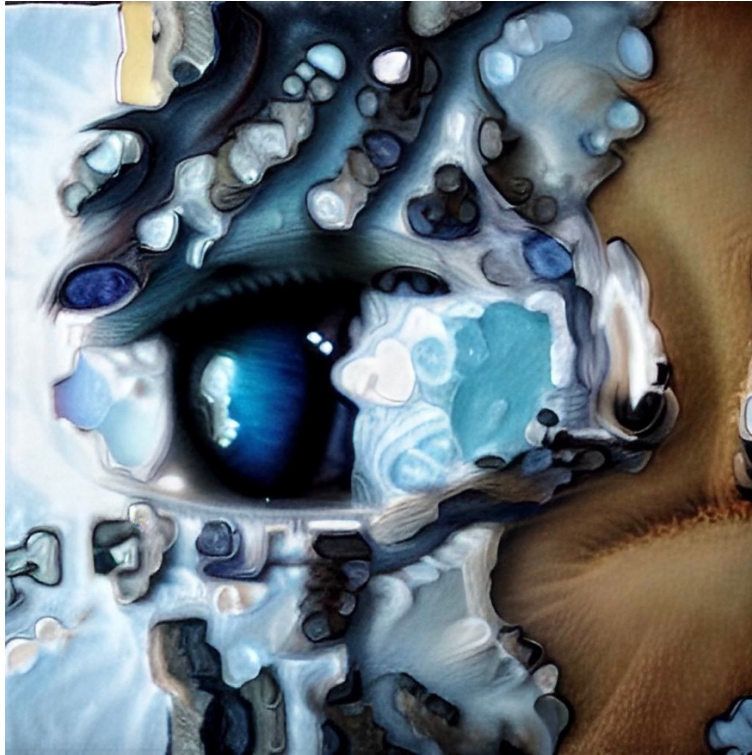
*Eyeball*. Graphite on paper. 50x50cm. 2022.



*Eye in Glass of Water.* Digital photo. 2022.



*Glass and water.* Digital photo. 2022.

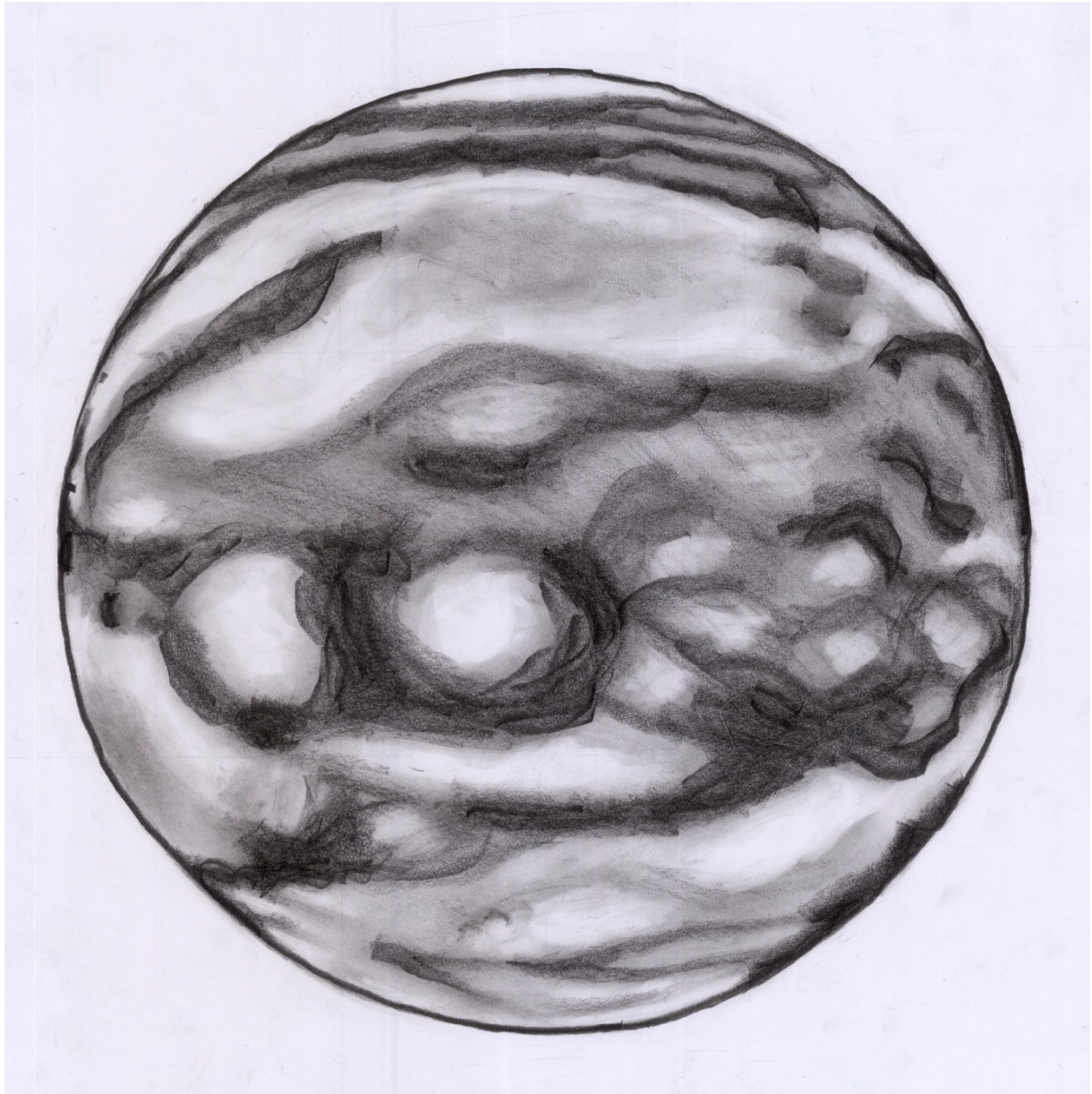


*Minds Eye in Water.* AI rendered. Wonder app. 2023.



*Mind's Eye in Water.* AI rendered. Wonder App. 2023.

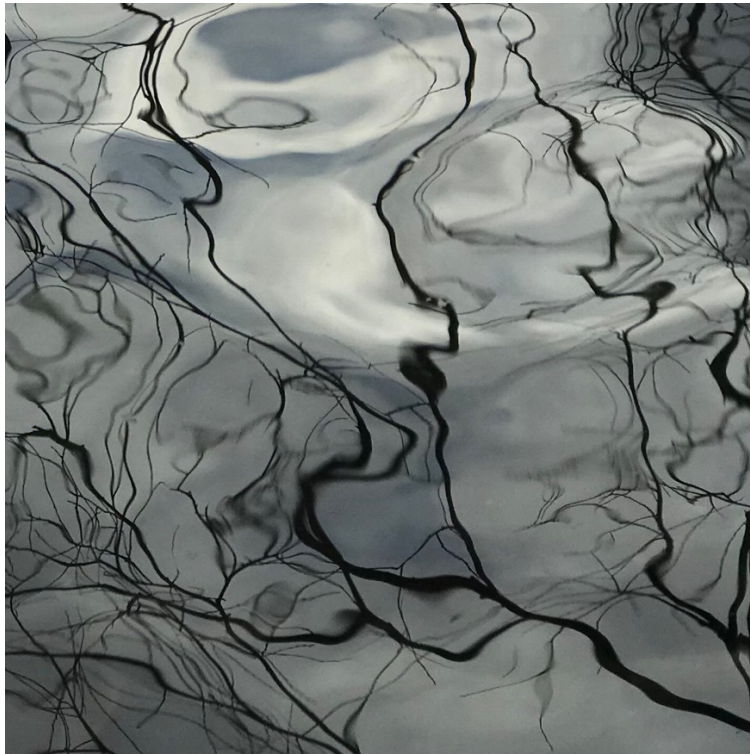




*Eye of Intuition.* Left-handed drawing (reversal). Graphite on paper. 50x50xm. 2024. See artmaking timelapse video here: <https://youtu.be/bGRVLCZb8YI>

## **Trees in Water Cont.**

Below are various experimental processes involved in developing the work *Trees in Water*: digital photographs, AI-generated images of the oil-on-canvas painting *Trees in Water*, and a graphite drawing of a single tree reflected in water, bending and morphing due to the ripple effect on the water's surface. Lastly, there is a depiction of a single vortex, executed with my left hand, showing trees and the sky reflected in swirling vortices captured on the river's surface.



*Trees in Water.* Digital photo. 2021.

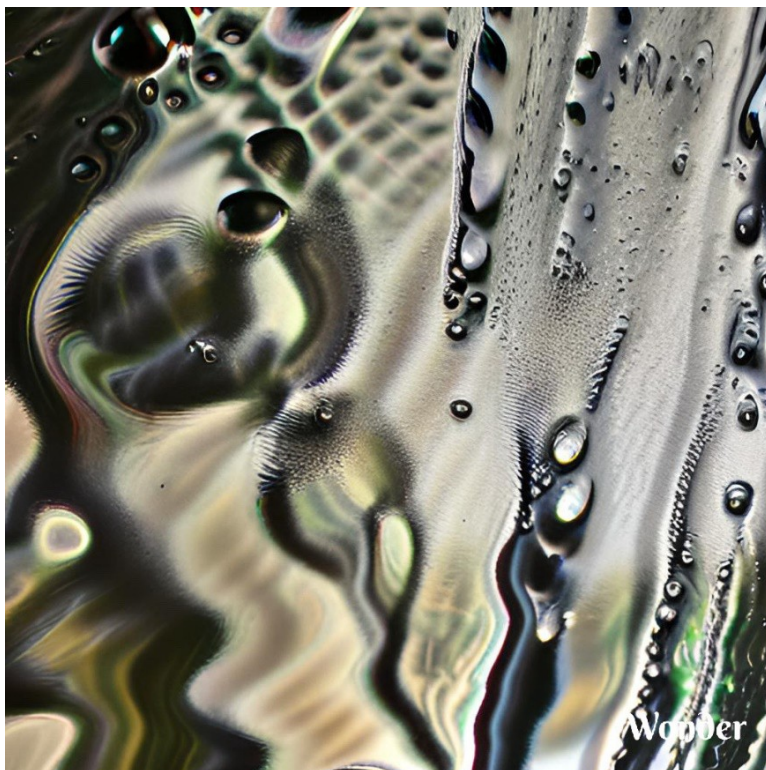


*Trees in Water.* Digital photo. 2021.



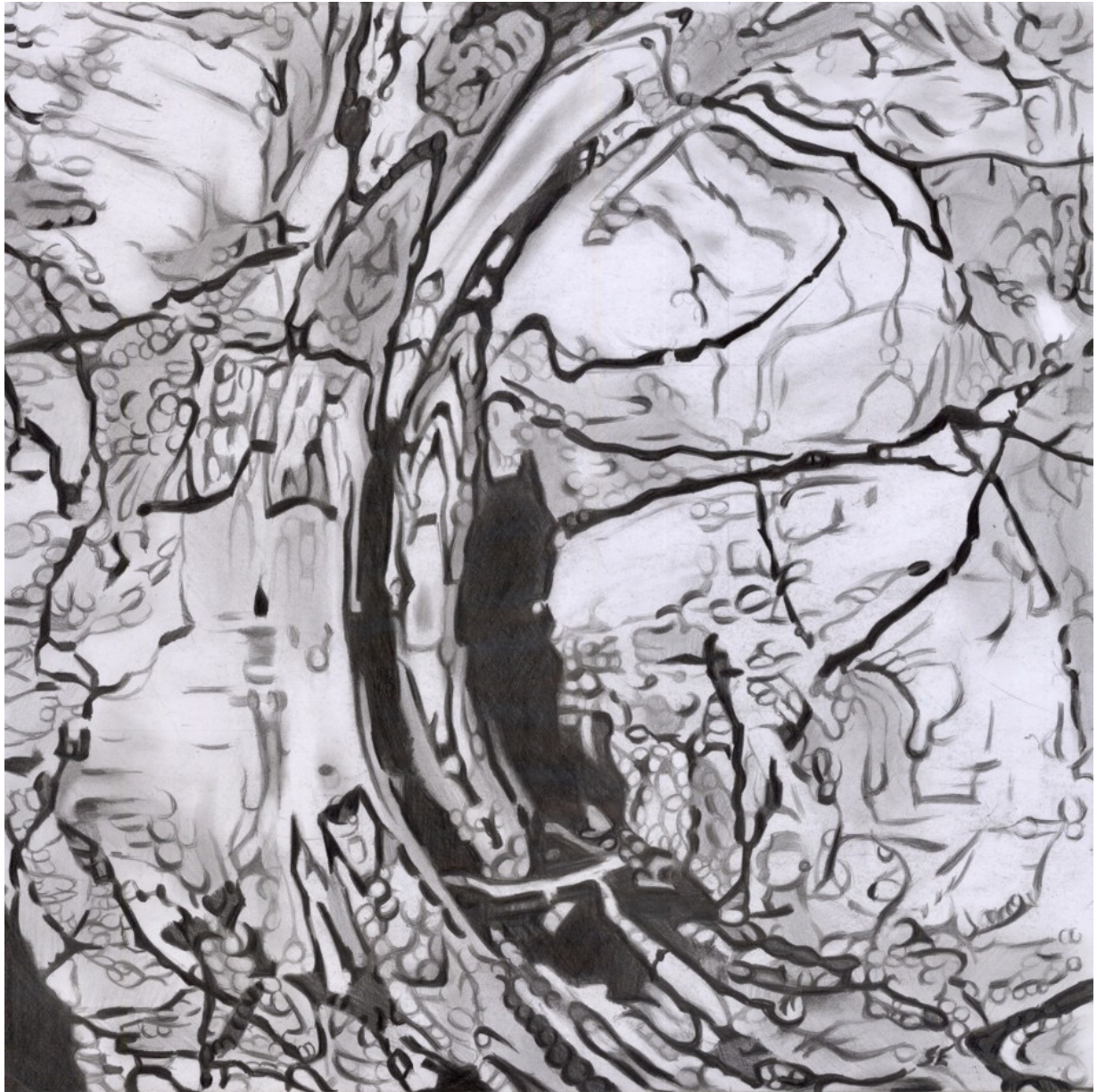


*Trees in Water.* AI rendered. Wonder App. 2023.



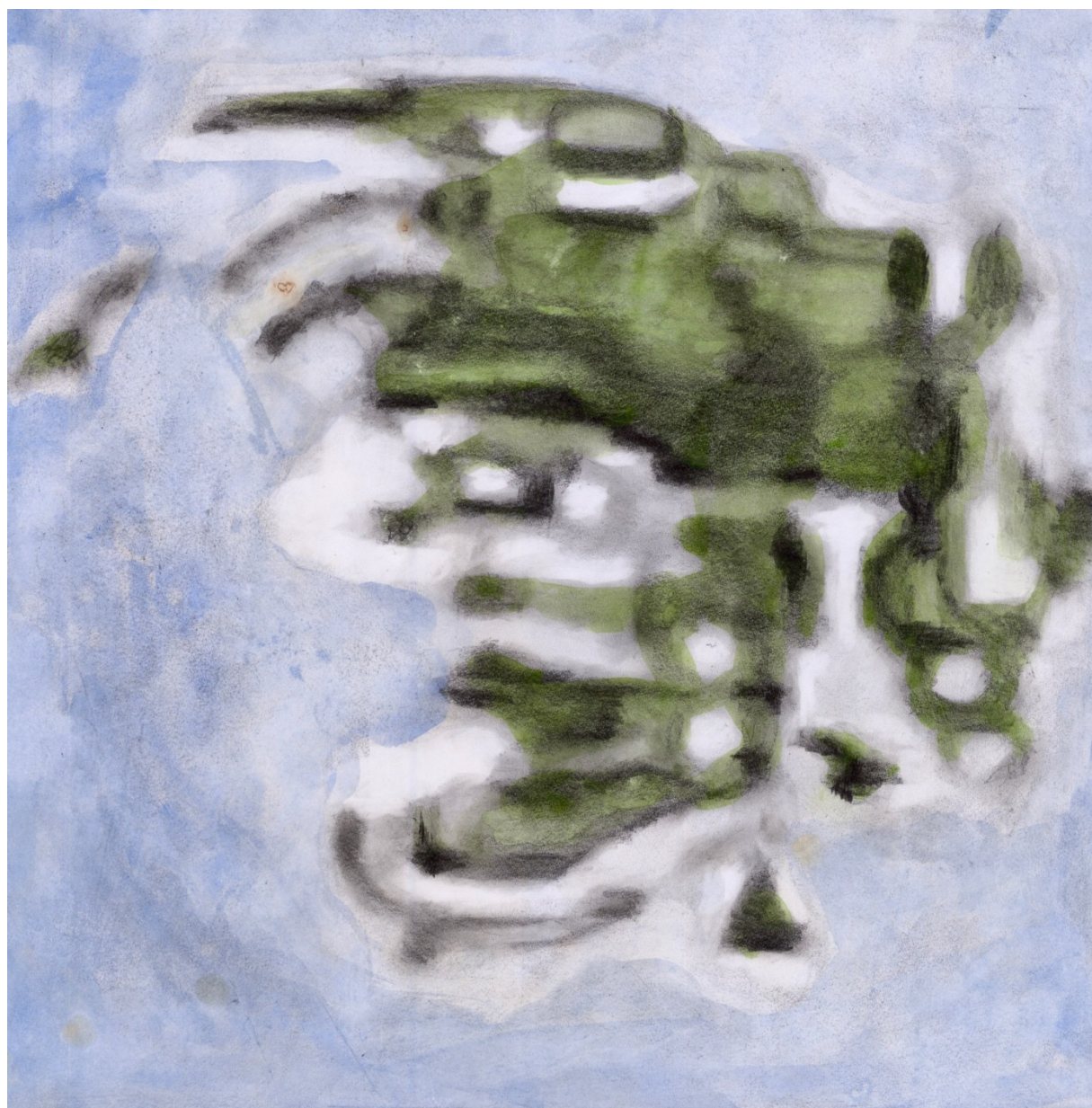
*Trees in Water.* AI rendered. Wonder App. 2023.





*Tree in Rippling Water*. Graphite on paper. 50x50cm. 2024. See artmaking timelapse video here: [https://youtu.be/P6fCWt2Q\\_vk](https://youtu.be/P6fCWt2Q_vk)

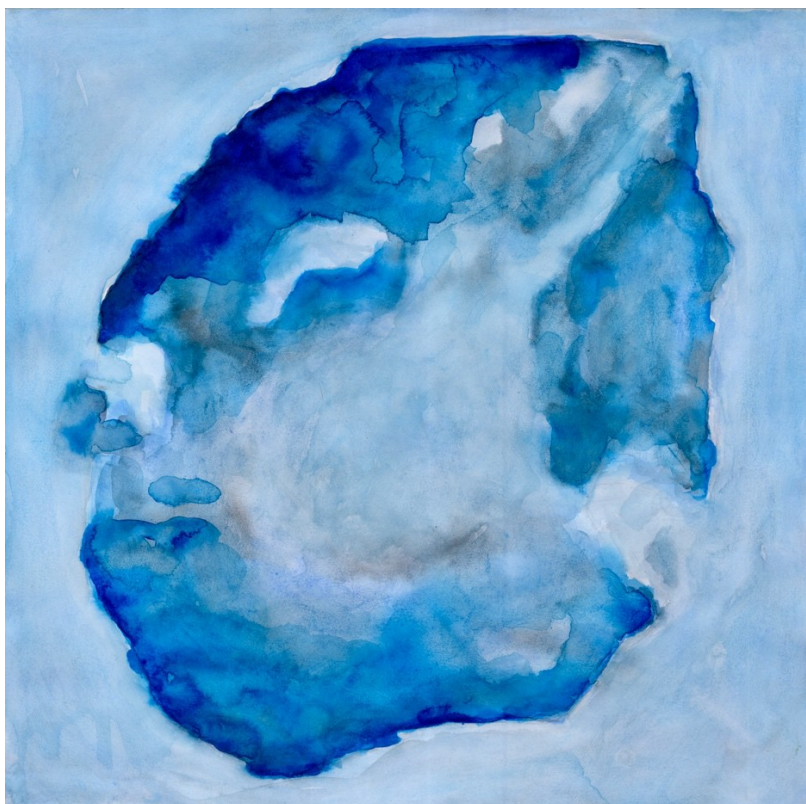




*Vortices (vortex)*. Watercolour on graphite. 50x50cm. 2024. See artmaking timelapse video here: <https://youtube.com/shorts/iYSr2aZbGBE?si=IEEtgpZZOyP0B7lr>

### **Inverted Raindrop Cont.**

Seen below are three depictions of Inverted Raindrop are presented. The first two are in watercolour, and the third is a graphite drawing on paper. This third drawing is similar to Inverted Raindrop II in Chapter VI. It was also executed in three hours but completed in a single drawing session within one day.

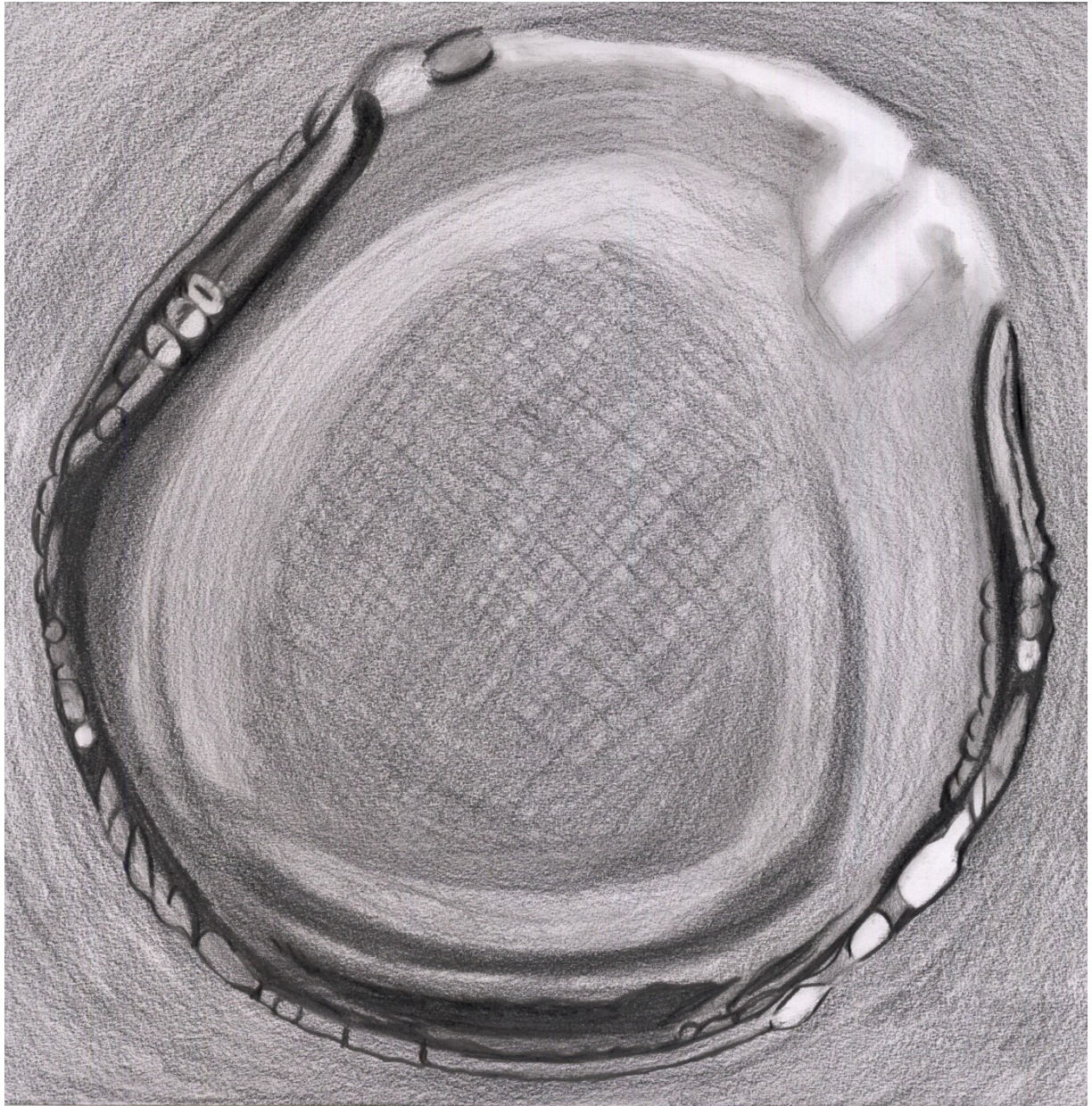


*Inverted Droplet (blue)*. Watercolour on paper. 50x50cm. 2023.



*Inverted Droplet (green)*. Watercolour on paper. 50x50cm. 2023.

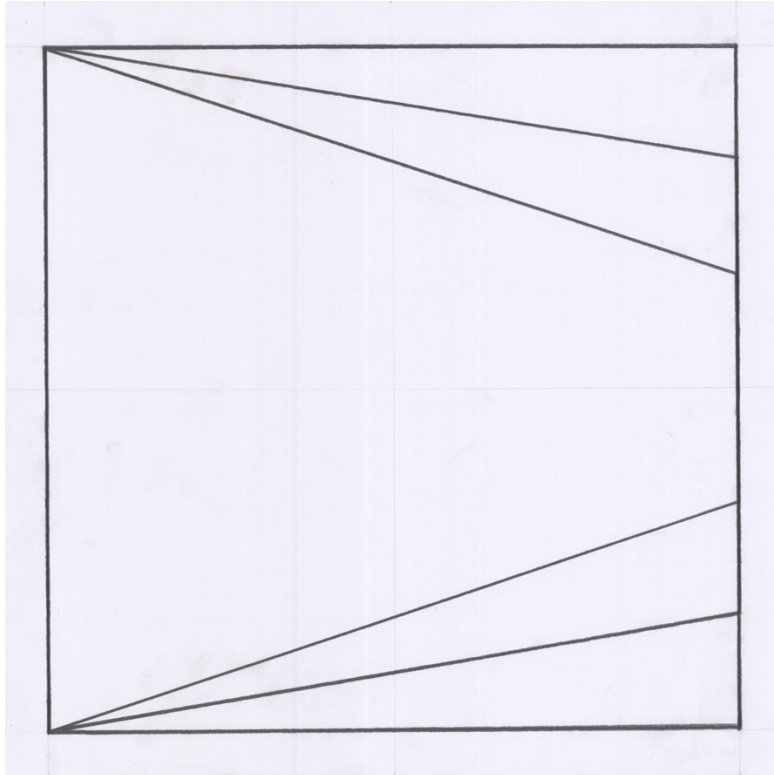




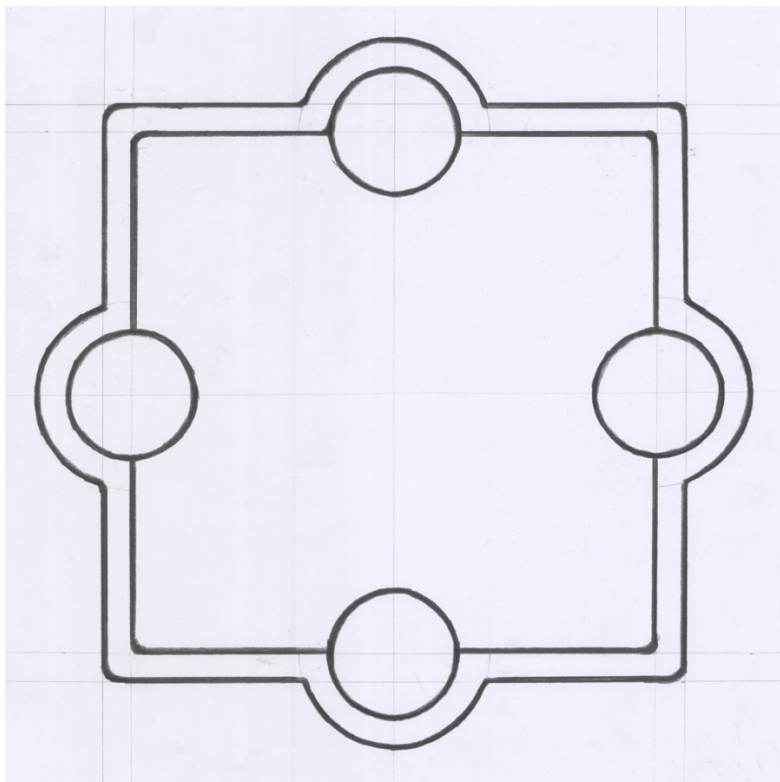
*Inverted Droplet.* Graphite on paper 50X50cm. Single day drawing (3 hrs). 2023.

## **Linea Concept Drawing**

The imagery below features concept line drawings that explore movement, as well as the circle, square, and perspective. The final two drawings depict an angular perspective of the atrium in the art school.

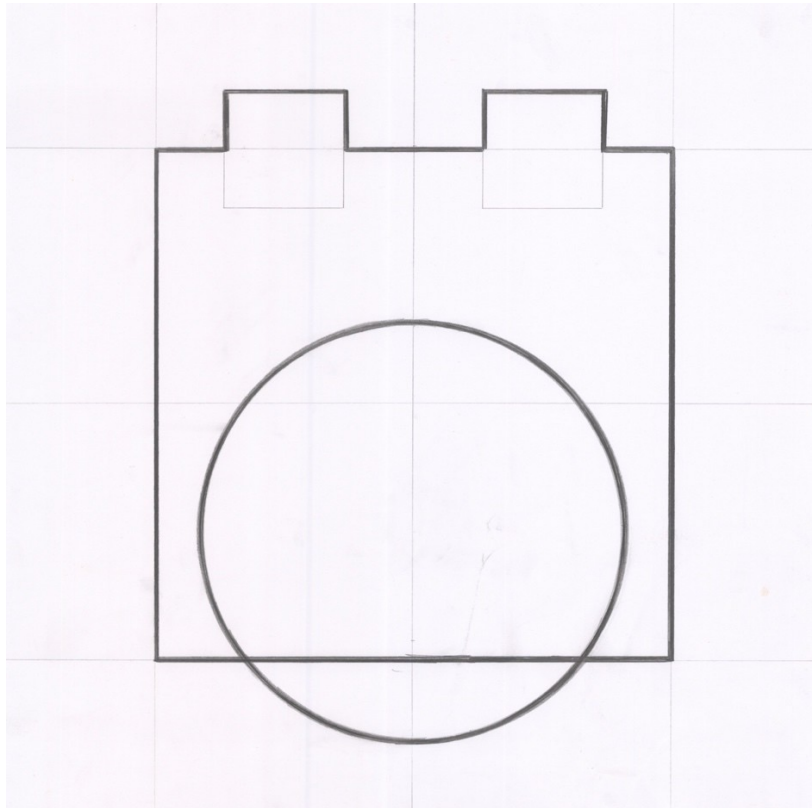


*Perspectival Plane X 3.* Graphite on paper. 50x50cm.  
2021.

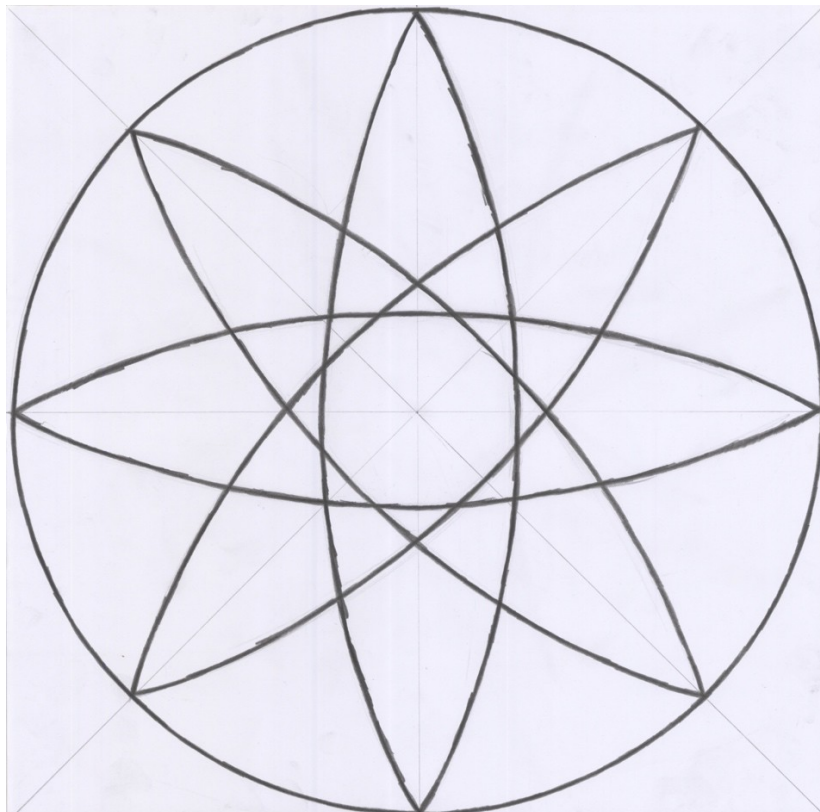


*Circle, Square, Field.* Graphite on Paper. 50x50cm. 2024.

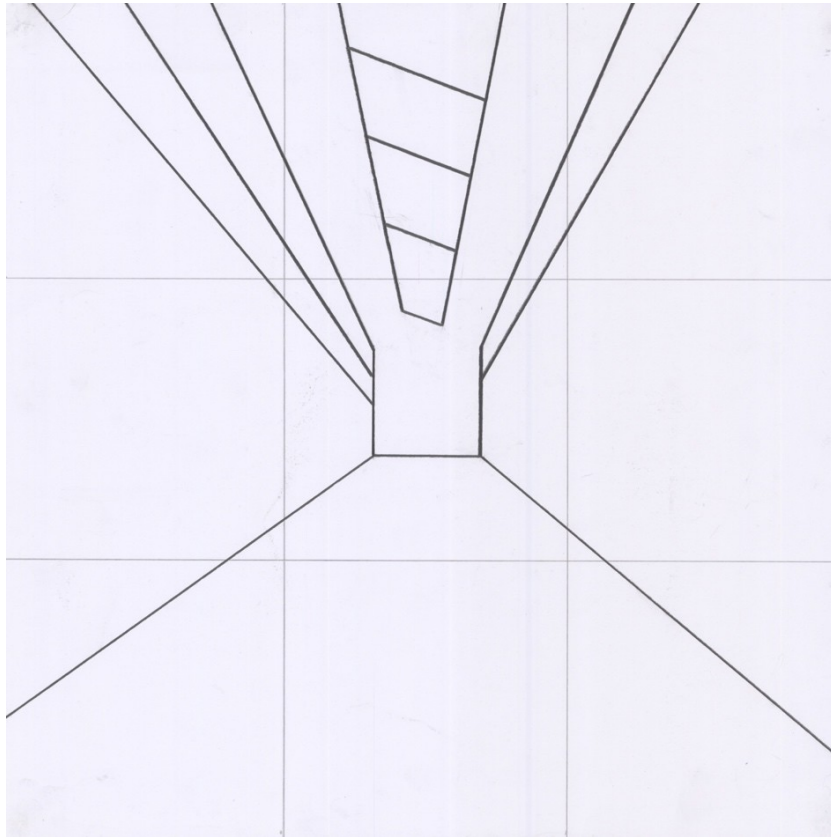




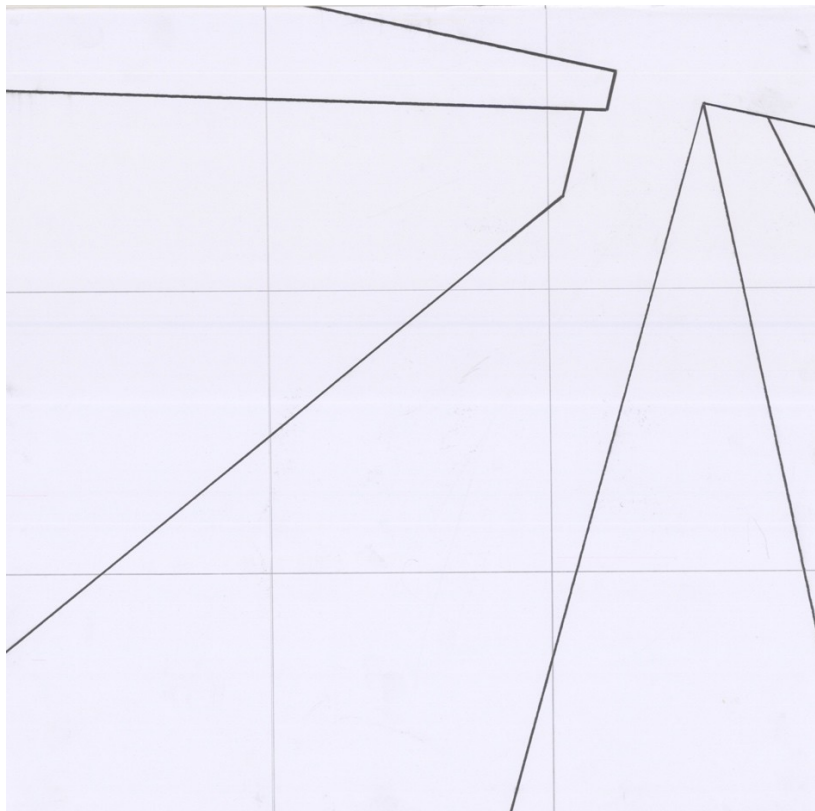
*LEGO* (circle and square). Graphite on paper. 50x50cm. 2021.



*Rotating Eye* (circle and square). Graphite on paper. 50x50cm. 2022.



*Atrium*. Graphite on paper. 50x50cm. Perspectival (entrance ground floor level view). 2022.



*Atrium II*. Graphite on paper. 50x50cm. Perspectival (first floor (balcony) level view). 2022.

## Appendix B: Glossary of Terms

### **Arts-Based Research**

A methodology that uses the process of artmaking as a means of inquiry and knowledge production. This approach is central to the thesis, allowing for exploration of the dyslexic experience through creative practices.

### **Divergent Thinking**

A thought process used to generate creative ideas by exploring many possible solutions. It contrasts with convergent thinking, which follows a particular set of logical steps to arrive at one solution.

### **Dyslexic Sublime**

A term developed in this thesis that integrates the concept of the Sublime with the lived experiences of dyslexic artists. It explores how dyslexic individuals' unique cognitive strengths, such as visual-spatial perception and divergent thinking, contribute to their creative processes, often invoking awe, wonder, and transcendence.

### **Flâneur**

From French 'stroller.' A cultural figure, particular to 19th-century Paris, descriptive of an individual who leisurely wanders the city, observing urban life with curiosity and detachment. Theorised by Walter Benjamin as emblematic of modernity, consumer culture, and the spectacle of the city.

### **Mind Wandering**

A cognitive phenomenon where attention drifts away from a task toward unrelated thoughts or fantasies. In the context of this thesis, it is framed as a creative tool that dyslexic artists use to unlock unexpected ideas and inspirations.

**Mind's Eye**

Refers to the ability to visualize imagery or scenes in the mind, a significant cognitive strength in dyslexic individuals that often enhances their artistic and creative processes.

**Neurodiversity**

The idea that neurological differences, such as dyslexia, autism, ADHD, and others, are natural variations of the human brain and should be recognised and respected as part of human diversity rather than pathologised.

**Otherness**

The state of being different or outside the norm. In the context of this thesis, otherness relates to how dyslexic individuals are often seen as outsiders in a neurotypical world but use this position to inform unique artistic practices.

**Positive Dyslexia**

(Nicolson, 2016) reframes dyslexia as not only a difficulty but also a difference that can bring strengths such as creativity, resilience, and big-picture thinking, encouraging a focus on potential as well as challenges.

**Practice-Based Research**

A research methodology where creative practice is a central focus of the inquiry. In this thesis, practice-based research involves using the process of creating art as a means of generating knowledge, with the artwork itself serving both as a research method and as a contribution to the research outcomes.

**Spatial Reasoning**

The capacity to think about objects in three dimensions and to draw conclusions about those

objects from limited information. Dyslexic artists frequently employ spatial reasoning in their work, contributing to their unique approach to form and structure.

### **The Sublime**

Refers to an aesthetic concept that evokes awe, wonder, and even terror, often associated with vastness, grandeur, or the ineffable. Philosophers like Burke, Kant, Longinus, and Lyotard have explored it in relation to art, transcendence, and human experience.

### **Transcendence**

The act of rising above or going beyond ordinary limits, often associated with spiritual or philosophical realms. In the thesis, it is linked to how dyslexic artists transcend their perceived limitations through creativity and art.

### **Trauma**

Emotional and psychological wounds that can result from experiences of discrimination, marginalization, or learning difficulties. In the context of this thesis, trauma is often associated with the dyslexic experience and is linked to Burke's idea of terror in the Sublime.

### **Visual-Spatial Perception**

A cognitive strength often found in dyslexic individuals that involves the ability to visualize, manipulate, and analyse objects or spaces in one's mind. In art, this ability manifests in heightened sensitivity to patterns, depth, and spatial relationships.

## Appendix C: Art Exhibitions

The following images showcase opportunities to exhibit my work throughout this PhD. These include two exhibitions in churches: one in the City of London next to my art school, and the other in the village near my family home in Kent where I grew up. Additionally, there was an opportunity to show work at The Shard in London and at an arts festival event in Brighton, organized by OutsideIn.

### Exhibitions:

- St Botolph's Without Aldgate Church, City of London, installation of the work *Trees in Water* montage drawing, 2021.
- Art Festival, St Mary's Church, Stalisfield, 2022.
- PGR Exhibition, London Metropolitan University: School of Art, Architecture & Design, 2022.
- The Arabs Group Art Awards, The Shard, London, 2022.
- OutsideIn, Phoenix Arts Centre, Brighton, installation and talk of the work *Trees in Water*, montage drawing, to a live audience, 2024.
- PGR Exhibition, London Metropolitan University: School of Art, Architecture & Design, 2024.





*Trees in Water* (in situ). Aldgate in Winter, St Botolph's Without Aldgate Church. City of London. 2021.





*Trees in Water* (in situ). Aldgate in Winter, St Botolph's Without Aldgate Church. City of London. 2021.



*Trees in Water* (in situ). Aldgate in Winter, St Botolph's Without Aldgate Church. City of London. 2021.





*Nebulous Spheroid: blue*. Oil on canvas. 80x80cm.  
2020.



*Nebulous Spheroid: blue* (in situ). Arabs Group Art  
Awards. The Shard, London. 2022.



*Nebulous Spheroid: blue* (in situ). Art Festival.  
St Mary's Church, Stalisfield, Kent. 2022.



*Nebulous Spheroid: blue* (in situ). Art  
Festival. St Mary's Church, Stalisfield, Kent.





Post Graduate Research exhibition (PGR). School of Art, Architecture and Design. City of London. 2022.





Post Graduate Research exhibition (PGR). School of Art, Architecture and Design. City of London. 2022.





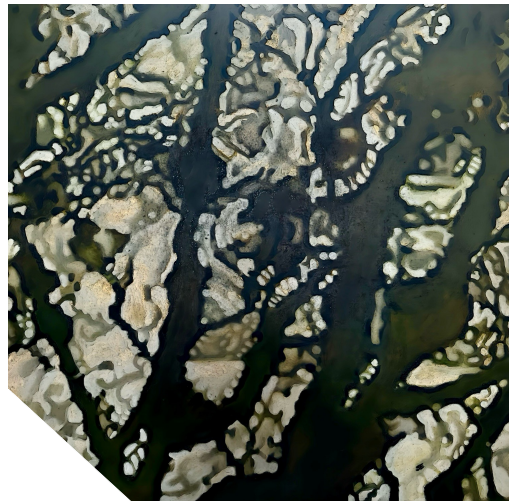
*Trees in Water* (montage drawing). Performance installation. Phoenix Arts Centre, Brighton. 2024. Watch here: [https://youtu.be/psD11fQJYHU?si=HQ6yIzTPQdFX\\_SWi](https://youtu.be/psD11fQJYHU?si=HQ6yIzTPQdFX_SWi)

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## The Dyslexic Sublime: Exploring the Art-Making Process of Dyslexic Artists through the Lens of the Sublime

This practice-based research explores how dyslexic artists navigate experiences of disempowerment and marginalisation through the lens of the Sublime in their art-making processes. While the connection between art and the Sublime, involving concepts of transcendence and the duality of pain and pleasure, is well-documented, there is limited research on how these ideas manifest in the work of dyslexic artists. By employing arts-based research methods, including workshops, interviews, and my own reflexive art practice, this study investigates the intersection of dyslexia, creativity, and the Sublime.

The findings reveal that dyslexic artists, with their heightened sensitivity to sensory stimuli, creative problem-solving skills, and unconventional thinking, contribute unexpected elements to art that evoke awe and wonder. The concept of the Dyslexic Sublime emerges as a guiding principle, highlighting the strengths of visuospatial and divergent thinking rooted in the lived experiences of dyslexic individuals. This study offers practical implications for education and the arts, advocating for an inclusive approach that empowers dyslexic individuals to leverage their unique strengths, fostering a broader dialogue on creativity and neurodiversity.



Trees in Water. Oil on canvas. 150X150cm. 2023.

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### Project Details

**Project team:**  
Skye William Eade

**Supervisors:**  
Jacek Scarso  
Johanna Hallsten

Research Poster. Post Graduate Research exhibition (PGR). School of Art, Architecture and Design. City of London. 2024.

## Appendix D: Conference Presentations and Symposia

- Three-minute thesis (Lightning talk), 2021, ‘Negotiating a Changed World: New Research at London Met,’ Student and Staff Research Conference, London Metropolitan University, 2021.
- ‘The Dyslexic Sublime: Exploring the Artmaking Process of Dyslexic Artists Through the Lens of the Sublime,’ Tackling the Big Challenges Together, Interdisciplinary Conference, Canterbury Christ Church University, 8–9 June 2022.
- ‘Lifting Barriers: New Research at London Met,’ Student and Staff Research Conference, London Metropolitan University, 12–13 July 2022.
- ‘Small Steps Matter: Research Towards a Better World,’ Student and Staff Research Conference, London Metropolitan University, 4–5 July 2023.
- ‘Arts-based Research Methods in Dyslexia Research,’ Resource Speaker, University of the Philippines Manila, 4 December 2023.
- ‘*Mind’s Eye in Water*,’ ArtQuest Crit, University of the Arts London (UAL), online critique, 2023.
- ‘Trauma Experience in Dyslexia,’ Resource Speaker, University of the Philippines Manila, 13 December 2023 and 6 May 2024.
- ‘Trauma Experience in Dyslexia,’ PGR: Postgraduate Research Symposium, School of Art, Architecture & Design, London Metropolitan University, 20 March 2024.
- ‘Dimensions of Dyslexia,’ British Dyslexia Association (BDA) International Conference, 2024.
- ‘Step Up Alumni,’ OutsideIn, 15-minute online presentation, 20 February 2024.
- ‘*Mind’s Eye in Water* and *Trees in Water* (Macro),’ ArtQuest Painting Salon, University of the Arts London (UAL), online presentation of two five-foot canvas paintings, 2024.

## Appendix E: Ethics Approval

### Re: Application for Ethics Clearance

Gian Carlo Rossi <g.rossi@londonmet.ac.uk>

Tue 19/01/2021 13:30

To: SKYE WILLIAM SKYE EADE <swe0005@my.londonmet.ac.uk>

Cc: Johanna Hallsten <j.hallsten@londonmet.ac.uk>; Jacek Ludwig Scarso <j.scarso@londonmet.ac.uk>

 1 attachments (296 KB)

Skye William Eade Research-Ethics-Form revised.pdf;

Dear Skye,

thanks very much for this and please find attached your approved ethics form.

Kindest regards and best of luck with your project,

Gian



## LONDON MET RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW FORM

### For Research Students and Staff

**Postgraduate research students** (MPhil, PhD and Professional Doctorate): This form should be completed by all research students in full consultation with their supervisor. All research students must complete a research ethics review form before commencing the research or collecting any data and no later than six months after enrolment.

**Staff:** This form should be completed by the member of staff responsible for the research project (i.e. Principal Investigator and/or grant-holder) in full consultation with any co-investigators, research students and research staff before commencing the research or collecting any data.

#### Definition of Research

Research 'is defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared. [...] It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, culture, society, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship [<sup>1</sup>]; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction. It excludes routine testing and routine analysis of materials, components and processes such as for the maintenance of national standards, as distinct from the development of new analytical techniques. It also excludes the development of teaching materials that do not embody original research.'<sup>2</sup>

London Met's *Research Ethics Policy and Procedures* and *Code of Good Research Practice*, along with links to research ethics online courses and guidance materials, can be found on the Research & Postgraduate Office Research Ethics webpage:

<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research/current-students/research-ethics/>

London Met's Research Framework can be found here:

<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research/current-students/research-framework/>

Researcher development sessions can be found here:

<https://student.londonmet.ac.uk/your-studies/mphil-phd-professional-doctorates/postgraduate-research-training-sessions/>

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/research-and-postgraduate-office-26844345187>

This form requires the completion of the following three sections:

**SECTION A: APPLICANT DETAILS**

**SECTION B: THE PROJECT - ETHICAL ISSUES**

**SECTION C: THE PROJECT - RISKS AND BENEFITS**

<sup>1</sup> 'Scholarship for the REF is defined as the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, in forms such as dictionaries, scholarly editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases.'

<sup>2</sup> REF 2021, Guidance on Submissions (2019/01), p. 90

<b>SECTION A: APPLICANT DETAILS</b>
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<b>A1</b>	<b>Background information</b> Research project title: <b>In Pursuit of the Sublime: Artmaking Process among Artists with Dyslexia</b> Date of submission for ethics approval: Proposed start date for project: <b>January 2020</b> Proposed end date for project: <b>September 2022</b> Ethics ID # (to be completed by RERP chair): RE/2010
<b>A2</b>	<b>Applicant details, if for a research student project</b> Name: <b>Skye William Eade</b> London Met Email address: <b>swe0005@my.londonmet.ac.uk</b>
<b>A3</b>	<b>Principal Researcher/Lead Supervisor</b> Member of staff at London Metropolitan University who is responsible for the proposed research project either as Principal Investigator/grant-holder or, in the case of postgraduate research student projects, as Lead Supervisor Name: <b>Dr. Johanna Hallsten</b> Job title: <b>Principal Supervisor</b> London Met Email address: <b>j.hallsten@londonmet.ac.uk</b>

<b>SECTION B: THE PROJECT - ETHICAL ISSUES</b>
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<b>B1</b>	<b>The Research Proposal</b> Please attach a brief summary ( <b>max. 1,000 words</b> ) of the research project including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background/rationale and conceptual framework of study</li> <li>• Research questions/aims/objectives</li> <li>• Research methodology</li> <li>• Key references</li> </ul> <p>If you plan to recruit participants, be sure to include information how potential participants in the study will be identified, approached and recruited; how informed consent will be obtained; and what measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data.</p>
<b>B2</b>	<b>Research Ethics</b> Please outline any ethical issues that might arise from this study and how they are to be addressed.  <i><b>NB</b> All research projects have ethical considerations. Please complete this section as fully as possible using the following pointers for guidance. Please include any additional information that you think would be helpful.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the project involve potentially deceiving participants? <b>Yes/No</b></li> <li>• Will you be requiring the disclosure of confidential or private information? <b>Yes/No</b></li> <li>• Is the project likely to lead to the disclosure of illegal activity or incriminating information about participants? <b>Yes/No</b></li> <li>• Does the project require a <u>Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)</u> check for the researcher? <b>Yes/No</b></li> <li>• Is the project likely to expose participants to distress of any nature? <b>Yes/No</b></li> <li>• Will participants be rewarded for their involvement? <b>Yes/No</b></li> <li>• Are there any potential conflicts of interest in this project? <b>Yes/No</b></li> </ul>



B3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there any other potential concerns? <b>Yes/No</b></li> </ul> <p><b>If you answered yes to any of the points above, please explain.</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will you be requiring the disclosure of confidential or private information? <b>Yes/No</b></li> <li>Is the project likely to expose participants to distress of any nature? <b>Yes/No</b></li> <li>Will participants be rewarded for their involvement? <b>Yes/No</b></li> </ul> <p><i>The nature of the research will require the disclosure of private information such as socio-demographic data and the diagnosis of dyslexia. It will also raise sensitive questions pertaining to their lived experiences of having dyslexia, including their experience of marginalisation and discrimination and painful experiences in childhood which may cause distress and discomfort.</i></p>
	<p>Does the proposed research project involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The analysis of existing data, artefacts or performances that are not already in the public domain (i.e. that are published, freely available or available by subscription)? <b>Yes/No</b></li> <li>The production and/or analysis of physical data (including computer code, physical entities and/or chemical materials) that might involve potential risks to humans, the researcher(s) or the University? <b>Yes/No</b></li> <li>The direct or indirect collection of new data from humans (e.g. interviews, observations, photos, surveys)? <b>Yes/No</b></li> <li>The direct or indirect collection of new data from animals? <b>Yes/No</b></li> <li>Sharing of data with other organisations? <b>Yes/No</b></li> <li>Export of data outside the EU? <b>Yes/No</b></li> </ul> <p><b>If you answered yes to any of the points above, please explain.</b></p> <p><b>B5</b> <i>The research will require probing on the lived experiences of participants as regards their dyslexia, as such interviews will be conducted, and the data analysed. Video documentation of workshops and reflexive documentation of participants whereby images of their artwork will also be utilised as part of the arts-based research methodology.</i></p>

	<p>Will the proposed research be conducted in any country outside the UK? If so, are there independent research ethics regulations and procedures that either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not recognise research ethics review approval from UK-based research ethics services? <b>Yes/No</b> and/or</li> <li>Require more detailed applications for research ethics review than would ordinarily be conducted by the University's Research Ethics Review Panels and/or other UK-based research ethics services? <b>Yes/No</b></li> </ul> <p><b>If you answered yes to any of the points above, please explain.</b></p> <p>Does the proposed research involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The collection and/or analysis of body tissues or fluids from humans or animals? <b>Yes/No</b></li> <li>The administration of any drug, food substance, placebo or invasive procedure to humans or animals? <b>Yes/No</b></li> <li>Any participants lacking capacity (as defined by the UK Mental Capacity Act 2005)? <b>Yes/No</b></li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationships with any external statutory-, voluntary-, or commercial-sector organisation(s) that require(s) research ethics approval to be obtained from an external research ethics committee or the UK National Research Ethics Service (this includes research involving staff, clients, premises, facilities and data from the UK National Health Service (NHS), Social Care organisations and some other statutory public bodies within the UK)? Yes/<b>No</b></li> </ul> <p><b>If you answered yes to any of the points above, please contact your school's RERP chair for further guidance.</b></p>
<b>B6</b>	<p>Does the proposed research involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessing / storing information (including information on the web) which promotes extremism or terrorism? Yes/<b>No</b></li> <li>Accessing / storing information which is security sensitive (e.g. for which a security clearance is required)? Yes/<b>No</b></li> </ul> <p><b>If you answered yes to any of the points above, please explain. To comply with the law, researchers seeking to use information in these categories must have appropriate protocols in place for the secure access and storage of material. For further guidance, see the Universities UK publication <a href="#">Oversight of Security Sensitive Research Material in UK Universities</a> (2012).</b></p>

### SECTION C: THE PROJECT - RISKS AND BENEFITS

<b>C1</b>	<p><b>Risk Assessment</b></p> <p>Please outline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the risks posed by this project to both researcher and research participants</li> <li>if applicable, the risk involved in research abroad</li> <li>the ways in which you intend to mitigate these risks</li> <li>the benefits of this project to the applicant, participants and any others</li> </ul> <p><i>There is possibility of emotional discomfort when enquiring into the lived experience of dyslexia. When it becomes apparent that the participant is experiencing emotional distress, then the interview will be paused, and participant assessed as to whether she/he wishes to continue. They will also be reminded that participation is completely voluntary and the risk of their involvement such as emotional discomfort will be explained to them at the start of the interview.</i></p> <p><i>It is conceivable that the participants may experience catharsis and possible enlightened sense of how events in their lives are connected and awareness of their condition and its impact on their practice as an artist. Their participation will also contribute to knowledge generation about dyslexia and the sublime.</i></p>
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**Please ensure that you have completed Sections A, B, and C and attached a Research Proposal before submitting to your School Research Ethics Review Panel (RERP)**

Please sign this form and submit it as an email attachment to the Chair of your school's Research Ethics Review Panel (RERP) and cc all of the staff and students who will be involved in the proposed research.

<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research/current-students/research-ethics/>

Research ethics approval can be granted for a maximum of 4 years or for the duration of the proposed research, whichever is shorter, on the condition that:

- The researcher must inform their school's Research Ethics Review Panel (RERP) of any changes to the proposed research that may alter the answers given to the questions in this form or any related research ethics applications
- The researcher must apply for an extension to their ethics approval if the research project continues beyond 4 years.

#### Declaration

**I confirm that I have read London Met's *Research Ethics Policy and Procedures* and *Code of Good Research Practice* and have consulted relevant guidance on ethics in research.**

**I confirm that I will carry out risk assessment before embarking on my research and if any risks are identified I will submit a report to Health and Safety.**

**I confirm that, before doing research abroad, I will carry out risk assessment incl. observing UK Government travel advice (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>). I will discuss any concerns with my supervisor and will submit any documentation that may be required.**

**Researcher signature: .....**

**Date: 06 January 2021**

#### Feedback from Ethics Review Panel

	<b><i>Approved</i></b>	<b><i>Feedback where further work required</i></b>
<b>Section A</b>		
<b>Section B</b>		We need to be explicit about where this data will be stored. It seems the university is moving towards storage on #09. We should also ensure that safe storage is completed as soon as possible after the interviews have taken place.
<b>Section C</b>		Where it is acknowledged and recognised that the interview may cause distress then there should be something in place to address the possible/potential effects. The difficulty is trying to identify what; counseling support (obvious but probably not practical) or just an opportunity to feed back to the researcher about the impact of the interviews. It would seem appropriate to indicate this on the form.
<b>Date of approval</b>		

## Appendix F: Invitation Letter to Participants

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

My name is Skye William Eade. I am studying PhD Art at London Metropolitan University. My area of research is on the art making process of artists with dyslexia and their lived experience using the frame of sublime principles. The purpose of this study is to understand the processes artists with dyslexia go through in the conceptualisation to execution of their work and on their lived experience of being dyslexic. This is intended not only to help raise awareness on the issue of stigmatisation of dyslexia but also to better understand the creative potential of artists with dyslexia. Please find below an abstract of my PhD research for reference.

As part of my research plan, I intend to interview artists with dyslexia and possibly hold a series of workshops. The purpose of this is to raise awareness in the area of creative ability and help lift the stigma associated with dyslexia. If this is something that may be of interest to you then please contact me with on t details provided below.

Thank you.

With best regards,

Skye William Eade  
PhD Art student  
London Metropolitan University

## Appendix G: Informed Consent

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I confirm that the general nature and purposes of this study entitled **Art Making and Dyslexia: The Sublime as Frame in Artistic Creation (A Practice-Based Research)** conducted by **Skye William Eade** has been explained to me. I was given the opportunity to clarify and ask questions which have been answered to my satisfaction.

I voluntarily give my consent to take part in this study.

I understand that I will be asked to answer interview questions pertaining to my lived experience as an artist with dyslexia as well as the artmaking process I engaged in my work.

Any potential risk resulting from my participation in the study has been described to me. This includes answering some questions that may be upsetting to me or may cause discomfort.

I am aware that I can refuse to answer any question asked and that I may discontinue my participation from the study at any time, without having to give a reason, up until **7 days after the completion of the interview**.

My participation in this study through the interview may take about 30 minutes to one hour. I consent to my interview being audio/video recorded for more accurate documentation.

I understand that my responses will be treated with utmost **confidentiality** and **anonymity** will be preserved. My personal data will only be known to the researcher and will not be divulged to anyone. Any personally identifiable information connected to my responses in the interview will be anonymised in research outputs. My name will not be associated with any results of this study, unless I explicitly give permission (in writing) to the researcher to use my identifiable information.

I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes explained to me by the researcher. I understand that such information will be handled in accordance with the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation.

I understand that the information I provide in the interview will be used as a thesis report and should I wish to receive a copy of it, I can request from the researcher.

My signature below signifies my voluntary participation in this research and I have received a copy of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

## Appendix H: Interview Questions for Participants

1. How would you describe your lived experience of dyslexia?
2. How does your artmaking relate to dyslexia, or how does dyslexia inform your artmaking?
3. What are your thoughts of the area of the sublime in the arts?
4. Do you think that your experience of dyslexia may also inspire a different way of looking at the world, for instance through the lens of themes relatable to the sublime such as that of otherness, transcendence, and the uncanny?



## Appendix I: Interview Questions for Experts

1. Please give me a brief overview of your perception of dyslexia.
2. How do you think dyslexia can facilitate the creative process of making art?
3. Please suggest some approaches to be used when working with people who have dyslexia. Specifically, what are your suggested approaches in facilitating a workshop or interviews with people with dyslexia?
4. Based on your experience of working with people with dyslexia, what do you notice is their common struggle, issues or concerns?

## Appendix J: Mind Wandering Analyses

### Exercise 1

- Duration: 38 seconds
- Thoughts: About everything but nothing in particular
- Feeling: Relaxed

### Exercise 2

- Duration: 30 seconds
- Awareness: Of mind wandering
- Feeling: Relaxed

### Exercise 3

- Duration: 30 seconds
- Focus: Funding application for the George Blunden Prize
- Experience: Imagining three-dimensionally how the bricks or stone cubes of the work *Nebulous (Raindrop) Diffraction* would sit in the earth while looking out of my large window

## Appendix K: Sample Transcript of Interview with a Participant

██████████ 0:00  
Its M██████. Hello.

Skye Eade 0:00  
Hello, M██████. Hi, how are you?

██████████ 0:02  
I'm fine yeah, not too bad at all.

Skye Eade 0:02  
Oh, good, good. Thank you for agreeing to let me question you a bit about dyslexia and art making and the sublime.

██████████ 0:10  
That's one of my favourite words the sublime. Really? I've got no problem doing that. That's brilliant.

Skye Eade 0:28  
So, M██████, so what are your thoughts on dyslexia?

██████████ 0:35  
Its a difficult, Its a difficult question. I was I was I was diagnosed in 2001 at Strode college with dyslexia. I knew I knew I had an issue with something. But when obviously, when they first told me there's a lot of relief, and then you can deal with it a lot better.

Skye Eade 0:56  
Yeah, yeah, I agree. So 2001 that would have been 20 years ago. So how old would you have been then?

██████████ 1:12  
40 ish.

Skye Eade 1:14  
Yeah. Interesting. About the same time I was diagnosed 40. Yeah. Okay, So was it when you discovered that you were dyslexic? Did you did you? Did you feel better? I think that's what you said. Or, I mean, were you depressed? Or did you feel sort of enlightened?

██████████ 1:40  
It's a bit like that. I think it's emotion. It's the three things what you suggested are all rolled into one.

Skye Eade 1:51  
Ah, interesting.

██████████ 2:01  
Once I knew I had dyslexia it didnt make things any easier, but at least you know what you had.

Skye Eade 2:19  
Yeah. Yeah, that's right. So with your How long have you been a practising artist M██████?

██████████ 2:30  
Oh crumbs, about 15/20 years on and off really, but now it's more, it's really, its obviously, It's built up and built up.

Skye Eade 2:41  
How do you think your dyslexia has affected your, what kind of impact or effect do you think that has on your art making?

2:56

Well, that's a good question. I think obviously, the written side of it, the written side, presenting yourself and making a clear message, probably that will be the most challenging aspect.

Skye Eade 3:11

Do you think it's it's kind of, like a preferred way of expressing yourself as a dyslexic? Do you think being, you know, in the visual image painting, or drawing?

3:26

I think, I think visual interpretation is my strongest point, obviously, which is dyslexic people with, like, you know, people with severe dyslexia. dyslexia is usually a visual interpretation to interpret the world's visual. visual language is a lot easier than the written word.

Skye Eade 3:42

Yeah, I agree. Yeah interesting. Did you when you were a school you obviously didn't know you're dyslexic then? Did you? Did you struggle at school?

3:54

Yeah. I went to a specialist school called Avalon school. This was about 1977/78. And then dyslexia Asperger's syndrome. They were very, very very little known about them. And obviously yes I went to a specialist school because my education suffered through those diagnoses, but then it wasn't fully understand as it is today.

Skye Eade 4:20

Yeah. So did you did you feel like you were stupid or slow or this kind of, you know, these are quite common feelings for us Dyslexics when we're at school, you know, feelings of being stupefied and you know, this kind of thing.

4:40

There was a lot of name calling and again, a lot of a lot of verbal. You're thick, you're stupid, you're spastic and all that language, but then again, little little was known about it and obviously it affected you greatly in in one degree or lesser degree, but that was when, then they started to pick up my talent as a painter or artist because somehow I could interpret the world through art. So it's a double edged sword really.

Skye Eade 5:12

So even when you were at school you were artistic then?

5:16

Very artistic. Yeah, I was used to I was always asked to go into classes to draw trees or human form and the other which was a bit of, was a quite experienced. But yeah, you you're aware of what you what the talent you've been given.

Skye Eade 5:37

Yeah. Were you encouraged by your teachers with your art artistic talents?

5:44

Yes, I was. I think it would have been Yes. In the 70s and early 80s. It was it would have been today have been a lot more encouragement, but then it was Yeah, there was some progress, weren't a great deal.

Those are full throttle.

Skye Eade 6:01

Yeah. And how did that make you feel? Did you feel I mean, yeah, how did that make you feel your art teachers noticing a talent there?

6:14

Put it this way; I was 13/14, I did a set of pencil drawings really high high class pencil drawings, it was shown at the Bath and West Show and this lady wanted to buy the whole lot every single piece and the school would tell the school will sell the drawings. And obviously especially disappointment, but I wish I could find the work today but probably some of my best work ever done, these were huge pencil pencil drawings. Obviously, I will spend hours drawing these drawings and obviously it hit a chord with someone.

Skye Eade 6:52

How old were you then?

6:55

Between round 12/13 years. Yeah, around there? Probably maybe slightly, yeah 14 years old.

Skye Eade 7:03

So that must have that must have made you feel quite good at that age to know that someone wanted to buy your work or were you not aware of it at the time?

7:12

I wasn't aware of the ability I had you just you just just did what you had to do and explore, obviously painting then wasn't so serious as it is now, obvious the graphic the graphic drawings were quite important. But mostly these were wood scapes landscapes, nothing technical, like buildings and drawings like Richard Holland used to do but there obviously there's a huge variation in both genres.

Skye Eade 7:38

Yeah, yeah. Architecture and yeah, Artist. So were you supported by your parents? Do you think when you were a child for your dyslexia, or did they not understand it?

7:54

They knew obviously, there was an issue. Obviously, I was a very, very slow learner. Again, then dyslexia and the autistic wasn't so fully understood fully understood as it is today. So there is there's a great huge gulf. The information we know now and information and there is a huge gulf. Probably if we knew then, more than things could have been that bit easier.

Skye Eade 8:21

Do you think they they thought there was something wrong with you? Or do you think they just believed that you had a different way of learning?

8:30

It wasn't really discussed I suppose we just went to school dad was working mum was working. We've grown up in a family and I suppose that bit sheltered it really and it really never mentioned.

Skye Eade 8:45

So you didn't feel at home like you there was something wrong with you, but maybe at school?

██████████ 8:51

No I suppose not really you just you just as a kid, you know, obviously the word dyslexia wasn't used as it is. Because as it is now.

Skye Eade 9:02

Yeah. Now, M██████████, I know you're interested in the sublime and how long have you been interested in the sublime

██████████ 9:15

It's a beautiful word is terror and beauty side by side that's what it is and I suppose so. When I was a child, I grew up along the south coast. My dad was in the forces and storms would come up from the storm would come up from the sea. We lived in a flat and sometimes a flat would vibrate with the wind and always, always living by the sea. And the spiritual side that would that would have gradually woken my senses.

Skye Eade 9:49

When when you say the spiritual side. What do you mean by that?

██████████ 9:54

It's, that's a complicated... it's.. I think feel the gift I've been given is a God given gift. It's, it's, it's like a voice which it can't be described. But it can, it can be described in art and things like that it's something which you can't touch, but you can touch at the same time. I hope that makes sense.

Skye Eade 10:18

Yeah, it does. Absolutely. Especially describing the sublime. Obviously, the Sublime is closely linked with spiritual spiritualism and spirituality.

██████████ 10:41

When I went, also, when I went to London, when I went to Tate Modern, and all these great modern galleries when I saw Turner's work seen in real life, that's when the realisation started to hit. What a powerful sentiment it is.

Skye Eade 10:58

Yeah, the romantic 18th century because that the the 18th century was, like a renaissance of the sublime was now a rebirth of it.

██████████ 11:13

Very famous painter isn't there a famous, because we had the renaissance, there's the Italian renaissance, then we had the Dutch renaissance, then other sort of British then rich, and then the pre-raphaelite. And it was that sort of luminous, beautiful, use of light. And somehow I got a gift to create that on canvas. And what people like about my work is how I portray light onto canvas. And there's there's no method or no, never, you just got the ability, it's built into you.

Skye Eade 11:47

So when you're when you're creating work of the sublime, do you do you feel like it's a transcendence, a freedom, do you feel like it's freeing you from the constraints of being human and being dyslexic?

██████████ 12:05

I think it's erm, obviously. I just, basically, I just go ahead and do it. And I, sometimes I have music in the background. And to,



you don't have to, you don't set yourself into I think I just do it. That's it.

Skye Eade 12:28

Yeah. So it's sort of an automatic thing. It just just a natural, a natural leaning towards the sublime. Are you religious [REDACTED], do you follow a particular religion?

[REDACTED] 12:48

No, I don't don't. My Mom and Dad, Mom and Dad. Thier faith and my stepdad and my mother in law. They were they were they were strong faith in the Christian belief. And I've always believed in always believe in a spirit, but it's got no name, or is it all around and about us? It's I call it some of my poetry I do I put it to the unknown God, it means there's no, it's so it's so far away. But it's so close is is that how I explained my way I see the world.

Skye Eade 13:32

Because I was going to ask you, why do you think you like to paint the sublime?

[REDACTED] 13:40

I'm very lucky, maybe. It's. I suppose im like Turner. Its a gift what you've been given? Is how is how you just I just like to paint in that style. If that helps?

Skye Eade 13:59

It does. Well thanks, M [REDACTED], I'm probably going to leave in there because I think I've sort of run out of questions for you at the moment. If you don't mind, I might come back to you at a later time to ask you some more questions.

[REDACTED] 14:23

Can I ask, what's this about and how does this form your... Whats the sort of remit that you've been given? Because, you know, I can obviously I can help a lot more than normal anyway.

Skye Eade 14:37

Yeah. Well, I also am interested in the sublime Mark and I have been for quite a few years. And as you know, I'm also an artist, and I'm also dyslexic quite, it's quite severe at times.

[REDACTED] 14:53

Because we met through R [REDACTED] d H [REDACTED].

Skye Eade 14:55

Yes. And So I finished my master's a few years ago and I'm, I submitted a research proposal to study a PhD. And I've been offered a place where I've started actually, and the title of the research is The Sublime as a Guiding Force for Dyslexic Artists in the making of art so it's, it's sort of it's like a tripartite three parts to it of the sublime but asking why do, because there's a lot that's been written about there's a lot of research academic research on the sublime but not much is known why dyslexic artists like yourself and myself...

[REDACTED] 15:48

Now we're talking. I think I've been more My nickname is [REDACTED] 21st century and obviously I have a relationship with his art obviously, people say you're my work is so much like Turner's.

Skye Eade 16:13

Yeah, it looks very similar.

██████████ 16:14

I normally use the paint raw from the tube.

Skye Eade 16:28

You mean you don't mix it with oil or anything?

██████████ 16:33

No, I don't have to. Because once I have got the image in my head. I'm working on some bark paintings at the moment. I just just use the white straight from the tube and obviously eventually it blends in or it naturalised itself with the colours.

Skye Eade 16:51

The do you ever think about what it is you're doing when you're actually doing it?

██████████ 16:58

Oh, definitely, I've got a clear picture in my head what I want to paint and what to.... One of my big projects at the moment is I'm doing a huge painting on a wall. And it's a fishing scene and it's a sunset with thunderclouds. The idea started, the idea started about six months ago, and eventually... How I think is I think of an idea, dwell it over, dwell it over, then paint it.

Skye Eade 17:26

dwell it over. That sounds interesting. Could you could you explain Could you elaborate on that when you say dwell it over? What does that mean?

██████████ 17:38

Okay, at the moment, I'm, I'm working on wood, fragments of wood, and on bark. Four or five years ago, I did I found a piece of bark fallen off a tree. And I thought so, I'm gonna paint that so I'll send you some. I'll send you some shots. My work I'm doing at the moment.

Skye Eade 17:57

Yeah, great.

██████████ 17:59

And these are these are on because a lot of my work now is on the environment environmental side. So I'm using recycled materials. And at the moment the work I'm doing is night paintings of the sea. So I'm using a simple colour palette, and the idea of formed in my head and once the idea is formed into my head then I can portray what's in my mind, I can portray that onto the wood.

Skye Eade 18:26

Yeah, I see. So do you do any preparatory sketches or anything? Or is it just straight with the paint onto it?

██████████ 18:31

Just straight into it?

Skye Eade 18:33

And is it from photographs? Or do you go out there?

██████████ 18:37

Just memory, that's all.

Skye Eade 18:38  
From memory? No photographs?

18:41  
No, not at all. There's no need to because the knowledge I built up over the years because obvious with a sublime a lot of scientificness behind it because I study the climate the jet stream, so with the sublime, which may help your PhD, is there's a lot of science involved with it jet streams, gulf Stream. So behind my work, there's a lot of scientific knowledge.

Skye Eade 19:20  
Okay. Because that sounds interesting. So yeah, because I mean, the the, you know, the, the making of the art is is kind of interesting. So you don't because a lot of landscape artists they like to be out in the landscape painting, or are you studio based, or do you prefer to be in a studio?

19:42  
To be quite frank, I can paint in both environments.

Skye Eade 19:48  
Which do you do most of do you think, in a studio or outside?

19:54  
Studio work is obviously obvious situation at the moment studio work is the greatest branch of what I'm doing.

Skye Eade 20:02  
Because you said you you you paint from memory then you don't have to be outside looking at looking at what you're painting?

20:09  
No not really never needed never needed that problem is always a it's a nice problem to have. I've always had the ability to formulate an idea and create an idea. No, I'm never an artistic block never had no problem with it.

Skye Eade 20:24  
Well, you know, I remember when I was in the life classes. Some artists, they believe they have to be out there in the elements at the moment to seize the moment on their canvas. Do you know what I mean? But I've never been like that. I'm a studio artist too. So I understand your, your way. Yeah, cuz I don't. I like to be in a studio where I can take the time and reflect on things that I'm thinking you're like that too, then you prefer to to be in a studio where you can take reflect on things instead of having to get on with it before the rain comes or the sun goes or that kind of thing. Do you see what I mean when you're out in the elements.

21:11  
When I studied at Western, I did go out on the beach in full blown gales just as much as Turner did to feel to to I went out on a one day one and a force 9 gale down to Western got soaked. And yes to get all my experiences to watch a violent thunderstorm to watch the clouds the lightning and, and these memories echo through your art.

Skye Eade 21:35  
So you take those memories back and then you work in the studio on them.

21:41  
If it's snowing, go out in the snow, it was snowing or it's very frosty. You go out and enjoy what you're seeing. Sometimes you don't enjoy it, especially if its blowing a blizzard but is to get an experience and it absorbs into your personality.

Skye Eade 21:57

And when you say lightning and thunder and how do you equate that with the sublime

22:03

Well its terrifying its just quite, some people, my ex was terrified of thunderstorms. I find them beautiful, but they are again the word Sublime is beauty and terror is the unusual relationship is this face man is facing mankind since the day we was created to the day will die is that good and evil. Sea painting. Turner did a sea painting with a dog on a beach. It was just this sublime painting with a dog on a beach. All your have is the waves crashing behind the story. It was a dog It was a dog looking for the sea captain and the sea captain and all the people were killed in the storm. The dog was howling on the beach. But you had this beautiful sunset. beautiful sunrise, you had no idea what happened previous. That's one of his famous paintings. How do you see that?

Skye Eade 23:02

Do you? How do I see what exactly M Sorry?

23:06

The previous, the answer I just given you.

Skye Eade 23:09

Of that painting of Turner with the dog? Do you mean or?

23:13

Yes, it's called; I'm not sure what the paintings called. But its one of his, its not one of his most famous most famous pieces, but it is somewhere in his memoir somewhere.

Skye Eade 23:28

I remember reading about Turner that he once strapped him strapped himself to the mast of a boat and worked on a sketch or painting out on out on the sea, you know, strapped to a boat. So he could pick up the immediacy of the moment, you know, in his work. But Turner is obviously a very good example, isn't he of the romantic artists of the 18th century? Yeah. Well, it's really interesting to talk to you about it. And if you'd be happy M, I'd really like to. Because what I'm doing, I'd really like to talk to you later. Because what I'm doing at the moment, is just having a brief chat with artists like yourself who are dyslexic, and also about the art making process. But as I go further into the PhD research, I will probably be looking for particular case studies. And I wonder if you might be interested because I think you'd be a really good case study because of you're interested in the sublime

24:41

I think I've got and I think if R has been alive now he would have said go ahead with it, M. Yeah, definitely, definitely.

Skye Eade 24:54

Does that mean you might be interested?

24:57

I will go ahead and do. No It's good. It's a good, it's good for me to give my point of view. Of course I would do it. Im all for it.

Skye Eade 25:08

Great. I mean, I might come down to Somerset, and maybe we could even meet in person and do an interview, you know, in a cafe or, you

know, something like that. If you're whatever you prefer, you know.

██████████ 25:21

I'm happy to go ahead and do it. Yeah. That's fantastic.

Skye Eade 25:26

That's great. I'm sorry to hear about R ██████████.

██████████ 25:30

Do you realise he passed away?

Skye Eade 25:34

No, I didn't even know.

██████████ 25:36

He died about four or five years ago.

Skye Eade 25:41

Crikey. That's a bit of a shock.

██████████ 25:44

Sorry to bring that up.

Skye Eade 25:46

No, it's okay. I didn't even know. I mean, you know, I haven't seen. I haven't seen R ██████████ for 10 years. I think about 10.

██████████ 25:55

I can't remember. He died about four or five years ago.

Skye Eade 25:59

Okay. Sorry to hear that.

██████████ 26:03

Yeah, me too. Yes. A great friend and a great, great supporter of the arts.

Skye Eade 26:09

I think he liked the sublime, didn't he? I don't know if he was conscious of it or not.

██████████ 26:14

Well he is great fan of he talks. He talks a lot about you. He always they've always talked about, you know? Yeah, he said and he had a lot of your drawings in his, a lot of a lot of your drawings in his kitchen.

Skye Eade 26:31

Did he? I know. I know. He bought a few paintings off me two or three, I think but I didn't know. Yeah. Had some drawings as well.

██████████ 26:39

Sorry. That's right, Yeah, yeah. Yeah. He had paintings in his in his kitchen. And that's when I, when I first used to talk about you. That's how I got in contact with you was through. Richard.

Skye Eade 26:52

That's right.

██████████ 26:59

Yeah, I'll send you some photographs of what I'm doing at the moment. But I've definitely seen I didn't I did a fine art degree at Bath Spa

Skye Eade 27:09

Okay, so you have a degree in art to that's interesting.

27:12

I do have a degree in art

Skye Eade 27:14

Was it fine art or?

27:17

Fine art? Yeah. and quick. I, they interviewed me, we had a professor, each of us had to go for an interview, and we had to justify our art, which is not easy to do. So he, he interviewed me and after the interview we returned and he gave us he gave us his opinion on my art and the students art and he said, M, I don't understand where you're coming from. I said that's brilliant. What do you mean by that? I said, art should be partly mysterious as if you can't fathom what I'm trying to say. Because he said "thats one way of looking at it."

Skye Eade 28:08

Yeah, well, I remember reading a book by I don't know if you've heard of the author, E.H. Gombrich when I was doing my bachelor's degree, he said, there's no such thing as art.

28:24

Yeah I see where you're coming from, probably. There's no answer to that.

Skye Eade 28:30

No, there isn't.

28:32

I think ive read somewhere 'art is everything' again I suppose. It's like, my belief God is everything. It doesn't matter if it's got a name or has not got a name is it's down to individual choice.

Skye Eade 28:46

Yeah, yeah.

28:49

Definitely. Well, I'm definitely I'm definitely happy fo you to do case study, thats no problem.

Skye Eade 28:56

That would be great, because I would only do case studies on the most interesting ones. And I think I think you definitely would be an interesting participant. I mean, it would be anonymous Mark, unless you would prefer me to use your name. So you would obviously you know, that would give you more exposure, probably. But I think because it you know, involves things like your childhood and your experience. It might be better that it's anonymous, you know.

29:28

No, I'm happy to use my name. Because if you look for my behind shadows, and if you're in a creative industries, you've got to be heard and got to be seen. Now, I'll tell you a quick story. I had a



fellow artist. He was scared stiff of being in crowd and he's scared stiff of going to his own studio. And hes scared stiff, we do. Through his own art shows, and I did say to him, I said you're in the wrong industry, because as an artist, you've got to be in one way youve got to be a show person or you got to be comfortable in that environment.

Skye Eade 30:06

You have but I'm sure you have met artists like I have. Some artists are quite introverted, aren't they? They don't like they like to rather be away in a studio behind a canvas. You know, but I agree with you. I think you know, if you want your work to be out there at your work is you isn't it? So you can't hide? M [REDACTED], can I ask; you are you you are you're fully practising artists, aren't you? That's all you do, isn't there? Or? I mean, have you got another job? Or is it?

[REDACTED] 30:38

Full time artists? Yeah,

Skye Eade 30:39

I thought so. Okay. That's great.

[REDACTED] 30:42

Yeah. I think we covered everything there.

Skye Eade 30:48

Yeah, that for now, because I think I need to reformulate my questions now. Because I've run out. Because you've given me a great lot of, you know, it's quite a bit of dialogue there that I think could be kind of pulled apart. It's really interesting. So thank you for taking the time.

[REDACTED] 31:08

Well, I think if if, if I given you something to dwell on, that's brilliant, as he says, to dwell on.

Skye Eade 31:17

I think there's a lot.

[REDACTED] 31:20

Yeah, I'm at the moment. Obviously, I do abstract I do. I do abstract work on different different branches. All I'm doing at the moment, but definitely im happy to go ahead with this. No problem.

Skye Eade 31:36

Great. Thanks again, Mark. I'll be in touch then.

[REDACTED] 31:39

Okay, I'll catch you soon. Okay.

Skye Eade 31:42

Okay. Thanks again.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>

## Appendix L: Exemplary Quotes from Interview Participants

Participants	Lived experience of dyslexia	How their artmaking relates to dyslexia	Thoughts about the sublime	How their artmaking relates to the sublime
Pseudonym: NM	NM is a full-time artist with a bachelor's degree in art. NM says "I knew I had an issue with something" prior to his diagnosis. Mixed feeling of being diagnosed dyslexic (good & bad) but overriding sense that knowing meant understanding "what you had."	NM is aged sixty and has been a practising artist for about twenty years. NM says, "visual interpretation is my strongest point". NM attended a specialist school and states that his artistic talents were picked up and he found an "escape" through art. NM states "you were aware of the artistic talents you had been given". NM experienced name calling at school such as "thick, spastic, stupid". NM says, "it affected you greatly". NM states being dyslexic and artist as "a double edge sword".	NM sees the sublime as "terror and beauty side by side". NM recalls his childhood living by the sea and the power of the storms would often shake the house. NM believes "a god given gift" he has "like "a voice inside". NM believes he is spiritual NM says, "god is everything".	NM states that he does not really think about this and would prefer to just "go ahead and do it". NM likes to "dwell it over" before continuing a painting. So, there are reflexive moment of contemplation. NM paints his landscapes from memory (this could be a visuospatial indicator). NM is interested in natural science such as cloud formations and weather patters. NM prefers to work in a studio. NM talks of how his experience in extreme weather causes him to somehow distil this memory in his mind/imagination and later depict on canvas. NM talks of the beauty and terror of being during a thunderstorm. NM asks; "how do you see that"?

<p>Pseudonym: ZS</p>	<p>ZS. (aged 34) states that he is “severely dyslexic”. There are many other dyslexics in his family. ZS says he is proud to be dyslexic and that he “wouldn’t want it any other way”. He says he is where he is in life as a consequence of being dyslexic. ZS parents were supportive of his dyslexia. ZS says he did experience being stupefied at school, like being excluded from Sats exams. He felt “less adequate”. ZS was put in the lowest groups in secondary school and explains how he had to work extremely hard to prove himself to be better and eventually raised up into higher groups. He recalls being called “stupid”. Being called stupid is the most offensive name ZS states and is a trigger to experience of being</p>	<p>ZS states that other members of his family work in the creative industries and are dyslexic. ZS states “visual intelligence is very important for dyslexics”. ZS states that although he started off painting, he learnt that he was becoming very aware of space and his work evolved into the medium of sculpture. ZS recalls in his younger years working on family-owned farms and he learnt skills that he was able to transfer into his practice of sculpture.</p>	<p>ZS states that he is “quite a spiritual person”. ZS likes the idea that we are all essentially “stardust”. And goes on to say; “the reverberations of the universe are within us all”. ZS says the “sublime is something of an interest” for him. ZS wishes for humans to be more aware of our impact on the environment. ZS is seeking to transcend to a “new spiritual plateau of understanding”. ZS talks of his frustrations in how “humanity looking backwards in time and not trying to pioneer a future where unity is the most important thing”. He means this in terms of climate change and tyrannical rulers, scarcity of water etc... ZS again talks of the importance for humanity to reach a “higher spiritual plane”.</p>	<p>ZS states that his work has a “spiritual consequence” and of “unity” and that “science and engineering are very much at the forefront of what I do”. ZS says he continues trying to find his “liberty and continuously trying to liberate ideas”.</p>
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	stupefied. ZS went through a series of psychological tests at school and scored an exceptionally high IQ test of 138.		ZS talks of his interest in “biosphere consciousness”	
Pseudonym: JN	JN states that it is more difficult to diagnose dyslexia in females. JN believes she has a greater awareness of dyslexia since being diagnosed 5 years ago aged 34. JN claims this “an absolute revelation for me”. She claims that prior to this she compensated by attending music school and that this was her “creative vent”. JN says she did struggle at school and at times felt “thick” because “this is what academia had told me”. Her parents did not notice her dyslexia and JN felt unsupported by her school. JN discusses her untidiness in comparison to her older sisters. JN	JN was self-taught in photography and became a commercial photographer 15 years ago. JN attended arts school and graduated with a first. JN now works in sculpture/mixed media in particular mirrors and glass “transparent things” and describes herself as a conceptual artist. JN is currently studying a PhD and her area of research is of how social media impacts the physical artwork made.	JN is a practising Christian. This happened about 10 years ago shortly after the birth of her first child. She finds this comforting.	JN states that being a Christian is not about judging others and believes this influences her work somehow. JN perceives her dyslexia to be a “superpower”.

	claims lack of self-confidence probably because of dyslexia.			
Pseudonym: CN	CN is diagnosed as moderately dyslexic. He sees himself and other dyslexics as very good at “solving problems and working around things”.CN describes himself as “extremely more technical in the writing expression”. He says his writing is different to his verbal ability. CN states he enjoys writing. CN says he experiences situations where others appear baffled by a problem, but he gets it straight away. He goes on to say that dyslexics seem more able to “connect the dots”, like a mind mapping. CN says as an artist he finds his visuospatial awareness useful in curatorial aspects of holding an exhibition.CN believes	CN Paints abstract but likes to explore different mediums and digital art. CN says he likes to use a series of layers in his work He says he has always been creating art from the age in primary school where he won awards and joined art clubs. CN has had several commissions. CN said he uses “cotes theory”. CN likes the process of experimentation and adapting. CN prefers to skim read through books. CN is very good with technical equipment such as computers. CN makes the interesting point that Apple products operate more on the use of an icon whereas Windows machines operate more on the use of opening a sequence of windows. CN gained a o level in computer science and suggests this is an area he excelled in at school. CN	CN had a catholic upbringing. CN remains sceptical to religion as he states it to be manmade. CN does not see his work relates to spirituality.	CN was commissioned several years ago to create some work for a church. He created a painting of St. Peter for the church. This was a work created for the area’s local youth and low unemployment whom CN and the church were working with at the time.

	that once a dyslexic has acknowledged their limitations then they will be more easily adaptable than the non-dyslexic. At school CN was told he was lazy. CN has been assessed on three occasions throughout the past twenty years.	again states he has always been very adaptable in utilising whatever material is to hand. He states that tech is “just another material” or another medium.		
Pseudonym: TH	TH describes himself as a “visual thinker”. TH experienced being stupefied at school. TH expressed an ability to excel in poetry at school. TH enjoys writing now and feels able. TH recounts being held back a year which he found humiliating. TH states that using a computer helps as its “like a picture”, you can cut and paste. TH complains of having bad eyesight. From the age of 3 he wore glasses. TH states that short sighted people tend to see the overall picture rather than	TH enjoyed art from a young age and would often stay behind at school for extra art class. TH parents were somewhat supportive of his interest in art from a young age. People would often say “he’s good with his hands”. TH found this to be an insult.	When asked about the sublime TH responded, “that’s why one makes art, for a sublime experience”. TH goes on to describe this as “being totally one with the moment. Being flooded with the experience”. TH goes on to describe the sublime as being able to give someone that feeling of “oh my god”. TH describes it as a “definite perceptual thing” and “a sense of transcendence”. The transcendent appears to be the most profound principle of the sublime to TH. He goes on to	TH describes how his work “grows out of that romantic notion”. TH sees his work as relative to the sublime in terms of muted colouration as a sign of the past and sublimity”. TH states “there’s no one right way of seeing the world”. TH describes artmaking as a somewhat “obsessive” behaviour or ritualistic meditative experience through cycles of repetition.



	<p>small details. TH states that as a boy he enjoyed stories but disliked reading them. He goes on to express difficulty with reading in general at a young age. TH can now read well and fast. TH explained that wearing glasses from a young age kind of “defines you”. He goes on to say that he did not want another label attached to himself. It seems in this time there was a huge stigma with newly emerging term dyslexia.</p>		<p>describe this an experience often found in meditation.</p>	
Pseudonym: HS	<p>HS grew up in Germany and states it was not apparent that she was dyslexic until the age of 3 to 4. HS had to redo a year twice and then was put into what was known as a “mentally handicap school”. HS parents were supportive of her dyslexia and decided to send her to a pvt school. HS</p>	<p>HS talks about a period in her youth (aged about 11) of always carrying a tennis ball and bouncing it around. Also, at this time she expressed an interest in metal work in a refined manner as a choice early on due to these negative experiences at school. HS states “metal is my first language”. HS talks of her</p>	<p>HS was raised and is a practising Catholic. In relation to this HS talks of an ability in “reading people”. HS relates this to a type of empathy temporally speaking. HS agrees that spirituality relates to her in person in the first place rather than her work. HS talks of a “theory of belief” when we</p>	<p>We discuss HS spoons. This relates to her talk of orally tasting the edges of an object. HS talks of how “the spoon is the first tool we use in life” and also the last one we use, and everything else is in between”. We talk of the spoon as a metaphor. HS states this is her “hobby horse”, she makes spoons.</p>

	<p>experienced bullying by peers and teachers prior to pvt school. sense. HS later went on to do an apprenticeship in metal work. HS then studied at the Royal College of Art. HS believes that she chose to “work with her hands”. HS goes on to express that she was always able to excel at drawing in school.</p>	<p>sculptures as “holding these works in space”. During her apprenticeship HS talks of a experiencing a “precision” either with a machine or with her hands that she was good at and gained confidence thereafter. During her time at the Royal College HS experienced having “good ideas” and wanting to execute them. During this time HS became interested in “the philosophy of making”. HS talks of “a good problem”. I perceived this to be a sort of a discovery of trial and error through design. HS talks of “tasting” the edges of objects that are consigned for a particular purpose, such as a spice box. She talks of “embodied understanding”, “the language of making and articulating through my hands”.</p>	<p>discus Catholicism. HS states that she is interested in the faith aspect of Catholicism rather than the institution. I ask HS further about this faith and she states that she perceives faith to provide examples of “how to live”, for example the principle of love and tolerance to our neighbour for example.</p>	<p>The spoon is smooth to touch. When I discuss sublime principles again to HS she states that this relates back to her ideology of “good problems” that she expresses through her materials, shapes and constellations in making work.</p>
Pseudonym: FN	<p>FN was diagnosed at the age of 42. FN explains that she is also aware that she</p>	<p>FN describes her artmaking process as sort of ritualistic. She goes on to describe not</p>	<p>FN talks of a “deep thirst for knowledge and learning about very big</p>	<p>FN says she believes “creating things is a sacred act” FN states that “people’s</p>

	<p>has other coexist conditions. FN describes her dyslexia as “being stuck” and says “I can’t turn ideas into words” which she finds agitating. She goes on to describe being in the midst of “the problem of dyslexia”. FN goes on to say, “I feel very deeply about my experience of the aesthetics of the world”. FN goes on to say, “I have a clear sense of the world at an abstract level”, and she then finds struggles with an impossible task of turning this into words. FN does talk of going into another state of being where she feels very articulate. FN describes reading as very tiring and prefers to acquire information by listening. FN states “I am not driven to perform my knowledge”.</p>	<p>knowing the direction of her practice but retrospectively on reflection this seems to communicate something. FN describes this process as “I’m entirely led by aesthetics”. FN describes herself as “self-taught”. FN explains “I’m not technically trained” She goes on to say, “I haven’t found any learning environment’s that have managed to teach me”. FN states further “I enjoy a process that’s non language based”. FN explains an interest in how artists need to express themselves through song and movement. FN believes her language of art making is “to do” with her dyslexia. For example, sense of colour and texture. FN talks of her “difficult relationship with language”. FN talks of an obsession with “normal” in the western world. She talks of this as “disabling people”. FN mentions of an “awkwardness with my experience of</p>	<p>ideas”. FN talks of how “poetry made sense to me as a teenager”. FN alludes to the misogynistic or male dominated origins of the sublime. FN states “to understand the body carries a lot of knowledge and experience and it communicates that through how it moves and through your connection to it”. FN explains she feels more interested in immanence” from her experience of being absent from her body and her “isolation experience “because of her neurodiversity. So, she feels it’s important for her “practice to be more physical”. FN talks of “self-learning life”. FN explains that she is connected to Catholicism through her family. She goes on to explain the elaborations and ritualistic worship spaces have made a “lot of sense to her in her</p>	<p>autonomous routes to their own meaning is absolutely sacred”. FN talks of “neurotypical invented world”.</p>
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		dyslexia". She goes on to say that she is interested in leaving awkwardness in things" rather than trying to perfect things.	life, and the physicality". FN says the "saints have made a lot of sense to me as a source of human knowledge". She is interested how religion can be a "passing on" of knowledge. FN again states that she is interested in that "bigger story".	
Pseudonym: LV	LV is mostly a digital artist and works a lot in advertising. LV experienced low confidence and depression due to his dyslexia. Also, difficulty at school. LV talks of difficulties in filling out forms. LV is aged 43 and has worked as an artist most of his adult life. He says if contacted ten years ago to take part in this research he would not have accepted the offer. He was not comfortable at all in talking or communicating with others. LV explains of a meeting recently "my	LV says he has "overcome a lot of things" when I ask how his work relates to his dyslexia. LV says, "I think my imagination is very strong", he means this in comparison with non-dyslexic artists he knows. He describes how he can clearly see an image in his mind beforehand. LV states developing skills in art requires lots of training. LV says he is not very outgoing person and like to stay at home a lot to practice his drawing. LV agrees that he found confidence in himself through his artwork. LV explains that many companies	LV is a Buddhist as he follows family tradition. LV describes an experience of drifting out to sea and asked buddha for help via prayer. A kayak came over to save him, but the currents were strong, but he ended up saved. He believes buddha saved his life. LV describes being followed by a headless man on occasion. He goes on to say that a few days later he begins to have anxiety disorder.	LV explains he tries to put a message of his experience's describes previously into his art. LV describes his inspiration sometimes come from a movie. In particular Rambo. He says this inspired him to believe "we can do things alone, we can success alone". LV says, "I like to draw a lot about songs and movies". LV agrees that his success and awards from his art make him feel good. LV explains of his dreams of meeting the president of China. He also says, "I just want the world to be a better place". LV says, "I want to do

	head cannot cope really with what they are talking about” he goes on “my head is jumping everywhere”. LV explains as a young person he could not learn from a book but from a television.	like his work especially in China, but they cannot afford. LV explains that his work in advertising is like “a game”. It seems what LV is trying to say is that he is happy with his success but its superficial.		something good for the people”. LV agrees with me when I say that by his success, he can inspire other artists with dyslexia.
Pseudonym: JB	JB is a 21-year-old multimedia artist as many of us are these days. At school she describes “having a very hard time reading” and “sometimes my classmates laugh at me, and I feel ashamed”. JB also describes reading in front of the class as “very hard”. She goes on to describe sometimes getting words back to front and poor spelling.	JB describes looking at the clouds and seeing shapes and “imagine things very creatively”. She describes loving painting and drawing since childhood. JB says she prefers to “focus on something I’m good at”, she sees this a consequence of her dyslexia. Many people tell JB that her work is good and now she sells her work. JB says, “now I am selling things that I make from my hands”. JB states that when she is in an exam, and she does not know what to answer she sometimes draw from her imagination. JB states that she thinks her art and dyslexia have a connection insofar as “because I see	JB says she is very much interested in “magic and such things”. JB says, “I am interested in clowns because they make the children happy “. She goes on to say how she is interested in their magic tricks and wishes to know their secrets”. She says, “I do like weird things”. For example, the mime artist is intriguing to her, the way the artists act out meaning without words. She says, “it amazes me”. When I ask why she says, “because I can understand without talking, just only on his actions”.	JB talks how “I can put my emotion in my works”. JB talks of how she will sometimes compare animated movies with real life movies, and she finds similarities in them and is interested in this relationship. I ask her why and she says, “maybe because I’m always finding a relation between the two”, by this she means reality and imagination. JB intimates a traumatic experience in her childhood and being an orphan “that is why I am always alone, because they think I’m stupid and funny”, because of that I have anxiety”. JB agrees that through her art

		things differently”. JB says that she doesn’t need to always find an image to copy and agrees that she has good visual imagination “from my head” as she says often.		she is able to overcome this anxiety. When she is making art, she says “I forget I am not alone”. She says that she feels happy when her customers buy her work and tell her how beautiful it is and how much they love it. She says she feels “fulfilled”. When painting sometimes JB described being carefree and happy like in her childhood. She repeats that making her work she feels happy and that when executing her work, she is left feeling “very fulfilled and satisfied”. JB agrees that this process is therapy for her and that she is able to forget her problems.
Pseudonym: WK	WK is a professional artist. Puppetry and stop motion film is her medium. WK began working for in the theme park industry in the area of animatronics. She also produces children’s book	WK reflects “it was my only option, it feels like” when asked how art relates to her dyslexia. WK describes making her film as a “therapeutic process”. WK discusses “we have a need to communicate, and we have	WK talks about “connected to myself” when asked this question. WK explains artmaking as “a space we can thrive, it’s a space we can move”. She says, “art allows you to show something inside of	WK states that when she is able to connect of communicate through her work to her audience that is it this then that feels like a transcendent experience, “in a bigger way”. She talks of art as a “connection tool”



	<p>illustration. WK enjoys creating work about her dyslexia. She prefers digital means of creating visual imagery. WK talks of her concern in relation to the impact on a child's self-esteem when discussing dyslexia. She also goes on to discuss how her mother was an art teacher and WK recalls how her mother would state "art is the most important subject", WK says this "holds true in my soul". She preferred art rather than "focusing on what I was bad at". WK believes her mother encouraged and valued WK creative strengths. Although WK struggled at school, she says "I did ok". WK mother was aware of her dyslexia from a young age and describes her being very 3 dimensional when making art. WK describes her</p>	<p>this thing about us that inhibits that".</p>	<p>yourself". She talks of her goal being to show how dyslexia feels". WK talks how when creating work there is two versions, the one inside her head and the one that comes out and is experienced by the view. WK states that the area of transcendence relates most to her art and artmaking. Expression is transcendent to WK, she calls is "breaking out of your body".</p>	<p>between herself and the spectator.</p>
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	perception of schooling as “winning was the goal not learning”.			
Pseudonym: RT	<p>RT is a sticker artist. RT states that he has little self-confidence. He states that he even struggles to define himself as an artist. But the art he does, people like. He says, “it’s a weird one in my head”, in other words he is baffled by this. We agree that all people struggle with confidence issues at some time. The only thing RT says he was good at school was art. RT has always been accused of being lazy. He says, “I have my own little quirks”. RT was diagnosed as dyslexic in high school. He talks of how recently he experienced a kind of breakdown. He relates this to his disorganisation and forgetfulness cause him a lot of stress and anxiety. RT talks of his difficulties in holding a normal</p>	<p>Because of the nature of sticker art, RT describes how if he makes a spelling mistake, he leaves it in the work as it’s a part of his expression. He describes many of the characters in his art wear masks, not due to Covid but his own feeling of not being able to communicate due to his dyslexia. But RT describes the mask as a front. RT describes a chat video chat room he joins for sticker artists. RT states that creating sticker art makes him feel good. He goes on to say, “I haven’t got much self-worth”. He describes how when people from the other side of the world message him and ask about his work and also compliment him, this makes him feel good. He states this is one of the things that he is “really happy and proud of”.</p>	<p>RT was raised with both Christian and catholic influences. RT states “nothing makes me feel as good as when I’m doing my work”. RT talks of sticker art like “little pixies, you never notice it until someone shows you it”. He means this in the way sticker art, just pops up at you from nowhere. Hidden at the bottom of lampposts for example. Its free art he explains. He explains that he has invented this saying, that they are like pixies. He says that little space they occupy can say a lot. Another name for the stickers is “slaps”.</p>	<p>RT talks of going through what he calls “a ritual” when setting up his shop for the day in preparation to begin drawing. RT says 100% his self-esteem is improved from his art. RT talks of how for everyone person who doesn’t like his work another will. He talks about this as a kind of equilibrium or a sense of balance.</p>

	<p>conversation. He says, “things just drop out of my head”, and explains if asked to do something, the next day he will have completely forgotten. RT talks of how upon leaving school age the school sent him off to special needs college where he was almost forced into manual labour. RT had various jobs such as head doorman and general handyman/labourer and care worker before becoming an artist. He says selling his art has forced him out of his shell because he has to communicate with buyers when they message him. He sends his stickers all over the world. He talks of how conversations are struck up during this process of selling his work, again encouraging him to become more confident. RT experienced</p>			
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	being called a retard and would be “nothing in life” the common stupefaction. He describes his time at school as “horrendous”.			
Pseudonym: KT	KT is a practising artist with a master’s degree in art. He is also involved in arts community work. KT described himself as having many comorbid difficulties combined, but he states, “it don’t define me”. KT was diagnosed aged 47, some 5 years ago. KT describes his childhood experience of schooling as “fraught”. KT describes his parents as dismissive of his learning difficulties as a child. KT states in relation to schooling “I just bimbled through”. KT says he has always had problems with coordination stating, “I was always a bit gangly”. He goes on to say, “I’m naturally disorganised and forgetful”. KT says that	KT describes his artwork as a “refuge” and “a place where I can try and get things right”. He describes his work as abstract. KT paints, draws and writes. He describes himself as working somewhere in between these three mediums. He describes his work as “performative, it’s like the act of painting”. KT states that since being diagnosed and engrossed in his art he feels a lot more relaxed and more self-accepting of himself. He means by talking to other people about his dyslexia and making work. He describes his work as a process of research between himself artmaking and his dyslexia, a kind of “working out” he says.	KT says when discussing the sublime that he doesn’t think you can make art without this in mind. He says that even if you’re not well read on the subject, it’s still there. KT describes himself as “a humanist”. He talks about “the spirit in everyone, the humanity of living”. He goes on; “it’s a non-religious celebration of life”. When I ask him what he means by “spirit”, he says “I don’t know”. KT goes on to talk about our relationship with the universe. He says that because we are made up of stardust this could be then “a conscious element of the universe recognising itself” he then says he looks at this in his work.	KT says he has all this stuff going around in his head and through his art he is trying to make sense of this. He makes reference to Casper David Friedrich and Wanderer Above the Sea in relations to this, a sense of smallness and sense of awe or terror. He says the struggle is then to somehow transfer this thinking onto a two-dimensional surface. He says as artists we are always “dealing with the other and the uncanny”. He says that being neurodiverse adds another dimension to the work. He states at one point “I’m losing myself for a minute in great swirl of thought”. KT describes art and art education as “liberating”. He says, “I find those things easy that others

	<p>because he can talk and think through things people thought he was “pulling a fast one”. So, I think by this KT means disbelief of him having a learning difficulty. KT talks of being discriminated even in the workplace due to his lack of diagnoses. Because KT was able to present himself reasonably (verbally) well he describes again his perception by peers as “odd” rather than “stupid”. KT has always been drawn to the arts. Reading was always difficult.</p>		<p>He says, “art is about mystery”.</p>	<p>find difficult”. He describes his motivation in these areas as “self-led”. He says making art and art has made him more confident and tenacious as a dyslexic person. He describes a sense of “well-being” in art for neurodiverse people. Through KT diagnoses of dyslexia, he explains when making art he intrinsically processes this in his meaning of making art. Through diagnoses KT accepts “me”, he says. Tim describes art as a good tool to analyse the sublime. KT relates dyslexia as something bigger than us and that we can understand, and he relates this to the sublime.</p>
Pseudonym: BR	<p>BR describes herself a “painter, drawer, a two-dimensional artist” although she has also experimented with ceramics. BR describes her school experience of</p>	<p>When asked this question BR says, “it’s only really recently that I’ve actually sort of started to embrace my dyslexia, to be honest with you because I had some very deep wounds”. She describes</p>	<p>BR talks of “a meditative state within working” when asked about the sublime. She goes on to say, “in the creating”. She talks about “being the moment, which you’re not</p>	<p>When I discuss with BR the shift from low self-esteem in the younger years of a dyslexic to high self-esteem through art, she says that this is however something that we need to be</p>

	<p>being accused of laziness and “left pretty much really at the back of the class”. She describes particularly her secondary schooling as “a pretty bad experience for me all round”. BR describes as a consequence of this as being “very withdrawn”. BR the states that “this is when art came into my life and became very important to me”. She describes at school as being “put in a stupid bracket”. BR was offered a place at a six-form college because she wanted to study A level art. She was offered a place, and it was here that her life significantly changed as she also discovered she was dyslexic. She describes this artists environment as “brilliant, yes it was quite a leap”. BR describes artmaking as “my words,</p>	<p>how raising her son (whom also is dyslexic) has caused her to see dyslexia in a different way “and how great it is really in him”. BR says that dyslexia isn’t something she consciously uses in her work but also says “I haven’t delved into it in an artistic way, but obviously it’s always been an underlying current within it because it is my expression”. BR recalls discrimination at work and feeling humiliated by her employer due to dyslexia. When I ask BR about feeling stigmatised, she states “because I’m in the art world I’m not facing too much of that now in my life”. When I ask about the art making process BR describes recently discovering to draw using her left hand and how this is looser and more abstracted in comparison to her usual right-handed drawing which is more detailed and controlled. BR describes when drawing</p>	<p>often in any other thing”. She talks further about this as being “totally absorbed” and states “it’s a spiritual act, whenever you’re in the moment of something”. BR states its more about “the world rather than any kind of religion” when I ask her about interest in spiritual things. BR describes art as “a personal spirituality”. In spiritual terms BR describes art as “my anchor, my go to”. She goes on to describe art and art making as “being true to myself, being me”. BR agrees this is akin to a connection “to oneself I suppose and then you’re hoping that other people connect to that”. BR talks of the magic of the earth as more significant than religiosity. She says that “people need to be in the moment and enjoy what we have”. When BR thinks about religion, she</p>	<p>continuously working on. She goes on to say that no matter how successful you might be as a dyslexic you will still have those negative feelings come up. She says, “it’s something I will always battle with”. She says being a dyslexic artist can be a brilliant way to “listen to yourself”, “be yourself”, and “express yourself”. She goes on to say that all artists are different and “you’re not going to be like anyone else, so you don’t have to be”. BR talks of how perhaps she might consider doing a series of work reflecting on her dyslexia and believes this might be cathartic. She says that making art anyway involves “working on yourself, even if you don’t realise it, you are”. She goes on to say, “you’re strengthening yourself; you’re strengthening your voice, you’re discovering</p>
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	my way of making poetry”.	she likes a reference point to work from whereas with painting, she states “I like to just see where the paint goes”. She describes using a sculptural reference for a drawing. She then says that using her left hand she will begin mark making from the reference then remove the reference away and “push my own side of it”. When painting BR describes putting the paint down first and then “pushing the paint around”. BR talks of how during life class teaching work she felt that often “people aren’t really looking” and how her different perceptibility might be attributable to her dyslexia. BR discussed “I like to see the struggle of the drawing; I like seeing how it gets there”.	says “I think we should be worshipping the planet more”.	more about yourself”. BR says further “it’s really hard to be dyslexic in the world that we live in”. Although she believes there are signs now of positives being found in dyslexia emerging. She was always told “you can’t do that because of my dyslexia, but that is not what I say to my son”. She says to her son “you can do that; you just have to work harder”. BR talks of how all these positive wonderful dyslexic groups are open on Facebook. She says, “this is great hearing about all these wonderful people being themselves”. BR says, “art gives you your unique voice, because you are different”.
Pseudonym: BM	BM main focus in art making story writing, script writing. BM describes herself as a “film	BM says, “as a kid, art class was the one place she felt confident”. She goes on “ I felt like I was free in a	BM talks of her understanding of the sublime as a “thing you can’t exactly touch or see,	BM discusses the last script she wrote and how this relates to the sublime. She wrote of a homeless woman



	<p>maker". BM is currently working for a film production company. BM states that she enjoys "making stories that kind of speak of something of the human psyche". BM was diagnosed dyslexic at a young age. She says, "it was really challenging for a really long time". She says, "the emotional effects of being dyslexic struck me the most". She goes on to say, "I was really hard on myself for a really long time". She says, "it's a struggle when you have to learn differently your entire life". She goes on "it's hard for people who don't have it to fully understand it". BM went to a private Christian school and says, "I had all the support I could have had", but she says, "I still felt like I was so dumb all the time". People would laugh at her</p>	<p>sense". She says of art "a place where I can express myself where I can't elsewhere", by this she also means the writing of stories as an art form. She describes her story writing as "creating a whole new world". She talks of her creative writing and how she prefers not to write on her own real-life experience but rather imagine worlds and characters where she sees herself in these characters. She says that she's interested in their lived experience of "not feeling good enough". She talks also "I have a different brain". She says she wishes art was taught more as an alternative or as a form of therapy. She says, "art provides a way to learn differently".</p>	<p>it's like kind of an experience, it's like an untouchable feeling". She says, "when I write I feel like I kind of feel a sense of the sublime". She goes on to say, "a greater understanding that maybe I can't put into words, but I can show it through action or scenes". She says, "dyslexia almost feels sublime, to try and describe it". She describes dyslexia as "it's a whole different way of seeing life". BM is Christian. She says she believes all religions "play a part in higher being or purpose". She talks of dissociating religion from her "studying the bible in my private time". She also talks of meditation and prayer. BM believes that she has more connection to areas of the sublime than others, "like god". She says, "I take prayer very</p>	<p>who was also on medication and was experiencing uncanny otherness, like a "phantom". She was struggling with not being good enough and this phantom was helping her through that. BM says, "I feel most at home in front of my whiteboard, thinking and daydreaming". She describes getting a better sense of something by letting the mind wander, for example to "sit there, look out of the window and think about it". She thinks this a gift dyslexic have to think so deeply. She says a lot of people (non-dyslexics) may choose not to take. It too that "higher level of, so what does it all mean". She says she her friends are confused when she talks of "higher associations". She also talks of dyslexics are good at "connecting things". She describes how as dyslexics "our brain thinks</p>
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	<p>when she read slow, for example. People also comment how lucky she was to have extra time etc. This left her feeling guilty. She says, “I didn’t really feel like I had a voice”. She says that although the teachers were aware of her dyslexia, she didn’t feel like they took it seriously. She says, “they would make me feel so dumb”, she means the teachers. She says that she is surprised that “I’m a writer, I love writing”. She states that the negativity experienced at school “bleeds into the creative experience to, the over analysing”. By this BM talks of “I have some trauma of learning with dyslexia, and that trauma caused me to be very critical of myself”. She talks further of being over critical of her work due to this. She says, “I’ve really</p>		<p>seriously, more than just asking for what you want, but asking to be guided and given strength, and sent on my purpose”. She says, “I usually get what I ask for”. She says this has helped when she thought she couldn’t do something but asked for help “that prayer was answered essentially”.</p>	<p>differently” and how this is sort of sublime. She talks extensively of being “different” due to dyslexia. BM agrees that through the creative process we may connect with a God source. She gives an example such as the written word of the bible. When we talk of this art making process She talks of “you are letting yourself be you in the purest form” or a kind of “free writing”. She connects this with letting it flow like in other art making. She talks of being “in that space when your just creating”. She talks of sort of losing yourself for hrs and then “you like, oh, I’m back”.</p>
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	<p>struggled with not feeling good enough, because I felt so stupid". She talks of how this affects her such as "I don't want to ask the question; I don't want to feel dumb". BM goes on talk about "social anxiety" like "I'm not good enough, everybody's out to get me". She talks of how the humiliation felt by dyslexics at a young age "really sticks with you". She talks of "pushing through" at school. By this she means developing good work ethics by trying much harder than the non-dyslexic, just to get by.</p>			
Pseudonym: CP	<p>CP is a musician of string instruments. He also is a keen photographer. CP describes his dyslexia as "a big pain in the ass". He says his main issues are those with memory. CP describes his experience at school as "just dreadful".</p>	<p>CP says dyslexia affects his music when referring to memory. He says for example "it takes me ages and ages and ages to learn someone else's song, to be able to cover it". He doesn't see his dyslexia as an advantage. When making music CP says</p>	<p>When discussing this subject CP relates this to how musicians sometimes do not like to reveal the meaning to a song because it might "take away" from what someone else might make or take from it. CP describes himself as "a</p>	<p>CP says when discussing the process of music making "you listen and write under different circumstances and under those different circumstances you're going to get a different result". He reflects on how this relates to the different ways you</p>

	<p>He took guitar lessons aged 10. CP was dissuaded by his teacher who at parents evening told his parents that he should pack up as he will not play an instrument in his life. CP later joined a punk rock band; he says you only needed to play 3 chords. CP recalls being bullied by teachers due to his dyslexia. CP says, “I couldn’t wait to get out of school”. CP describes trying various jobs until he found the option self-employment. CP says he has learnt to be organised by keeping a diary etc. CP was diagnosed 5 years ago at the age of 52 while studying teaching at university. CP describes mixed feelings on discovering his dyslexia. He talks of it being quite a struggle emotionally to come to terms with his disability. CP believes he</p>	<p>he begins by “writing lyrics and putting some music to it”, he goes on “and then maybe a baseline or some sort of riff”. He says this process can ebb and flow. CP talks of a music teaching process involving a kind of scaffolding. CP teaches music. The Vygotsky Cognitive Development Theory CP believes is his way of teaching. CP went on to write a song about Vygotsky. CP believes this is a useful way to teach a dyslexic.</p>	<p>total atheist”. CP talks of being “moved emotionally” by music. He describes how a song by Angelic Upstarts of a soldier lying over a bomb and how this made him cry. CP “I use songs a lot to help me through life in difficult situations”. He says he uses music as “an emotional support”. CP goes on to say, “I’ve spent my whole life angry, and I listen to a lot of angry music”. CP agrees music is therapeutic for him. He says, “I use it to calm me down really, to make me feel somebody understands”.</p>	<p>can write a song. CP says he does pick up the guitar daily. He says he loves to “kick up a racquet”. He says that due to this daily practice he knows that he can play at a gig at short notice. He says, “I just love doing it”. He talks about going out to busk again soon.</p>
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	has been discriminated due to his dyslexia when making applications to study at post graduate level. CP states he is also autistic and doesn't socialise.			
Pseudonym: DB	DB studied music at university. He then went on to work for a media agency "as a creative". DB then went on to film school. DB is a keen photographer, film maker, he draws sometimes and still occasionally composes music. DB says he always ignored, denied and didn't like to talk about his dyslexia. DB says he was angered at dyslexia being recognised a disability in the discrimination act 2010. DB describes his frustration thereby causing a reaction in him to what he equates to "gas lighting". He says, "how is	DB says his photography is his preferred medium. DB is sceptical as to what relationship art and dyslexia really have. He describes dyslexia as some "a blocker" in terms of being creative. DB says, "at school you were good at art if you could draw, that was it, and if you weren't good at drawing you weren't good at art". He describes dyslexia as a sort of hindrance to his art making. Although DB does agree to a "correlation" with his interest in the visual image and his dyslexia. DB describes a theme in his film making of "outsider men who struggle to fit into society". He relates in part to "searching for a	DB says the condition of being dyslexic "encourages" one to larger of bigger more overpowering experiences when I ask him about the sublime. DB states that "to drown out my own experiences you go and do something bigger or scarier or exciting than anything else". He says, "the power of nature completely chimes with that". DB describes of being by the Ocean in Cornwall and how the power of nature "cleanses your soul and washes away your fears". DB says his own experience and that of other with dyslexia	DB states that although his family is very religious, he doesn't have faith in such institutions. DB recounts quotes made that "art galleries are temples to the new age". He says that this is what art is a for him describing it as a "quasi-religious experience". DB says "sometimes I lose myself in the moment and sometimes its feel enormous" when describing the artmaking process and how this relates to the sublime. He relates this to quotes Sigmund Freuds "oceanic experience". He describes this as "electrifying and illuminating moment and it

	<p>your self-esteem not going to be affected”? He goes on saying “I felt I was caught in a trap.” He says at home he was told he was clever but at school “thick or lazy”. He recalls feeling “terrified of it” when he was to sit tests at school. DB states that even after his diagnoses aged 9 there was very little support. DB says, “I’ve always been quite verbal” and explains his preference to the spoken word over the written. DB says, “I am very lucky” when he goes on to describe his family background and SES but described “emotional repression”. DB believes everyone in his family is dyslexic. Although most of DB family have been diagnosed with dyslexia he complains of a lack of awareness of dyslexia within his family. DB says</p>	<p>relationship with my father that I never had”. DB says through his art he is “giving a voice to those who aren’t allowed a voice” or those who find it difficult to express themselves. People with learning difficulties for example. DB says that his preferred medium photography has “not been through the academic rigour of filmmaking and music”. DB describes his photography as “distorting the everyday” he means this in non-literal sense. He goes on “it’s about finding those little moments and twisting them so that they seem unusual and finding that strangeness and obliqueness and beauty in small events”. DB says being dyslexic has crippled his self-confidence to a “crippling and terrible degree”. He says this can be found in his photography in “the corners and edges of things”. DB describes his</p>	<p>is “waiting for that moment of clarity where suddenly everything clicks”. He describes these as “magical moments” and relatable to the sublime.</p>	<p>drowns everything else out in life”. He goes on to say, “everything else is so dull in comparison, it’s just so boring”. Here we are talking of the creative process which DB describes as “the moment after conceptualisation when everything starts to crystallise and it’s there and your just overwhelmed by all the wondrous possibilities of it”. He agrees with me how this relates to notions of “the big idea”. He goes on to describe this coming together of ideas as “seeing the light”. He describes this as “whole new way of seeing things, and emotionally in those moments I kind of lose myself”. He describes this as almost childlike and “immensely freeing”.</p>
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	that does to the lack of emotional expression within his family “being creative was a chance to allow your feelings out”. But DB does say that “having a voice was really important”.	photography as “it’s my thing, I do it for me”.		
Pseudonym: CV	CV sees herself a sculptor as this is her background although she would also describe herself as “a multimedia artist”. CV says that whatever the medium “in my mind it’s a very three-dimensional space”. CV was diagnosed “mildly dyslexic”. CV also plays music. She explains how green overlays help her with reading both text and music. CV says that green is the colour that stabilises everything. CV states “I never felt like I fitted in” when we discuss schooling. CV explains how she was a very shy child. CV clarifies that her school years “were not	CV explains that she has to be very organised when making art due to her dyslexia. She says diagrams help her when doing academic work for example, “I’ve used visual imagery to help me explain concepts in academic writing because it’s easier for me”. CV is interested in creative writing, and she equates this to her practice of sculpture inasmuch as she is free to put the words together “in a way that I want to put them together” she says. CV states “I can write a stream of consciousness” but finds academic writing rigid and structured in comparison. CV states “colour, shape and	CV describes her artwork as about “identity it’s about self, it’s about experience in the world”. CV practices yoga and meditation and she relates this to the sublime and art. She says that through her art she is trying to ask big questions such as who am I what is this world, what is this other?” She talks of stripping away constructs of the self and then describes a “duality” and “phantom self”. CV says when she thinks of the sublime it leads her to notions of eternity. CV practices Vipassana meditation and talks of her experience in “retreat	CV states that her artmaking is a transcendence. She questions what it is we are moving away from and what we are moving closer to during this transcendence. She says, “it’s a piece of a bigger picture”, I think she means this in relation to dyslexia. CV prefers the term neurodiverse in our understanding of dyslexia. CV says other people say of her that “I’m searching for truth”. She agrees and says “yes, there’s a personal quest”. She says her artmaking is “a search for truth, for a bigger truth”. She goes on to talk of “Buddhist concepts of emptiness, the Buddhist



	<p>happy memories for me". She says that her dyslexia was not recognised by her parents. CV explains how she needs extra time when doing academic work as leaving things to the last minute would create panic. CV agrees that she is somewhat aware of the stigma associated with dyslexia as she feels apprehension about disclosing the fact. CV describes herself as a "visual kinaesthetic learner".</p>	<p>form are fundamental to my daily life" when we discuss how dyslexia relates to her art making. CV says that she has always been drawn to art, but she wasn't aware those related to her dyslexia apart from the fact she was assessed as a "visual reader" earlier on. CV Mum was an artist, and this seems to have had quite an influence on CV. She says, "art making is the only place I feel at home in myself". She goes on to say, "my art practice is the thing that grounds me, connects me with the world and in a way that makes me feel sane and safe".</p>	<p>centres" of long periods of meditation. She describes this as a very much "an internal journey".</p>	<p>concept of nothingness, the intangible, the ungraspable the absolute". Of course, these words also relate to the sublime. CV states that she believes there is "an ultimate, something that is intangible. something that is ethereal". She goes on to say that the things she makes art from are "vibrational frequencies". She says in relation to Buddhist thought "nothing exists isolated on its own". CV goes on to say; "I never kind of tackle spirituality directly so it becomes an end object". She relates these thoughts to her thought process and conceptualisation in art making.</p>
Pseudonym: MC	<p>MC describes his art as "pottery being my primary focus". MC also likes to write. He says he was always interested in art. He says, "whether it's something I've been</p>	<p>MC describes "in it" his art making process as a "safe haven" or "sacred space, where all that mattered was the thing that you're working on". He goes on to describe this as a "comfort zone, a</p>	<p>When I ask MC about this although he is familiar with the sublime, he says "my mind has never really gone there". He does however talk of luminosity and being awestruck as</p>	<p>He talks of his pottery making and says, "I just want to get back to that connection which was amazing". MC describes his pottery making as "it touches a part of me that</p>

	<p>making myself of enjoying someone else's creative work". MC is aged 50 and just last year was diagnosed dyslexic. MC says that at School "dyslexia was never mentioned". MC has expressed an interest in entrepreneurial pursuits and life coaching. MC says of his school years; "I was always behind. It was a very stressful time for me". MC describes his parents as "ivy league educators". He describes this as "pressure" because he feels he could not even come close to their standards of education. He describes his experience of dyslexia as "it's something I've fought through". He talks about the "imprint" that these negative early experiences leave on you. MC recall's drawing a lot at the age of 9/10 years old. He also wrote "boxes"</p>	<p>judge free space". He says he didn't "qualify" himself as being good or bad at art "it was just something that I did". He describes being in this space where "it's just you and your medium". He goes on to say, "you're the driver".</p>	<p>part of the artmaking process "but nothing beyond that". He does also talk of reaching the half century mark of his life and starting to question purpose. He says for example "for a long time I just lacked self-awareness". He talks of "trying to find your place in the world".</p>	<p>can't be accessed doing anything else". He describes his art as "a part of me heart, like a family member". He says it's not about selling a work but "it's about the feeling I get when I'm creating". He describes the artmaking process as "a high that's like a blanket and its home and it's when you're making your art, but your art is making you" . He goes on "lost in art, lost in space". MC agrees this is a transcendence of the negative associations of early experiences of dyslexia.</p>
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	of poetry at about the same age.			
Synonym: SM	<p>SM is a poet who has published work. SM was diagnosed dyslexic at 46. He also performs at “open mic events”. Here poets recite their work onstage. SM says using Zoom and being on mic on a stage has helped boost his confidence and “develop my style”. And helped “performing my stuff”. SM talks about the concept in relation to poetry as “own your stuff. He says, “nobody else can be you and you can’t be anyone else”. SM recalls his school experience of struggling with copying from the blackboard in terms of speed. He also says, “spelling was always difficult for me”. He also says, “reading out loud was quite difficult”. He says “I had to have a more in-depth understanding”</p>	<p>SM has written poetry about his dyslexia he says. He says, “because the way my brain works, I often write from a different angle”. He says he means this as non-dyslexic but also other dyslexics. He says many poets “are either neurodiverse or are healing. Many of them use poetry as a healing process for them”. He elaborates “a lot of poets have been through trauma in their life, and they use the poetry to heal that trauma”. He says he is quite “up front” about his dyslexia and knows other poets who are also dyslexic and “are doing very well”. He describes becoming aware of dyslexia as “an almost enlightenment”.</p>	<p>On this subject SM states “what influences poets is vast”. He talks of a “ground swell” of new poetry that may appeal to the younger generations who are turned off from more classical notions of poetry. He says this new poetry “very focused around people’s lives, what’s going on in the world”. He says, “it tells stories”. He describes this as very different from the traditional “fluffy cloud poetry” but admits there are still times when he will write “fluffy cloud poetry”. He describes this as “an alternative to fake news”. He equates this “realism” or truth telling and relatability of poetry to the sublime. SM talk of “hitting rock bottom” in his life and how he started to research Yin and Yang</p>	<p>SM says in his work he doesn’t refer to God but rather creation. SM believes “science tells us more about creation than the bible did”. SM also says that poets try to avoid areas such as religion as it can offend some of their audience. SM says subjects such as “power within the earth” comes through in his poetry. He says, “the writing is only the getting down of what’s in my head”. SM talks of how sometimes he can’t seem to get much written down and says, “I will mull if over for a few days”. SM agrees that poetry for him is therapeutic and says, “it’s about being heard, you know my voice is heard”. He goes on to say, “with the best will in the world, most of us are not heard”. He talks of the importance in his work of rhyme or beat,</p>

	<p>when learning at school compared with his peers. SM talks of “my creative brain thinking four, five steps ahead” sometimes in response to an idea whereas “others have to sit there and analyse the idea”. And have it explained until they understand. He explains further “I’ve got it in my head”. He contrasts this with on occasion being in a meeting “and my mind will just go blank”. He talks of “dyslexic tendencies” whereby you have a thought but don’t want to lose it so it can appear that you are interrupting. He talks of the fun of doing what he calls “improvisation poetry” off the top of one’s head. He says with poetry “you can take it in any direction you want”. He says he writes “free verse”, what he also calls</p>		<p>philosophy. He talks of how he started to address imbalances in his life. He began looking at Buddhism, although he didn’t follow this faith, and consequently found himself asking questions such as “why am I here on this earth?”. He said it “helped me find me as a person”. He says in relation to spirituality “I tend to write more about hell than I do about angels”. He does however say that in his writing “there is a want for peace, a want for utopia”. SM talk of how “we need a monsoon of change” in the world. He says this is his spiritualism. He says, “when you are in the depths of anxiety, hell becomes more of a place that your familiar with than heaven”. SM refers to Buddhism insomuch as “life on this earth is hell,</p>	<p>rhythm and flow. He equates this to rap and says how people respond to this. SM discusses how he recently collaborated in a podcast with a painter and created a poem about the painting. SM references Confucius “what I hear I forget, what I see I remember, what I do I learn”.</p>
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	<p>“brain dump”. He says his dyslexia was unrecognised in his younger years. He says he didn’t struggle to write in a creative sense at school and says, “the ideas were just falling out of my head onto the paper”. He describes how later from popular music influences of the time he developed his poetry, from playing around with lyrics from these artists.</p>		<p>and then you reach your nirvana at death”. He talks of this suffering helping us understand our purpose before we transcend into our next life. He says again “with poetry its allowing me to be who I am”. He says, “I’m not a believer in god”. He talks further of how in Eastern religion earth created heaven, but in western religion (Christianity) heaven created earth. He talks at length of this polarity.</p>	
Pseudonym: LM	<p>LM describes her artistic practice as “strictly amateur”. Her medium is photography mostly and she is also a writer. LM describes her dyslexia as mild. LM has suffered with poor vision throughout her life, and she talks of how this was sometimes confused with her dyslexia. Without her glasses LM is considered</p>	<p>LM describes her time at college whereby her tutor taught her how to what she describes as “hone my eye” to see colour through transparent of translucent bottles and glass as still life. She talks of “translating that three-dimensional thing I’m looking at into a two-dimensional space”. She goes on to say, “when I do my art, I’m very much aware of how</p>	<p>LM says, “both my brother and I being the dyslexics in the family were both atheist”. LM talks of a “bigger” interest in spirituality insomuch as “without the existence of an all being god”. She talks of an interest in “string theory” and multi dimensions and time. She describes this as just energy when we are rid of</p>	<p>LM describes the writing part of her art making as “very much on the human experience”. She says, “people are the most important thing in this world”. She describes her art making generally to be about “the human connection”. She talks about her interest in photographing human beings and nature. She talks</p>

	<p>legally blind. LM talks of always having problems with memory. LM says that her memory was always a problem area. When asked whether she experienced stupefaction in younger years she gives a definitive yes especially when compared to her as describes “highly intelligent brother”. LM states that she also experienced difficulty with “sequencing”. She says, “although I liked reading, I never did any good at it, until I went to college and everything was discussion”. She points out that had she been diagnosed like her brother things may have been different for her. She says she was aware of “dyslexic tendencies” in high school and college. Again, LM states that this was wrongly attributed to her vision. LM describes</p>	<p>things look next to each other”. LM becomes very expressive when she explains how from her life class painting, she learnt that when painting a transparent of translucent object, you paint what you can see through it. When we discuss LM writing she talks of always having to do a “first draft”. She says, “I have a very good vocabulary, but I say the wrong word all the time”. She goes on to explain how often she will mix word up that sound similar but have very different meaning. LM goes on to describe her spelling as “horrendous”. She says, “I can’t just spell in the air” and explains that when asked by a student (LM teaches) how to spell a word she has to “see it”, meaning she has to write it down first. LM writes shorts stories and poetry, and this is also what she teaches.</p>	<p>the physical body. She goes on to describe this as “inconceivable”. She describes an interest in the paranormal when she was younger. She describes this in relation to seeing ghosts of family members. She says that if there are ghosts “they have to exist somewhere. It’s not like they just come to me”. She says, “I saw them, I interacted with them”.</p>	<p>of an interest in (in what she describes as mythological) her playwriting of Greek gods and the culture surrounding this. She says of the characters in her play “I want them to definitely learn a lesson, but that’s the whole point to writing something down”. She says, “I want my characters to go through some kind of epiphany and life changing transcendence”. She talks of some sense of justice in the role of her characters also. When I ask whether her characters are a reflection of herself, she replies “oh yeah they all are, my characters are all me”. She says she tends to base her characters on “someone who’s the outsider, wanting to belong, or someone who’s like the underdog succeeding”. She talks about poems of “rising up” in relations to racism says, “I tend to just gravitate towards that kind of</p>
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	<p>herself as an empath. LM says that she has been creative her whole life. She recounts telling her mum often as a child “I want to make something’. LM states that areas of her dyslexia have improved in time but also point out that she no longer has teachers “marking me down”, for miss spelling”. She believes being dyslexic has made her a better English teacher. She believes her students benefit from her not being a “grammar Nazi”.</p>			<p>literature”. Again, she talks of empathy.</p>
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## Appendix M: Exemplary Quotes from Workshop Participants

Participants	Workshop task 1.1 – 1.4 (discussion)	Workshop task 1.5 – 1.7 (discussion)	Workshop task 1.8 – 2.0 (discussion)	Closing (discussion)
<b>Group 1</b>				
<b>FN</b>	FN describes how when addressing the task to imagine drawing your eye she understood this to mean “imagine the process of eye drawing”. So, FN drew herself and a mirror looking at her eye. FN describes looking at her eye in life and explains “I find myself wanting to just stare at the colours and the eye and not draw it”. FN describes “zooming in” and relates to CBNs “weird feeling” when looking at the eye in life.	FN describes remembering only having left side of the eye and being frustrated as thinking the drawing was “all about colour, and I didn’t have any colour”, so she wrote down “colour” in the cornea area, as if to compensate I assume. FN says of her second drawing that she didn’t like the way she wasn’t able to make the pupil dark enough and states “because you cant make pupil”.	People had different ideas about what the glass half full of water was for. FN thought it was to drink from to stay hydrated. FN made various drawings of her eye and the glass and water, she said “I gave up trying to make my brain do what it was told to do”. She describes here drawings as a “collection of thoughts”.	FN describes her performance art as “arranging physical objects”. She says “I don’t have an imagined picture”. By this she says, “I don’t have a mind’s eye of what I want to achieve”. In relation her watercolour painting she goes on to say “I have a sense of how the image should be”. She goes on “I don’t have a concept internally that I’m trying to execute”. By this she means she will make a mark then analyse the mark and make another from the external mark making. FN goes on to say “I am interested in how

				language and image connect” when describing my instructions of the said task and her interpretation of that. FN talks of how its “okay to weird but also quite dangerous”.
<b>CBN</b>	describes his eye as “moving in the inside, pulsating”. CBN also talks of seeing more detail in drawing from life as opposed to imagination or mind’s eye. CBN describes a “weird feeling” when drawing his eye from life. He says “it draws you in, inside the eye, and you don’t know what’s in it”.	CBN describes using his imagination as “viewing from the inside”. He describes how when in the task I asked the participants to “zoom in” on the cornea of the eye, his interpretation of that was to imagine being literally inside the eye. So, viewing the cornea from the inside. CBN draws wiring to depict what he describes as “processing” what the eye is seeing. When CBN talks of his second drawing he describes how focusing in on the pupil or “black hole” gives him a “weird feeling”, and how that feeling “draws you in”.	CBN created stylised spiral swirls to represent water. He says he doesn’t know how to draw the ripple of the water. I point out that I recall Leonardo Da Vinci depict water in the same stylised manner and I have also depicted water myself in this manner. CBN describes drawing the water from down to up and exclaims “that’s how I see it”.	CBN describes what you see as regular, but “when I imagine things it becomes sees in a more interesting and unique” way. He talks of being concerned of being “called out as weird, because I see things in a different way”. He talks of seeing things around that are not actually moving but to him appear to move. He says because of this he tends to “focus on that one thing and I can’t multitask. So he says, “will I interpret what I imagine or what I saw”. Again, he talks of this struggle within him of being seen as “weird”. CBN talks of “barriers and trauma” associated with dyslexia but also talks of his strengths in

				the way he perceives the world differently and he conveys this as adventagious.
<b>KT</b>	KT describes his “imagination eye” and “looking at it from the inside out”. He goes on to describes the process of drawing from the mind’s eye as “from inside, looser” and feels “freer” when drawing this way. Looking again at KT’s 2 <sup>nd</sup> drawing he agrees looks more detailed in comparison the mind’s eye drawing. Detail being more attributable to left brain. KT talks of drawing from life as “more complex”.	KT used blue in his drawing as he describes himself as “quite a literalist”. He calls this choice of colour an “imagined blue “and describes colour as “my default”. When KT discusses his cornea drawing from life he explains, “there is “more texture in the actual thing than in my imagination”. KT says that the actual transferring of a 3-dimensional object to a two-dimensional surface which he says he finds “intriguing”. KT states that “you can never get the black that you need”, when we discuss drawing the pupil.	KT’s drawing reveals a swirling vortex of water with a blue eye in the centre. He explains he swirled the water by moving the glass clockwise it appears from his gesturing. He explains how the blue hue would also move to other areas of the eye by the turbulence created.	KT says that he thinks he draws using his mind’s eye anyway. Looking at KT’s work this is evidenced. KT describes his work as “the experience of living and drawing”. KT goes on to say that he thinks his practice looks like “my mind’s eye”.
<b>JB</b>	JB describes drawing from her imagination or mind’s eye as “blurry and unclear”. JB feels that her drawing from life is “so much better” and says “the details are correct and perfect”.	JB I noticed always discussed both drawings instead of them in sequence (the imagined and the real life). JB talks of depicting red lines in her cornea drawing and calls them “the nerves of the eye”.	JB’s drawing depicts her whole eye surrounded by waves of turbulent water in a cup. I noticed JB’s first drawing was close up of her cornea area on her phone, again with the turbulent waves representing water	JB talks of “barriers when understanding instructions”, she says she “understands it differently” and this is why she is “doing it wrong”. I think she means in relations to her learning difference. JB says “sometimes I feel

			and again inside the cup. So she sort of drew a close up or zeroed in followed by a sort of reversal, zeroed out view of her eye. She describes depicting the zeroed-out eye due to having more time.	weird about myself” but says she finds doing art a means to “express her emotions and herself”
<b>ME</b>	I drew the first eye from my imagination in reverse to the eye I drew from the photograph that is indicative or reversal.	I drew a circle within a circle and state “I was just thinking of circles really”. In the second drawing I explain how by drawing from the photo I was able to discern “more light refracted on the surface”. I also describe this as “light and dark in two coloured rings”.	I drew this image by simple imagining the water, the eye, the morphing. I state that I found this the most enjoyable task.	I think drawing from life is a more prescribed linear way of being creative. Its more restrained, rigid. You must conform to what you’re looking at. It’s like you have to follow a set of rules, whereas from imagination its freer and anything becomes possible.
<b>Group 2</b>				
<b>DB</b>	DB talks of a struggle within himself of a dichotomy of “rigidity and chaotic”. He relates this to his drawing and a somewhat chaotic nature and then rigidity in the lines made by the pencil. He also talks of “layers of personality” in his drawing in relation to this polarity. He then talks about	DBs drawing reveals an interesting spiral depiction with a stick figure in the centre. DB also makes reference to “the eyes being the window to the soul”. He refers to the spiral as “moving through layers to reveal the person”. He describes on his normal drawing process he would draw about 1500 of these types of drawing until he	DB describes this task as “artistic gladiators” saying “drawers, are you ready?” DB then goes on to talk of his drawing as in movement.	DB again describes “feeling quite trapped in giving a literal presentation of it”. He also describes drawing his eye from imagination he was able to explore his sense of identity. Whereas when depicting his eye from the photograph he describes that he “couldn’t really be me, successfully”. DB describes

	<p>“going further in” in depicting the rings of the eye. DB calls the other participants “proper artists” and seems to feel somewhat insecure of his drawing ability’s. Although he does draw but states this is only with a pen. He then goes on to describe his drawing to possess an “ugliness that interests me”. He says he sees his drawing of his eye as “a representation of me”. DB describes when drawing a phot he becomes much more “caught up in the idea of trying to be good”. He says, “that’s more about representing societal expectations of what things should look like”. He says “I felt more able to discuss something that wasn’t there physically anyway”, when discussing the drawing from imagination. He draws scribbles of what he describes as “all kinds of bollocks”. When he</p>	<p>produces what he describes as “one slightly less shit’ or until something catches his eye. DB says he would never normally draw from a photograph as he feels he lacks “the language to be representational”. He states that what interested him in the photo was the pixelation.</p>		<p>feeling “really vulnerable” doing the drawing tasks. He talks of a feeling of having to do something better than everyone else. He talks of not having enough time. DB describes an urge of wanting to “run off to a corner and be on my own” whereby in time he would have found a solution to what he calls “draft” meaning task. DB states that he expresses things differently and doesn’t think her perceives differently. DB cites Gerhard Richter when describing how he knows when a painting is finished to which the artist reply’s; “its feels right”. DB is making a very important point here and one quite pertinent to my own art making at present and pertains to a current painig I’m working on. He describes how when it doesn’t feel quite right, you leave it, you work on it</p>
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	describes his artmaking process, he talks of how he will “draw and draw and draw with no great purpose” and then if something interesting happens he will then develop that more using his computer.			again and one day you look at it and it feels right. He talks of “doing it leaving it, doing it leaving it, going back and forth”.
<b>LV</b>	LV drew his eye from three variable perspectives. Vince is very skilled draftsman and claims he did not give it much thought. This differs very much from the other two participants. LV repeatedly seems concerned that he has misunderstood the task of “draft” as he calls it. So it can be surmised here that he somewhat overcompensates by executing a series of very detailed drawings in only three minutes.	LV begins by describing his drawing from imagination and how this is a three-dimensional representation. He then goes on to describe a riving flowing from inside the eye. I notice LV is less inclined to ask questions but seems to be very sharp in perceptually picking things up and in some cases where others feel the need to ask questions LV has already figured it out.	LV talks of seeing himself in another dimension when depicting this image and describes this as “alive”. He states that everything is in “3D”	LV describes not really understanding what the class is about. He states he was very excited to see how other artists carried out the exercises. LV expressed in this discussion how he has trouble understanding what the other participants were talking about. As I have written. I thought this was perhaps due to cultural or language barrier but the more I listen to LV the more I recognise this in myself. LV explicitly states that. He says, “my mind will fly everywhere”.
<b>NM</b>	NM talks of his eye and how it relates to the universe referring to “the eye of god”. Adding further	NM describes the drawing from imagination as more “visionary” and the the drawing from the photo as more “focused”. NM	NM depicts his eyeball quite literally in the water. He describes wishing to use his artistic abilities to create	NM describes his artmaking as a visual language. NM expresses in deep interest in the sublime and describes it

	that the centre of the eye is” like a galaxy”. He says further and alludes to the eye being the window of the soul “the bigger picture”. Mark makes a point of how taken he is by DBs drawing, interpretation of the task and analyses of the making process differs from his own. Nm describes drawing from the photo image to be much more “disciplined” and “structured, focused” whereas the drawing from imagination to be more “fluid, freer”.	states that in those 30 seconds of mind wandering he has “so much going on in my mind” with “loads of images going through your head”.	some kind of physical structure.	as “beauty and terror, side by side”. Again he states, “waiting for that moment and it just feels good”.
<b>ME</b>	I again point out that my two drawings are reversed (unconsciously) from left to right as per previous workshop.	From my drawings we talk of similarities with NMs and also the fact that the photographic representation is oval in shape due to the angle of the photograph.	DB describes my depiction as like a “treasure island” depiction of an “Island”, bit like a play of words here as can read as eye land or land of the eye.	In response to NMs comments in the general discussion of the sublime being akin to “beauty and terror, side by side” I describe this as similar to dyslexia.
<b>Group 3</b>				
<b>BR</b>	BR describes three imaginary eyes and states, “obviously I’m from another planet” and “I’m so weird I’m so sorry”. Her	BR talks of a “craziness” when describing her drawing from imagination. She also describes “movement” and “a lot going on”. When describing her 2 <sup>nd</sup>	BR describes her drawing as a “watery eye”. She talks of “seeing through a veil of water” and there being	BR talks of her preference for home schooling her own children. BR recounts being told by her headmistress at school, that “she didn’t



	drawings reveal different angles of perception. She describes herself as “an alien”.	drawing from the photo she talks of “mapping, mapped out” process. She says “ I like the craziness” when describing her drawings.	“something quite appealing about that”.	believe in it” and that they were “just the lazy lot”.
<b>ZS</b>	Sam describes his drawing as “bloody awful isn’t it”. Sam then talks of Picassos piercing eyes. Sam talks of “a void” when describing his drawings. He talks of how this relates to his tiredness at the moment and the darkness attributable to this.	ZS describes his first drawing from imagination as “more interesting”. He describes his iris depiction as “floral”. When describing his drawing from reference from the photo which looks quite dark, and he describes as a “sharks’ eye”. ZS talks of “counter-intuitiveness”, a kind of reversal insofar as his depictions represent the iris as dark with light shown on the surface of the pupil, whereas in reality the reverse is true. He explains this is due to copying from a somewhat darkened photo which he believes he copied true to the image. He states that his image from the imagination is similar to RBs as a circular “pattern” of sorts. He goes on to describe this pattern from imagination as to “stimulate that visual conversation”.	ZS talks of how he was interested in the pattern in the glass and “how to incorporate that into the eye” he says, “like a vortex”. ZS talks of “doing a lot of mind mapping”. ZS talks about a sort of “movement” in his concept drawings without a frame and “magnetically pose” of drawings. He means this in relation to his own practice as an artist.	ZS talks of dyslexic’s artists being “pioneering in our fields”. ZS attended a specialist dyslexic school. He describes conventional schooling as a “potential minefield” for dyslexics. ZS states that he believes “my dyslexia has enhanced everything I do”. He talks of being able to make these “connections” due to his “neurology”. He says, “I like to be in the grey”, rather than “black and white”. ZS says “every single dyslexic has to be nurtured as an individual”. ZS talks of how at school they often forget when teaching English that’s a “creative subject”. ZS echoes the word used by SM “its stifling”. ZS talks of the importance to “have that

				accessibility to the right type of tutor”.
<b>SM</b>	<p>SM states that to allow a dyslexic a non-prescriptive approach as huge benefit. SM describes his two drawings as “both terrible”. He says he felt free to draw from his imagination rather than the prescriptive from life or photo. He describes the reality of drawing my eye as something very different”. SM talk of how a painter friend of his asks different poets to interpret her work through the written or spoken word.</p>	<p>SM talks of how he focused much more on the drawing from the photograph. He adds there was much more attention to shading of the drawing from life. He talks of “homing in on details” in this drawing from the photo. SM makes the point that in the referential drawing from the photo small details can be identified, he states “small details dyslexics will often point out that others don’t see”.</p>	<p>SM was the only participant who followed through with the task and placed his glass onto of the phone and talks of “creating a vortex within the glass”. His ink ran out, so he wasn’t able to complete the task. He says that although the turbulence distorted the eye it was still recognisable as an eye. SM talks of “mind dumping”.</p>	<p>SM talks of the dyslexic often being “way ahead” of understanding a concept. He expounds further describing a kind of “stifling” in waiting for others to catch up. He speaks of due to the aforementioned factor that we as dyslexics having to “explain ourselves” to those who have not yet grasped the concept. He talks metaphorically of “take someone somewhere but you couldn’t tell them how to get there”. SM says “got to let them to be free” when discussing the dyslexic. He means this in reference of the time he needed as a child at school. He talks about “doing it on my terms” and of how he could write extensively compared to his peers at schools. He says, “that’s why I can do poetry, I can just let my mind go”.</p>

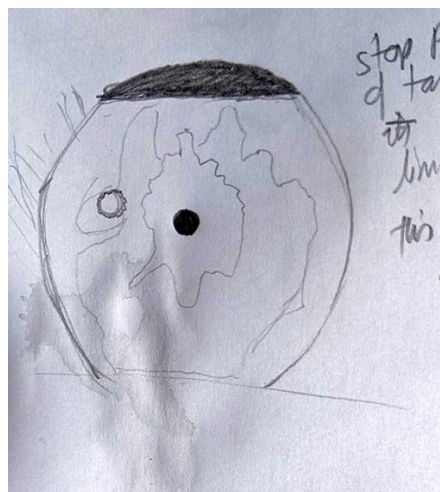
ME	My eyes look very similar.	When I show both my drawings, I point out that the drawing from the photo oddly seems somewhat “warped” in comparison to the almost perfectly circular drawing from imaginations.	ZS states that he thought I “must have had a lot of time in these thoughts” as he sees a “sophistication” in the drawing.	I explain that from the dyslexics I have talked to and met along the way, many of similar age group talk of dyslexia not being recognised or acknowledged in their schooling years.
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## Appendix N: Workshop Participants' Additional Drawings

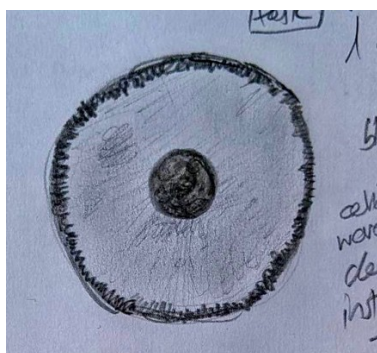
### Workshop 1.



Participant FN drawing.



Participant FN drawing.



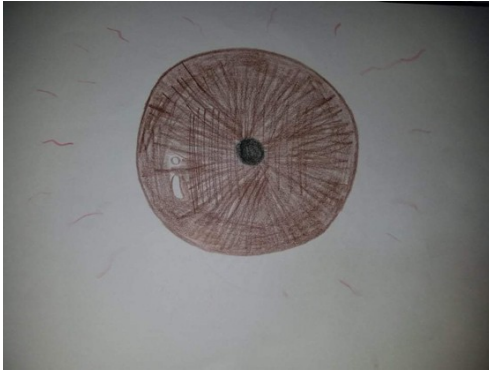
Participant FN drawing



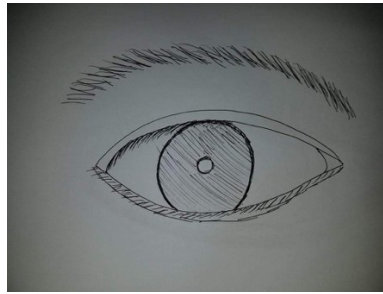
Participant JB drawing



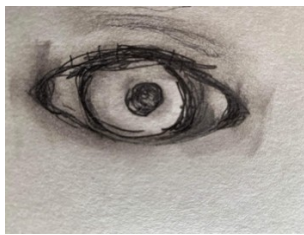
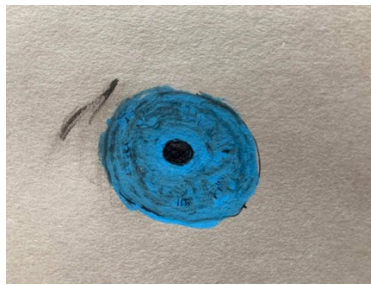
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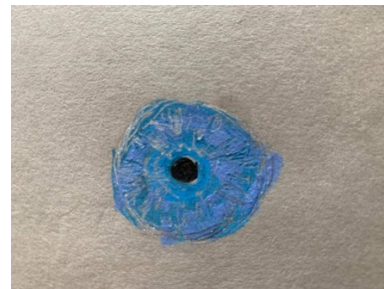
Participant JB drawing



Participant JB drawing

Participant KT  
drawing

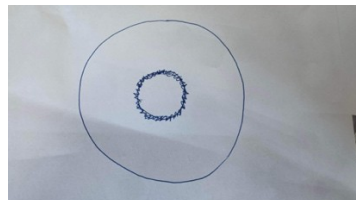
Participant KT drawing



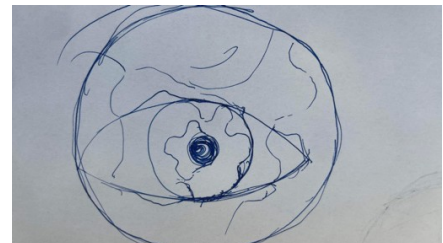
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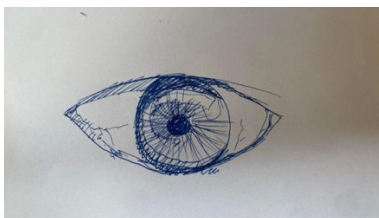
Participant KT drawing



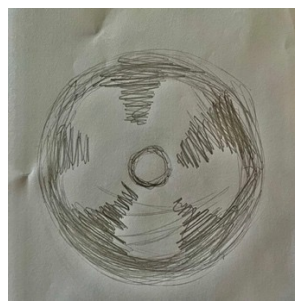
Participant CBN drawing



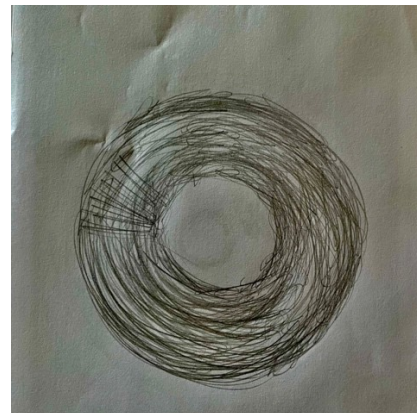
Participant CBN drawing



Participant CBN drawing



My own drawing

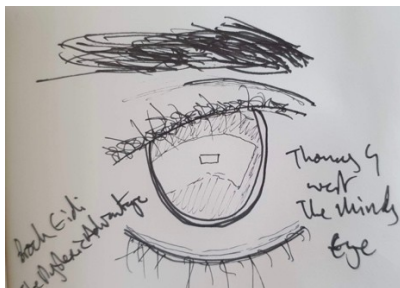


My own drawing

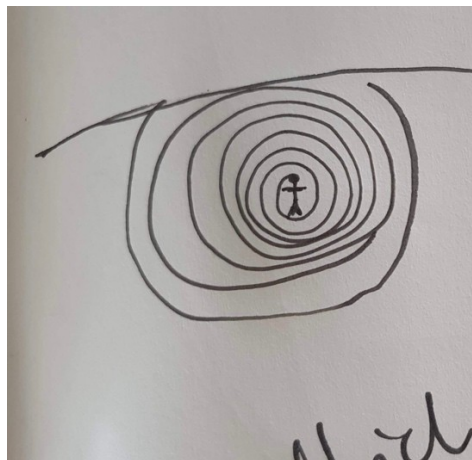


My own photo

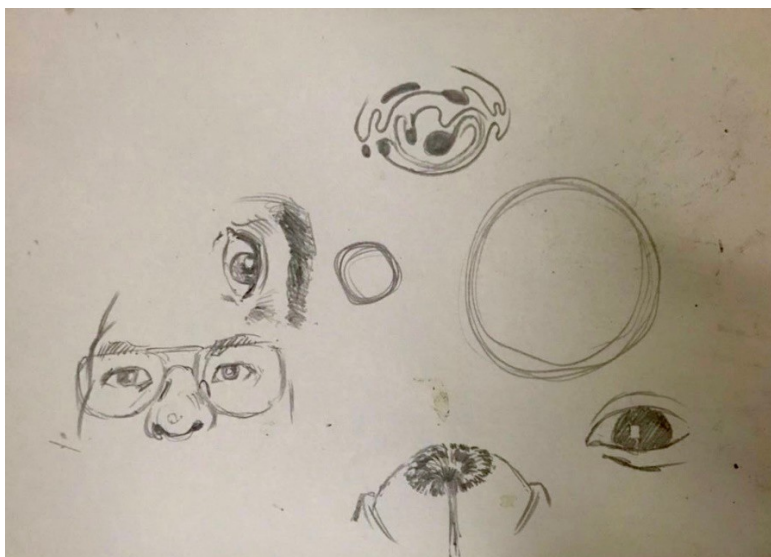
## Workshop 2.



Participant DB drawing

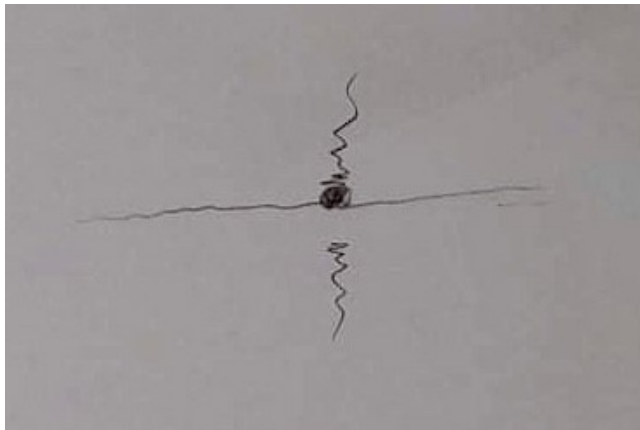


Participant DB drawing

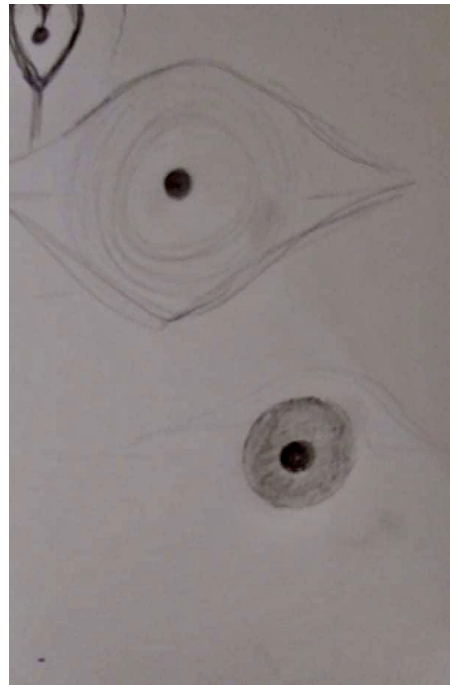


Participant LV Drawings

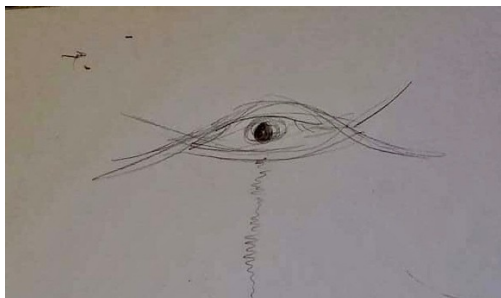




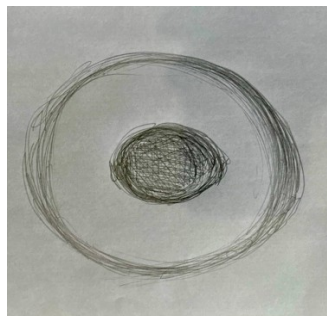
Participant NM drawing



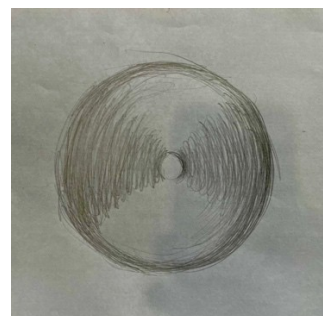
Participant NM drawings



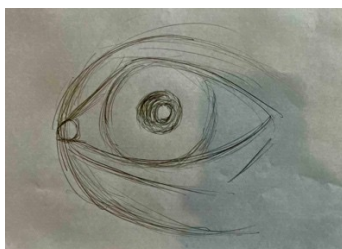
Participant NM drawing



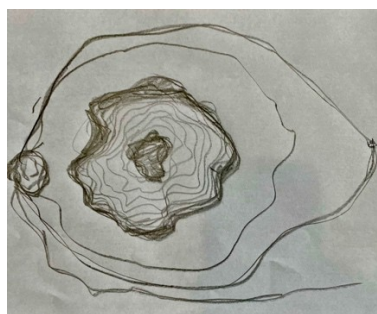
My own drawing



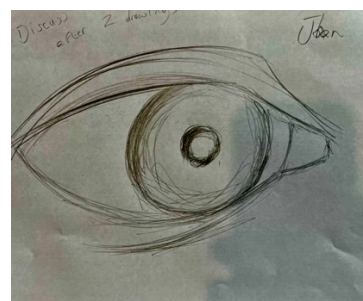
My own drawing



My own drawing



My own drawing



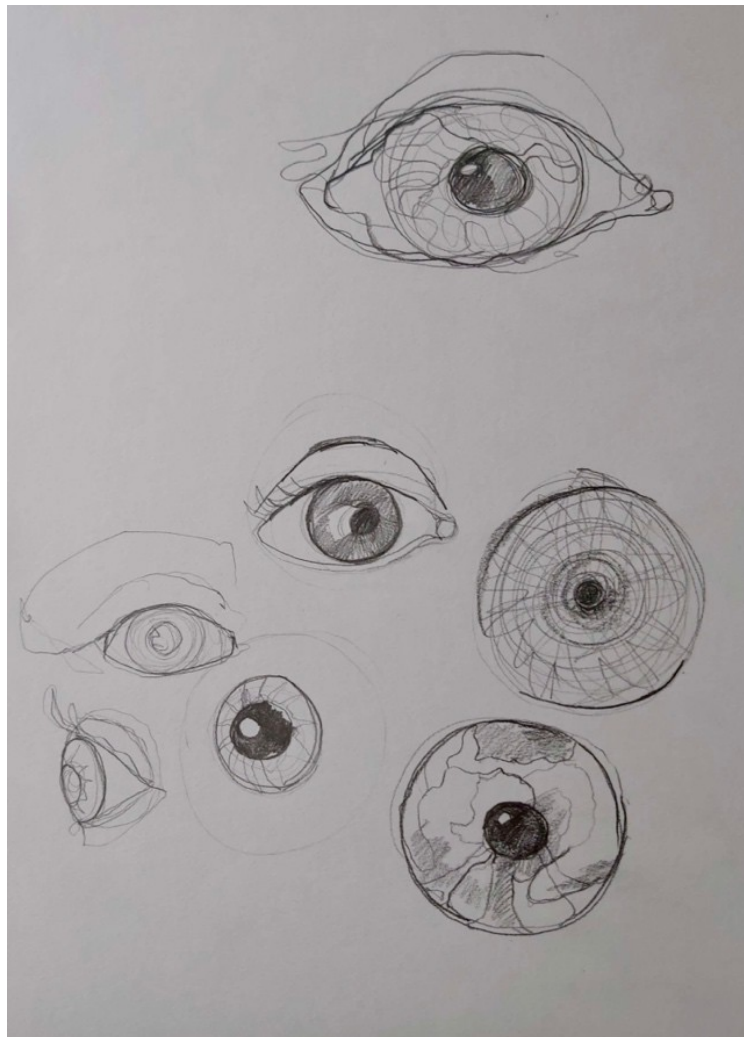
My own drawing





My own photo

### Workshop 3.



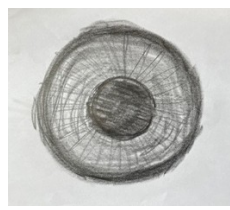
Participant BR drawings



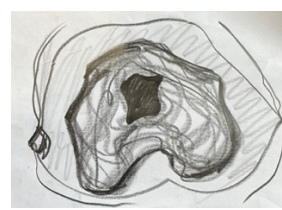
My own photo



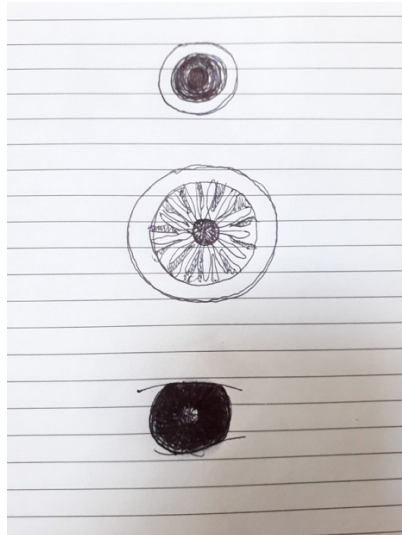
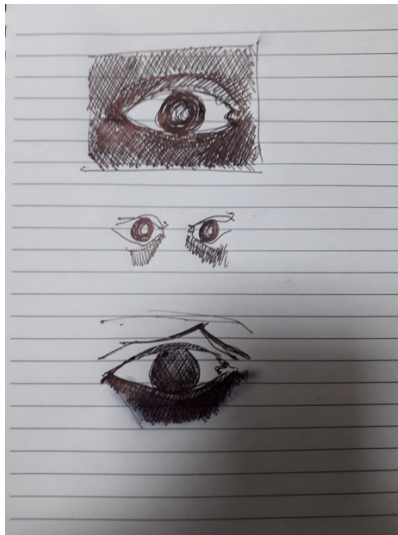
My own photo



My own drawing



My own drawing



Participant ZS Drawings

**Due to ethical considerations and confidentiality concerns, actual photographs of participants' eyes are not included.**

## Appendix O: Exemplary Quotes from Expert Interviews

Please give me a brief overview of your perception of dyslexia.	How do you think dyslexia can facilitate the creative process of making art?	Please suggest some approaches to be used when working with people who have dyslexia. Specifically, what are your suggested approaches in facilitating a workshop or interviews with people with dyslexia?	Based on your experience of working with people with dyslexia, what do you notice is their common struggle, issues or concerns?	How do you think those with dyslexia can find transcendence of this condition through art? OR: What is your message to those with dyslexia on how they can transcend their condition?
<b>Ursula (expert)</b>				
Ursula and I first met when she was working as dyslexia expert at University of East London. Ursula talks of troughs and peaks in dyslexia assessment. She says that the dyslexic experience is quite individual. She now works at University of Essex and holds two masters. Ursula is also a coaching psychologist. Ursula talks of “researched the coexistent of mental health challenges that can	Ursula explains that her first work was in interior design after art school because she says, “I never wanted to do anything where I had to read or write”. Ursula talks of her own 3-dimensional visuospatial awareness especially in relation to interior design. Ursula believes that the structuring of the brain is what influences the creative way of thinking often attributable to dyslexia. Ursula says that being creative is a way of	Ursula suggests finding what works for me when I ask her this question. She believes that dyslexics can be very good at talking and think she means this in terms of an interview situation. Ursula states “people with dyslexia are natural storytellers”. Ursula suggests to “key in” on the participants narratives, their stories.	She talks of the “impact on confidence due to experiences from a young age”. “Experiences from a young age including university”. “Lack of awareness of strengths and self-efficacy”. Ursula talks of seeing a lot of the imposter syndrome. She suggests to “look at your own strengths and do”. So, recognising strengths. She talks of the “challenges of dyslexia in the wider field”, but she says, “we will all keep fighting until they realise how brilliant	Ursula talks of the “allusiveness of dyslexia”. Ursula talks of herself being creative and how “my brain and me go to a different place”. Ursula talks of “a different cognitive experience” when creating art and “its elating, you sort of lift up”. Ursula also calls art making “meditative”.

<p>come with specific learning difficulties". Ursula suggests that dyslexic people are "performing and thinking in a more holistic manner". She says, "what works for dyslexics works for everybody". Ursula talks of "the wonders of dyslexia". She says people are now more open to talk about SpLD and mental health issues. Ursula goes on to discuss how to being identified as dyslexic seems to suggest you need help to fix something that's broken etc. rather celebrate something wonderful. Ursula equates dyslexia to the annoying child that's always going "but why". Ursula is herself dyslexic and dyspraxic. Ursula states that "our cognitive processing can</p>	<p>expression without having to do the cognitive stuff of turning thoughts into written word or "double processing". Ursula states that creativity is an essence of our cognitive processing". Ursula believes the term compensatory often used in research of dyslexia as negative "waddle".</p>		<p>we all are". Ursula believes we are "stuck with the medical model", rather looking further. But she is also critical of the social model insofar as it being condescending as meaning to change things to compensate for you. She states, "it's like being a minority group who are misunderstood and misrepresented".</p>	
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be as individual as our appearance”.				
<b>Dr Neil Alexander Passe</b>				
Neil is Doctor of Psychology and dyslexic himself. Neil formally studied design at art college. He now specialises in the trauma associated from early school experience. He talks of how “that can send many to a very dark place”. Neil recounts “I went into a very dark place at around 7 or 8”. He has published several articles and authored several books. He writes of “post traumatic growth”. He talks of his interest in rather than trying to fix the dyslexic better to help them understand their difference. Neil states, “I hated school” and talk of a preference of reading	Neil talks of a lack of research that suggests that dyslexics are innately dyslexic. He believes this propensity is because “it allows them to speak without words”. He calls dyslexics as “divergent in their thinking”. He talks of this open-minded approach of the dyslexic as opposed to the sequential learner. Neil says “I loved art at school, it was my way out. It gave me that sense of self-worth”. He talks of art as “giving a way of speaking without words”. Neil says of dyslexics “we want to say something, and we can be driven by the trauma, and art is a great way of showing that”.	Neil talks of more narrative approach or talking based research when working with dyslexics. He advises “if you are judging them purely on their words used you will get a very skewed result”. He advises allowing them to doodle for example while talking and “you will find different things coming up”. So, he suggests giving participants a piece of paper and pencil and asking them to doodle during a conversation. Neil talks of the sublime he relates to “mental health, madness and the sublime can draw you into some dark places”. He says “creativity, the sublime and mental health is a deep place”.	Neil talks of how dyslexics “struggle with fitting in” and “forced to read a lot in school”. He goes on to say, “they also struggle with their self-worth”. Neil suggests for dyslexics to focus on “working with your strengths” rather than against one’s strengths as is apparently quite common especially with younger people. He suggests exploring “what things do you enjoy doing in life”. And then to use this “to build a career from it”. When we discuss the labelling of dyslexia Neil believes “it can bring relief”. He also believes that the label can work adversely inasmuch as to give the dyslexic a reason to stop trying “I can’t do	Neil talks of how art and art making can be a way of talking about and processing your past trauma. He talks of also finding balance and meaning through art. So, he relates this to a form of therapy. He clarifies “the creative process, is a process”. He states that “if you stop trying, it’s a failure”. Neil states “perfectionism is a means of control”. Neil states “your self-esteem it comes from your work being seen by others and for them to give value to it”. By other people finding value in what you enjoy doing provides one with “self-belief that you are doing something right, and that you work is connect, because it is about

<p>from a visual image. He says now however “I found a creative process through writing, and that’s my main creative means”. Neil talks of getting his PhD in part to “prove I was worthy”. Neil describes his school experience as “I felt thick” he goes on “I was the odd one out”. He states, “that reflects on my research”. He says that dyslexic people often “feel that they don’t fit into their family” for example. Neil talks of being a parent and how revisiting the school and seeing the small chairs or the smell of the cleaning detergent can be trigger of past trauma.</p>			<p>this because I am dyslexic”. So, it could be a reason to “stop trying”. He talks about “self-narrative, what story you will tell yourself”. He talks of the dyslexic who is successful and attributes this to their dyslexia and the unsuccessful or unhappy dyslexic who may relate this to the weight of dyslexia holding them back. He reiterates “you work towards your strengths”. By this he refers to Richard Branson and how his success has come about by focusing on his strengths and delegating the areas of business he struggles with. He talks of trying different things and “giving value to the things you like doing in life”.</p>	<p>connection”. Neil believes “you don’t need to sell the art you just need to be supported that you’re making some form of connection”. Neil talks of the importance of “the journey” as an artist rather than the commercial perspective in relation to sales or appreciation from viewers. He says, “you do need support along that journey”. To reiterate this connection, he talks about how he relates this to “talking to the viewer, without using words”. He says, “I think it’s quite hard to put into words what art can do”. He describes the aforementioned connection as “quite magical”. He says art “moves you in another direction and it allows your differences to be heightened”. He goes on “it allows you to shine”. He states, “if more dyslexics were creative visually, they</p>
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				would gain far more self-worth". He also states, "they would be more at peace with themselves rather than struggling to use the written word".
<b>Mostapha Alfour</b>				
Mostapha describes his expertise as "I am a specialised teacher in assessing and teaching students with specific learning differences". Mostapha has various master's degrees in the area of psychology and is currently undertaking a Doctorate in Psychology. Mostapha describes dyslexia as a "continuum" and he seems to describe a more holistic approach to accommodate co-morbid or coexistent factors commonly found. He talks of "focusing on the strengths". He talks of the coexistence of mental	Mostapha states that "creativity is one way of being intelligent". He says creativity and dyslexia "go really well together". He talks of anxiety and stress associated with dyslexia and how creativity can help express this. He goes on to say, "human beings, they have different colours". Mostapha again talks of "coping strategies" as strengths. He talks of dyslexic being able to "produce something" that another person may not. He uses the word "gift". He says of art as "therapeutic". He says "they become in their own world, endorsed"	Mostapha advises some preparation beforehand when working with a dyslexic. He says, "generally people, they like to know what to expect". He advises to avoid "surprises" as this can "put pressure on that person". He advises to make things "clear" and structured", when interviewing dyslexics. He talks of accommodating such things as "visual stress". He talks of finishing the interview "in a way that makes the person feel at ease". He says of dyslexics "they need this empathy and compassion" and "respect to their subjective experience". He goes on "show them that you are accepting them as	When I asked Mostapha this question his response was: "organisation, time management, structuring, planning , they need help with this". He goes on to say, "they need coping strategies". He says further that often "they know their subject, but they need structure, they need to break things down". He describes "words as their enemy". He talks of how all dyslexics are different and mentions the benefit of mind maps. He explains to use more visual means of communicating information helps. Mostapha states that he	He states, "spirituality is in a way a type of therapy". He describes dyslexic person is empowered when they find creativity useful. He describes improved self-worth and it as "a healing process" when making art. He talks of stupefaction, anxiety and depression amongst other things as "buried down in their subconscious". He means this as a kind of repression. He says of the creative process can help the dyslexic to "shine". He describes this feeling of finding something that they are good at such as art as "seeing the light". He sees that this is his own personal



<p>health challenges often found with dyslexia. He talks of SpLD “as an area for strengths and development”. Mostapha says “a dyslexia friendly way of doing things is good for everyone”. He believes “it’s better not to focus on labelling”. He goes on to say, “stigmatisation it’s always been associated with labelling”. Mostapha talks of his belief in using a multi-sensory approach when teaching SpLD students. Mostapha talks of assessing “cognitive processing” when forming a profile of SpLD student. Mostapha talks of compensatory technics used by dyslexics such as “chunking”, breaking things down into more manageable chunks. Mostapha seems reluctant</p>	<p>when in the creative process.</p>	<p>they are”. He says that if this is not done then they will not feel comfortable to express themselves. He suggests start with an introduction, maybe a joke. He talks of having regular breaks and “fifteen minutes between tasks”. Mostapha talks of how in his field of Psychology (social sciences) he will start with 1. Group discussion, 2. One to one interview, 3. Interview for research skills, 4. Written task. But he talks of how in the humanities it may be different. He talks on “not disadvantaging other people” when posing research questions.</p>	<p>himself a SpLD and a “dyslexic profile” although he seems somewhat uncomfortable to commit fully to addressing himself as formally dyslexic. He describes his own benefit of using assistive technology and colour coding. He says that this is of great benefit in his profession as he has empathy and compassion due to his own SpLD. He describes “traumatic experiences from school”.</p>	<p>“lived experience”. He says this can only be understood qualitatively. He talks of acceptance and this then enabling the dyslexic to “excel”. He goes on to talk of empowerment and self-empowerment. Mostapha talks of how by not being “kind to themselves” or “self-compassionate” thereby increasing stress and anxiety. But he states how having art can sort of save one from this.</p>
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to define dyslexia in his own words but he goes on to say, “I don’t believe in one label”. He goes on to say that he believes in a more “humanistic approach”. He talks of how the dyslexic “they need someone to facilitate their journey to discover their inner healer and inner strengths”. He talks of “the superhuman” or “superhuman strengths”. He goes on further to talk of the importance of “intervention” to unlock this potential.				
<b>Paul Guyver</b>				
Paul has a masters in the study of adult dyslexia. He also worked for a number of years as “dyslexia diagnostician”. He states, “art is something I’m incredibly passionate about”. As he is also an artist. He calls	Paul agrees with my posing of the question that “some” people with dyslexia have an inclination to creativity. He suggests however that it may be a compensatory pursuit. He describes art as “a medium for	He talks a “bespoke, approach” he relates to the DDS of the London Metropolitan University. He says, “we try and help people develop their own independent strategies, because everybody has a slightly different way of	Paul states in one word “time” in response to this question. He goes further to say “efficiency and effectiveness” as other factors to consider. He goes on to talk about problem areas common with dyslexia such as	Paul response to this question by stating “I don’t like to think that people are defined by dyslexia if they have dyslexia”. He says he prefers to see people as “all different and individual”. He says that although art or skills in art making “brings

<p>his art “arts-based photography”. Paul is not however dyslexic. Paul describes reading and writing as “a skill”. He describes reading as “turning shape into sound”. And writing “the process of turning sound into a code, its coding and decoding”. He talks of taking into consideration “the emotional impact of the individual”.</p>	<p>expression”. And states that this is useful for the dyslexic who may struggle with words as a means to communicate. He goes on to say that if he was inclined to struggle with reading and writing that he can perceive art to be “a great release”. Paul says that although he was screened previously as ‘not’ dyslexic he does struggle with spelling. Paul believes that “if you have that desire to express yourself in some way” then there would be a leaning towards art and art making. He goes on to talk about sense of “reward” form the conceptualising to the actualisation of an idea whereby one is rewarded by this outcome or sense of achievement. He describes this as a “cathartic” experience and calls it “a positive thing” and a “de-stressor”.</p>	<p>working”. He says he likes to “separate skill and idea, or creativity”. By this he means ‘the idea is the most important thing’. He believes its best to get this idea down before its forgotten. He relates this to the area of difficulty with dyslexics, working memory. He talks of the “mechanical skill-based thing” that can be looked at later. An example of skill based is the reading or writing. He goes on to say, “do not hinder that process of creativity, that process of idea realisation”. We talk about perfectionism and how this relates to dyslexia. Paul sees this as way for the dyslexic to try and gain control but believes it’s not only attributable to dyslexics. He makes an interesting allusion to developing the scaffolding of an idea as quickly as possible and then tend to the minor details at the end.</p>	<p>reading, tracking or visual stress he says, “it makes it more difficult to draw meaning”. He talks of “support strategy” and he further talks of this as a “lightbulb moment” whereby the student with dyslexia sees as way forward. He talks of identifying “what’s your goal and what’s the most effective and efficient way for you as an individual to get to your goal”.</p>	<p>its own benefits”, He remains unsure as to whether that is a transcendent factor because he states, “that’s an individual thing”. He later changes his opinion on this and agrees this is possible for some, but not for all. Again, he believes this is an individual thing. I ask him what he would suggest would be a good way for dyslexic people to transcend the negative conditioning of dyslexia and his response was “demystify the process of reading and writing” and he goes on to suggest to “find the route to express your ideas”. I find this a slight contradiction as it seems to me what he is saying here is that by expressing oneself through art one can transcend these negative associations of dyslexia. He talks of allowing ourselves time to think and “let the mind filter</p>
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		Again, he refers to “the framework, that’s the idea”.		ideas through and be creative”. We talk of the allegorical coding found in visual art from even painting created hundreds of years ago . He reaffirms his belief “idea is king”.
<b>Professor David McLoughlin</b>				
David describes himself as “educational and occupational psychologist”. He has worked in this field for over 30 years. David specialises working with adults. He has published several books on the subject. David states “most of my time I’ve devoted to assessing dyslexic individuals at all levels”. David states “the model of dyslexia that I operate on is that it’s to do with working memory”. He states this is proven by science and also his own experience of working with 1000s of	David confirms that dyslexics “are more likely to be visual”. He attributes this to “that link between the visuospatial sketchpad and the central executive” and states this will enable better concentration. David states “I don’t think that all dyslexic people are naturally more gifted than non-dyslexic people”. David quotes the now deceased “critic” A.A. Gill who “was a very dyslexic man” who said, “the reason more dyslexic people wind up in the art department because it’s the only place they’re not remedial”. I find this	David recounts the “talking through” approach rather than “talking at”. David advises using imagery as much as possible and also to work for short periods of time, because they (dyslexics) lose concentration. David goes on to suggest using “reasoning” as much as possible. He describes this as “trying to talk through stuff with other people”. He clarifies “so that they don’t have to rely on automatic memory, they can work things out”. He recounts the adage “if you want to understand something yourself, teach it to someone else”.	David states the main issue here is “speed” he means this when reading, writing and processing information. He says, “it takes them longer to do things that other people take for granted”. He believes that dyslexic people “to get where they are, work a damn site harder than everybody else”. David believes the “equality act 2010” has made a profound difference in terms of provision made for dyslexic people in higher education. David critically talks of the ‘one size fits all’ and how this can also	David states that if dyslexics are able to focus on their strength rather than their weaknesses “then they will thrive”. He goes on to say, “confidence and self-esteem come from feeling successful”. So, David believes that focusing on creative pursuits can “contribute to the attitude to how they approach things”. He goes on “working towards the sublime and not worrying to much about the barriers that get in the way”. He agrees that otherness can be a factor for artist with dyslexia.

<p>individuals. David describes difficulties with working memory as “the ability to multitask with words such as read quickly, remember the details and answer the questions”. He talks of difficulties experienced by dyslexics also of “organisational skills including such things as time management”. He also talks of other memory related problems such as “verbal short-term memory” “rapid naming” this is what happens when we try to recall names and other “factual information quickly”. David explains of an “intrinsic difficulty” amongst dyslexics with the “phonological loop”. He also states that the dyslexic will “process visual information more readily than verbal</p>	<p>comment condescending towards other dyslexics and it leaves me wondering whether A.A.Gill is in fact just revealing a sense of shame of dyslexia. He describes dyslexics at being quite good at “the big picture”. David points out that “there are a lot of myths promoted in dyslexia”.</p>		<p>be used incorrectly he says to assume all dyslexics are good code breakers or have superpowers is a falsehood. David talks of how useful the art of delegation (“do what you can with that”) is for successful dyslexics such as Richard Branson. David states that he would also describe voice recognition technology as a form of delegation. David says (although he is not dyslexic) that he has dictated all his paperwork. He says, “it’s the most efficient way for me to get words on the page”. David advises with voice recognition technology to “know its limitations”. David states “the university has become dyslexia friendly without even trying to be”. He means this for example by how lectures are now often recorded meaning note</p>	
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information”. David talks of inclinations to art and design in dyslexics if the “visuospatial sketchpad” is ok.			taking is not so necessary. David advises “forget that your dyslexic and just say to people your someone that reads thoroughly and writes carefully and likes to get some else to check what they’ve written”. David advises in regard to dyslexia as a term “focus on the solutions” he means this individually. He believes “people don’t need to know your dyslexic”. He sees the use of it as a label as “a waste of time”. David goes on to say, “there are no adequate definitions of dyslexia that address it as a lifespan problem”. David states “I focus on dyslexia as processing problem not as a literacy difficulty”.	
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## Appendix P: Award for Oral Research Presentation



### STUDENT AND STAFF RESEARCH CONFERENCE

12/13 JULY 2022

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#### **Student and Staff Research Conference 2022**

**Lifting Barriers: New Research at London Met**

**Winner Best 15-minute Presentation Day 1**

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**Skye William Eade**

**The Dyslexic Sublime: Exploring the Art-making Process  
Through the Lens of Dyslexia**

Dr Úna Fairbrother  
Interim Head of Graduate School  
London Metropolitan University



## Appendix Q: Acceptance Letter for Oral Presentation in Interdisciplinary Learning and Research Conference at Canterbury Christchurch University

29/03/2024, 20:37

IRN Conference Outcome

Amy Trott <a.trott481@canterbury.ac.uk>  
on behalf of  
irn@canterbury.ac.uk <irn@canterbury.ac.uk>

Thu 07/04/2022 18:32

To:SKYE WILLIAM SKYE EADE <swe0005@my.londonmet.ac.uk>

Dear Skye

Congratulations!

I am pleased to say that your abstract has been accepted for the Interdisciplinary Learning and Research conference.

We are in the process of finalising a conference programme, and this will be sent to you with a conference booking form as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Amy

□



Amy Trott

Programme Developer and Conference Assistant  
Interdisciplinary Learning and Research Conference  
Canterbury Christ Church University  
[IRN@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:IRN@canterbury.ac.uk)

## Appendix R: Acceptance Letter for Oral Presentation in Exclamation! Summer Conference at Exeter University

29/03/2024, 20:44

### Invitation to Present at Exclamation Summer Conference

Exclamation <exclamation@exeter.ac.uk>

Thu 15/06/2023 18:30

Cc:Exclamation <exclamation@exeter.ac.uk>

You don't often get email from exclamation@exeter.ac.uk. [Learn why this is important](#)

Good evening,

We hope this email finds you well.

Thank you for your recent abstract for our conference. We very much enjoyed hearing about your work and are **delighted to accept** your paper for our **in-person conference** on **Monday 17<sup>th</sup> July** 2023 at the University of Exeter, Amory, C417. (Accessibility information for the building can be found [here](#)).

Please confirm your attendance at the conference by registering [here](#) by Wednesday 21st June.

To allow everyone enough time to present, speakers are reminded to keep their papers 10-15 minutes, with time for questions allocated at the end.

We will be in touch with further details closer to the day.

We are very excited to welcome you to this year's conference and look forward to seeing you in July.

With very best wishes,  
Chloë and Kirby  
(Co-Editors)

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## Appendix S: Acceptance Letter for Oral Presentation in 2024 Conference of the British Dyslexia Association

### IC24 Acceptance of Submission

Dear skye eade,

Your abstract submission for consideration for the 13th British Dyslexia Association International Conference 2024 has now been reviewed by the conference committee. We are pleased to inform you that your abstract **58, The Dyslexic Sublime: an Exploration of Dyslexic Art-making through the Lens of the Sublime** - has been accepted for a Spoken Research Paper session.

Please could you let us know by **Friday 12th January 2024** if you are happy to **proceed with** your session as stated above, by return email to [IC24@bdadyslexia.org.uk](mailto:IC24@bdadyslexia.org.uk). Please note that some abstracts have been accepted as a different session to what was originally submitted.

Once we have received all responses, we will notify you of your session time/day. You will need to obtain a presenter ticket which is at a reduced rate by **31st March 2024** – [IC24 Booking](#). Guidelines for presentations will be sent to you by **1st February 2024**.

We look forward to seeing you in June 2024.

Please [visit the website](#) for more information but if you have any questions at this stage, please feel free to email us at [IC24@bdadyslexia.org.uk](mailto:IC24@bdadyslexia.org.uk)

With best wishes,

BDA IC24 Committee

## **Appendix T: Sample Transcript of Audio Reflexivity of the Work Mind's Eye in Water**

### **(Recording No. 4)**

“So, thinking about the making of the work then. I find myself sometimes wondering what it is I'm actually doing when I'm painting you know, I'm just shifting monochromatic greens, hues around a five-foot square canvas, trying to copy a photograph. And, but I usually work for an hour or two or three hours, and I start to find my way. But it's... I can see why people sometimes call artists mad. Because there's no sense. There's no logic initially to what you're doing. You don't know what you're doing. But it's like you're being led by intuition, the inner teacher. And it's, there's a sense of achievement that comes and satisfaction when you look back after those two hours work and look at what you've done, and you can see you've made progress.”

### **(Recording No. 10)**

Yeah, it's, it's got a bit dark, but I will lighten it up as white light, lighter colours are always applied at the end. And black is essential because it gives the painting weight. And what else did I say? Yeah, I didn't try to create work that's sublime, although it's on my mind now because I'm researching the sublime. But I think because of my lived experience, when I create work, it leans towards the sublime. Like it's probably quite deep and heavy and maybe even melancholic, melancholic. But that could be my lived experience of dyslexia being marginalised, outsider, traumatic experiences. But I'm getting more confident, because I've been painting a few months now. And I'd had a break for about a year, at least more than a year, I think, from painting, and so I'm kind of in the swing of it now. And even though I've

had a break, I'm feeling more confident about handling the paint and what I'm actually doing. And it's like a self-fulfilling prophecy. The more confident you are, the more you believe in what you're doing. The more you believe in what you're doing, the more you do what you want to do, or the more you manifest your realisation the more you make manifest. Belief is everything. If you believe in what you're doing, you will do it.

### **(Recording No. 16)**

So, looking at the painting now, after not working on it for a few days, I'm considering whether I leave it as a stylized copy of the zeroed in photo that I was trying to depict. Or I work a little bit more on that stylistic depiction. But I think where I'm going with it is to try to make it more of a realistic image and try and copy it as best from the photo. So that it's a copy of the image and not a stylized depiction, because the image itself is already too abstract. So it's already even if it's an exact copy of the photo, it's already difficult to discern, I would have to explain to somebody what it is, because you wouldn't know because it's such a zeroed in image, it would be hard for anybody to know what it is. Exactly. So making it stylized, would just accentuate that. So, I'm thinking best to try and stay on track to paint from the image I created with a camera and my computer. But when I reflected on my work I've made over the years, some of it is very stylized, some of it I've gone completely down the stylistic path with the work, of course the image always comes from somewhere... usually a photo, most of the time a photo that I've taken now and that image is sometimes exaggerated or amplified parts of it, which is being stylised. But there are occasions when I have done my very best to try and create a mirror image of the photograph. And then of course when you're painting a photograph that's what you're doing, you're painting a photograph you're not painting from life and that's

probably another thing I should consider because I've always called myself a studio artist I always work in the studio not outside painting from life so that's another factor to consider.

### **(Recording No. 23)**

So, on completion of the work then I left the work unfinished in July and started again in September. So having two months break from working on the painting although it was near completion was just what I needed to get away from it, although it's placed on the wall in our living room to to just get away from working on it, and sort of reflect on it. And I was able to quite quickly finished the painting I realised there wasn't as much more to do as I thought there was and that I needed to to finish it and decide that it was finished and that few months of reflection enabled me to do that. I'm actually very pleased with the work and when I took it off the living room wall and placed it on the bedroom wall to make space for my new work that I will be working on in the studio space. I realised what a void there is on that wall now. All those many hours of mark making on a canvas really do leave or make an impression on a wall. Which of course we know that's the purpose of art anyway, but you know, two-dimensional work, but yeah, the void is very noticeable. And I look forward to working on the macro painting of trees in water.

## **Appendix U: Sample Transcript of Audio Reflexivity of the Work Trees in Water (Montage Drawing)**

### **(Recording No. 1)**

So approximately half an hour to an hour last night in the evening I was browsing through some photographs taken a few years ago now of the reflections of trees on the water in a local pond. And I particularly like this image, these two images actually, of the trees on the water just because it has quite chiaroscuro effect of light and dark on the waters... quite stark contrast. And I'd like to perhaps accentuate that in a graphite drawing initially, I purchased some pencils just a few days ago, some very, like a big, thick graphite pencil and some quite, quite thick leaded, soft leaded pencils of the high B range. And quite keen to do a drawing like this from one I did about two months ago now, or a month ago of the trees reflected in the water. So I looked at the two images I found and I began cropping them. One of the images, I put a grid of nine onto it, and cropped each of the nine squares of the grid of the image and drop them into my photo stream. And then I found the other image and I cropped.. I think there's only one or two images of the nine that was put onto... I put a grid on the image, a grid of nine squares as a square image anyway, so it splits it into nine. And like I said, I found two I think, to sort of light and dark reflected on the surface of the water from the reflection of the trees. I forgot to record the process when I was actually thinking and actively cropping the images but I'm recording it now. In retrospect.



**(Recording No. 4)**

I used to often look at trees reflected in puddles when I was going for a run 20 years ago now and think about how I would capture that, so now I'm just looking at the there's branches in the water and thinking of the drama, the dramatic intensity of the light and dark of those reflections.

**(Recording No. 8)**

So increasing the frequency of my drawing now and the drawing is becoming more fluid and I think I'm working faster. Still preference to work in daylight and just I suppose experiencing enjoying the sort of meditative associations with drawing or the catharsis, but still very focused and thinking about how these warped, trees in water resemble the warped words on a page when I'm reading sometimes, which I believe is associated with dyslexia. The fact that I'm using black and white and chiaroscuro in the drawings. Monochromatic is similar to the black and white of a printed word in text. But yeah, the there's a analogy there with the the warped branches and the warped wording. What is it about that warped-ness.

**(Recording No. 13)**

So thoughts on the drawing number nine, the last drawing of the montage of trees in water. Some anxiety about finishing this last piece, because it's the, it is the last piece and you know, some apprehension as to whether I will mess it up or not do it properly or procrastinate or so, but anyway, successfully, I completed the last piece. And I also reflect on it being a large drawing. So because of the anxiety I had, because it's the last piece and it's like finishing off the work, which is something I've struggled with in the past, not doing enough sometimes or overdoing the work and destroying it entirely. And I knew this is the, you know, this is the last

piece and, and so consequently, I don't think it was as good as the other pieces. But probably, as there are nine of them, it was probably as good as one or two of the others that maybe weren't. But it really when you put the whole thing together, you really cannot notice it all looks, it all fits together like a jigsaw puzzle. And because it's a larger scale work, those small nuances in finish, aesthetics really don't matter in the bigger scheme. You won't notice it, I know now I'm being perfectionist, as usual, show it somebody else, and they probably look at it and not see any different from any of the other drawings. It's got this, the same chiaroscuro light and dark. So overall, what have I achieved here? What my... What is this showing me about my research? I'm thinking about the final finish. What about the process? And the process? What have I learned about the process? So I will miss not drawing at this, this twilight hour of three or four in the middle of winter in the afternoon, just as it turns from light to dark. But I also see an analogy and that in the drawings are, black and white, charcoal, light and dark. It's become a ritual, a daily ritual to work at this time of day. And I will miss that and probably before long, I will have to start on another drawing. It's yeah. It's part of my identity drawing de-marking but it's a work completed now. And I know this research isn't about the completion. But it is complete. And now well, I mean the making the construction of the works complete. Now it's about how do I photograph it? How do I frame it? Where would it be? What? How would it look right in what kind of space or setting, so, it's not over yet.

## **Appendix V: Sample Transcript of Audio Reflexivity of the Work Canvas Cube (Sphere)**

### **(Recording No. 1)**

So, thinking about the cube of Canvas and how to take that further. I've actually been thinking for some time now, on the idea of the cube suspended on its axis and in rotation, forming a circular rotation or the square the cube, becoming a sphere, as the speed is increased how that relates to water and spheres in water. And thinking about how to do that, what to do with that. I've found some footage in my photo stream of a video captured of the cube when it was suspended. And I'm in the process now of using software and sort of cropping that image focusing on the cube in rotation and speeding that up. And just looking at the results of that. I liked the idea of this work as well, because it wasn't made by my hands. It was conceived with my mind I sketched a design drawing and took it to a company who were able to execute the cube of canvas, which was exhibited during my master's. So yeah, it's taking that concept forward now, in terms of three dimensionality, and the circle and the square, which are shapes that have become very significant in my work over the years. Recently, in particular,

### **(Recording No. 3)**

So I'm thinking about creating another drawing of this canvas cube but a drawing of the cube in different phases of motion. So yeah, just just showing the cube from as many possible angles as it's rotating. This isn't something I've done before so it'd be an interesting, interesting geometrical drawing. Using graphite pencil on paper, I just, I keep thinking in my mind's eye how I would do that. So this week, I'm going to actually do it on paper with charcoal pencil.

**(Recording No. 4)**

So I'm thinking about the cube in rotation on its axis. And what facets or planes are viewed when it's in rotation and how that can be depicted with pencil and paper and in relation to creating another movie file, video file, moving image of the cube with digitally rendered depictions from the trees reflected in water drawings on those planes of the cube using iMovie probably software and how many I think it's probably about three, three different three dimensional views of the cube in rotation. So usually, well three planes of the cube in rotation, and I'm thinking probably three different frames, photo frames joined together using iMovie and then played will show the cube in rotation with the trees in water on images on the planes of the cube.

## **Appendix W: Full Transcript of Audio Reflexivity of the Work Canvas Cube (Drawing)**

### **(Recording No. 1)**

So I suppose about an hour of drawing this morning... something that's just been in my head for a while, I did try to capture the cube in rotation at different angles and I thought of doing a line drawing of these showing the cube in different stages of rotation. So, I just got on with it this morning on some paper and some pencils and compass and came up with a drawing that I'm pleased with and it's sort of shows the cube but two different angles. And sort of a central axis point and also the sphere, circle that forms when it's rotated at speed. And on reflection, I mean, it was quite, I was trying to just figure it out all out in my head, but I just found myself getting confused. So just put it on paper. And I decided to stop just two angles was enough. And I've noticed that on reflection of the drawings soon after that it's actually perfectly symmetrical, which makes me think of not only the 3d visual-spatial propensity of people with dyslexia, but also the sense of balance and symmetry, that could be equate ,could be suggestive of our sort of equal size parts of our brain in relation to non Dyslexics who have the left side more developed. And this is proven by research. So, you know, sort of sense of equilibrium.

### **(Recording No. 2)**

So, I was trying to think how I could capture the cube in motion at speed, but showing the different facets of the cube. So this morning I started a drawing, and I, what I did, I realised retrospectively is break it down into chunks. So I first drew two angles of the cube in motion when it's suspended on its axis. I then drew another angle, another two angles of the cube, a sort of typical three dimensional cube with three planes visible. And I then did a third drawing

where I merged both drawings. And just then I realised that I had captured the image of the cube at speed in rotation on its axis in a drawing, in a line drawing, which is what I was trying to do. I didn't know how to do it. It sort of happened by accident sort of happenstance just by going through photos, stills of the cube in motion and drawing from there.

## Appendix X: Full Transcript Audio Reflexivity of the Work Circle, Square (Church)

### (Recording No. 1)

So the inception of this latest work was a visit to Dover castle. And right up on top of the hill, where the castle is situated, and within the walls of the castle, right on the very summit of the hill, is an ancient chapel that was there before the building of the castle. And my partner and myself, we're observing the church, and it's really beautiful church made of Flint. And it's been restored and one of the windows, I'm not sure if it was an original window or not. It depicts the circle and the square. And, of course, my work... More recent work is very much of the circle and the square. And the square being relates to the format that I've executed, work on. And the circle in relation to circular formations in water bubbles, droplets, etc. So I then cropped it from a photograph of the church window of the, chapel, at Dover, and this photograph has been left in my stream for a couple of months, actually, and, and now I find myself thinking, you know, procrastinating with the PhD, imminence of the PhD and thinking, What do I do, and I realised that the way I, I need something to cling on to, to I need an idea, or concept, something to develop. Once I'm clear of that, and I feel in my mind, that it's worthy of taking the time to develop. And I mean, that's the crux of it, really, I need to have something that I think yeah, that's worth pursuing that's worth doing that's worth developing. And this is developed, this process has developed over the years over the decades now, and where I am now, I have a, an iPad Pro, and my stylus and I, a very rough sketch can be depicted there with lots of room for mistakes, unlike a drawing, where you can work on it, and if you know, perhaps, make a mistake, and then the whole thing is ruined, you've got to start again, with a digital drawing. You can save each development of it, and always go back, undo or screenshot, save a copy of it. So there's lots of lots more room for error. So I've developed a sketch slightly inaccurate,



which irks me a bit but hey, it's just a... I think, probably less than an hour of the... sort of schematic drawing of the circle and square formation of the glass in the church. And now, I will develop from that a watercolour and graphite sketch which will probably be the works as far as it will go, because it's just a church window and it's the circle and the square. That's the I'm thinking that my work really has become about symbology.

### **(Recording No. 2)**

Okay well during the process of sketching this geometric pattern thoughts go through my mind of mistakes I've made in my life and moving forward in my life and making progress and then I think of the way I'm drawing am I, being accurate enough I reflect on the fact that nothing is perfect. And there will always inaccuracies even when we perceive they're not to be. And having drawn out the diagram, which took about 20 minutes of measuring and drawing, there's a almost cathartic feeling of completion. And yeah. So the drawing is, is complete.

### **(Recording No. 3)**

So I've now covered the drawing in watercolour erm, trying to match the original coloration in the stained glass and I'm feel compelled to wash it off slightly because it's stained glass. So there's a lot of light shining through and with all the watercolour covering the drawing, you can't quite see that. But I'm aware that I've ruined drawings by doing this, but I can't stop myself from doing it because I might always be wondering what if, so, I have to I have to wash some of it off carefully. And then the final bit of the drawing will be to colour the stained glass the lead effect is sort of outline the schemata, schematic rather, the lines of the outline of the of the drawing and that will be the work completed.