



Choreographing Possibility

An Autoethnographic Transdisciplinary Immersion into the Practice of Deferring
Judgement in Creative Endeavours

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, *Paulina Larocca*, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the *TD School* at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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PROLOGUE

An Invitation to Engage with Judgement and Possibility

Welcome to a dynamic exploration of deferring judgement—a concept that invites you to suspend immediate assessments and open yourself to broader possibilities. Ideally, this thesis would be accompanied by sensory artefacts to foster a more profound, holistic engagement with this theme, providing an embodied experience of touch, hearing, scent, and taste. However, due to practical constraints, visual and verbal prompts, along with mythic tales, serve as alternative pathways to immerse you in this journey.

The visual prompts offer an embodied way to enter a state of deferring judgement, while the mythic tales and the verbal prompts that open and close each chapter serve as storytelling devices that both invoke and defer judgement, inviting deeper embodiment, immersion, and engagement.

This approach reflects my commitment to making this a living, breathing document. The language is intentionally unconventional: I speak directly to “you” and use “I” because this thesis is inherently dialogic and personal—a collaboration between us. As you engage with this journey, “we” participate in a creative act where both the familiar and the unknown coexist. In this space, you are invited to sit with uncertainty, embrace curiosity, and allow new perspectives and possibilities to emerge.

Embrace this exploration with wonder and openness, as the journey itself *is* the thesis.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how deferring judgement in creative endeavours can open new possibilities and foster more ethical, inclusive practices. Through autoethnographic reflection and collaborative experiences, I address the question: *How is the lived experience of deferring judgement embodied and negotiated intersubjectively during creative collaborations to expand possibilities?* This research illuminates the embodied, intersubjective, and emergent qualities of deferring judgement by drawing on insights from phenomenology and non-Western philosophies.

The study employs diverse methodologies, such as arts-based methods and immersive experiences, to reveal the subtle, often overlooked aspects of creativity that surface when judgement is acknowledged and actively deferred. The transdisciplinary approach integrates practice-led research, creating new intersections between theory and practice. This journey demonstrates the transformative potential of deferring judgement, showing how embodied experiences can ignite new creative possibilities, ethical awareness, and relational understanding within collaborative contexts.

The research culminates in “Fractals of Nature” (“Fractals”) an immersive, non-traditional research output (NTRO) designed to bring the principles of this thesis to life. Fractals invites the reader to experience deferring judgement as a lived practice, embodying the fundamental tenets of the thesis while pushing the boundaries of knowledge transfer. While grounded in rigorous scholarly inquiry, this work also opens pathways to more expansive, inclusive, and ethically aware creative practices, offering innovative methods for sharing knowledge across disciplines.

Keywords: transdisciplinary, creativity, deferring judgement, phenomenology, practice-led research, embodiment, creative collaboration, non-Western philosophies, autoethnography, facilitation, knowledge transfer

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Key Terms

Abduction and Abductive Reasoning: A form of logical inference that begins with observations and seeks the simplest and most likely explanation for them (Okoli, 2023). Unlike deduction, which draws specific conclusions from general principles, or induction, which generalises from specific instances, abduction focuses on generating the best possible hypothesis to explain the available evidence. It is often used in contexts where information is incomplete, such as creative problem-solving.

Arts-Based Methods: Research approaches that utilise artistic practices, such as visual arts, music, theatre, dance, and digital media, to generate and communicate knowledge (Knowles & Cole, 2007). These methods capture sensory and emotional experiences, providing alternative ways to explore and represent complex phenomena (Schein, 2013; Ward & Shortt, 2020).

Autoethnography: A qualitative research method that uses personal narrative, subjectivity, and reflexivity to explore cultural and social phenomena (Adams et al., 2021). It combines self-examination with broader social and cultural analysis, offering a valuable tool for understanding the complexities of human experience and identity within creative practice.

Bracketing (Epoché): The phenomenological practice of suspending preconceptions, biases, and assumptions to approach a phenomenon or narrative with fresh eyes (Macann, 1993). It encourages a deeper engagement with the lived experiences being studied, aiming to uncover the essence of those experiences more openly and unbiasedly.

Creative Collaboration: The process of individuals working together to generate novel and valuable outcomes (Sawyer, 2011), creative collaboration has traditionally emphasised group dynamics, communication, and shared goal-setting. In this thesis, creative collaboration is reframed as a relational, embodied, and intersubjective encounter that extends beyond the human, engaging systems, environments, materials, and histories.

Creativity: Traditionally defined as the ability to produce work that is both novel and useful (Runco & Jaeger, 2012), creativity is often framed in cognitive, individualistic, or product-

oriented terms. In this thesis, creativity is reimagined as an emergent, relational, and embodied process that arises within complex systems and shared contexts. It is a way of being — one that involves sensing, responding, and co-shaping meaning through material, emotional, and intersubjective engagement. Creativity is not about generating new ideas, and navigating uncertainty, deferring judgement, and holding space for transformation.

Compassion: A deep concern for another person’s suffering and the motivation to help (Singer & Klimecki, 2014). Unlike empathy, which may result in distress or withdrawal, compassion involves a motivation to alleviate suffering. It reflects an active engagement with others’ difficulties and a commitment to providing support or relief.

Deferring Judgement: A concept central to creative practice, referring to the intentional suspension of evaluation or criticism to create a space for exploration, play, and openness to new possibilities (Parnes et al., 1977; Puccio et al., 2012). It is sometimes referred to as deferred judgement. In this thesis, deferring judgement is treated as a relational, embodied, and intersubjective stance. It is explored as a lived experience that is sensed in the body, co-created with others, and critical to navigating complexity and transformation in creative collaboration.

Embodiment: Refers to the lived experience of having a body and how it shapes perceptions, actions, and interactions with the world (Aarø, 2010; Claxton, 2015). In this research, embodiment is understood as the way creative practices and processes are experienced physically and emotionally, acknowledging that knowledge is not only cognitive but also grounded in sensory and bodily experiences.

Empathy: The capacity to resonate with or understand others’ emotional states (Singer & Klimecki, 2014). While empathy enables people to “walk in someone’s shoes,” understanding someone’s pain does not necessarily mean they are motivated to alleviate it. The difference lies in intent—empathy is about shared feelings, while compassion is about a desire to help. Simply feeling another person’s pain or joy does not inherently lead one to take constructive action or respond with care. Moreover, empathy can lead to empathic distress, where the shared emotional experience becomes overwhelming, prompting a desire to withdraw or protect oneself from negative emotions.

Felt Knowledge: Felt knowledge describes the emotional, embodied ways that environments influence and shape knowledge production (Catungal, 2017). It is gained through sensory and emotional engagement with the world, recognising that understanding is not solely cognitive but also deeply connected to bodily experiences. This type of knowledge acknowledges that certain insights emerge from the experience of being in a particular context, suggesting that knowledge can be profoundly personal and influenced by environment and emotions.

Intersubjectivity: Describes the shared, relational aspect of human experience (De Jaegher, 2021). It involves the exchange of perspectives between people, allowing for a shared understanding and co-creation of meaning. Just as people might struggle to define love fully, yet inherently understand and recognise it in their experiences, intersubjectivity captures a similar idea. While it may be challenging to describe precisely, people can still have meaningful exchanges and a shared understanding.

Intuition: This is the experience of understanding or knowing something instinctively, often without conscious reasoning (Chudnoff, 2013; Policastro, 1995). In creative practice, intuition is understood as a non-linear form of insight that does not rely on explicit reasoning or analysis. It guides decision-making and problem-solving by directly grasping complex situations that might not be accessible through conscious thought alone.

Lifeworld: The concept of the lifeworld, developed by phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, refers to the everyday lived experience before theoretical reflection (Macann, 1993). It represents the world of immediate experience grounded in the rich, intuitive realities that shape personal and collective understanding.

Liminality: The concept needed to address those aspects of human experience and social life that fall outside ordered structures (Wagoner & Zittoun, 2021). It highlights spaces of transition, indefiniteness, ambiguity, play, and creativity, serving as a necessary counterweight to an overemphasis on structural influences on human behaviour.

Non-Traditional Research Outputs (NTROs) as Arts-Based Methods: Involve creative works such as artworks, performances, and digital media that serve as both the method and the outcome of research (Burge et al., 2016). NTROs are practical and even artistic applications that enrich academic research, offering a dual contribution to knowledge production.

Practice-Led Research and Practice Research: A form of academic inquiry that uses the creative process to generate knowledge, understanding, and insights across various disciplines, from the arts to engineering (Candy, 2006; Haseman & Mafe, 2009). This approach allows researchers to seamlessly integrate their practice, methodologies, and outputs into the research process. In this thesis, “practice-led” research denotes a specific approach where the practice itself is the subject of inquiry, while “practice research” serves as a broader umbrella term encompassing various ways creative practices contribute to knowledge.

Radical Alterity (Otherness): Levinas’s (1998) emphasis on the ethical encounter with the “other.” Cultivating a deep respect for and openness to difference, otherness, and the unknown. Accepting multiple, equally valid truths enables people to see the “other” in themselves, which is essential in deferring judgement.

Reflexivity: A process of critically examining not only the subject but also one’s own role and assumptions, including social position, internalised beliefs, and personal biases, which influence interpretations of events (Deer, 2014). Reflexivity helps ensure a more objective and accurate representation of situations.

Subjective Intuition: Is the personal, internal sense of knowing or perceiving something that is heavily influenced by a person’s experiences, emotions, and contexts (Chudnoff, 2013; Policastro, 1995). Unlike more general forms of intuition, subjective intuition highlights the unique and idiosyncratic ways individuals interpret and respond to their environments. It emphasises the role of personal history, emotional states, and contextual factors in shaping judgements and decisions.

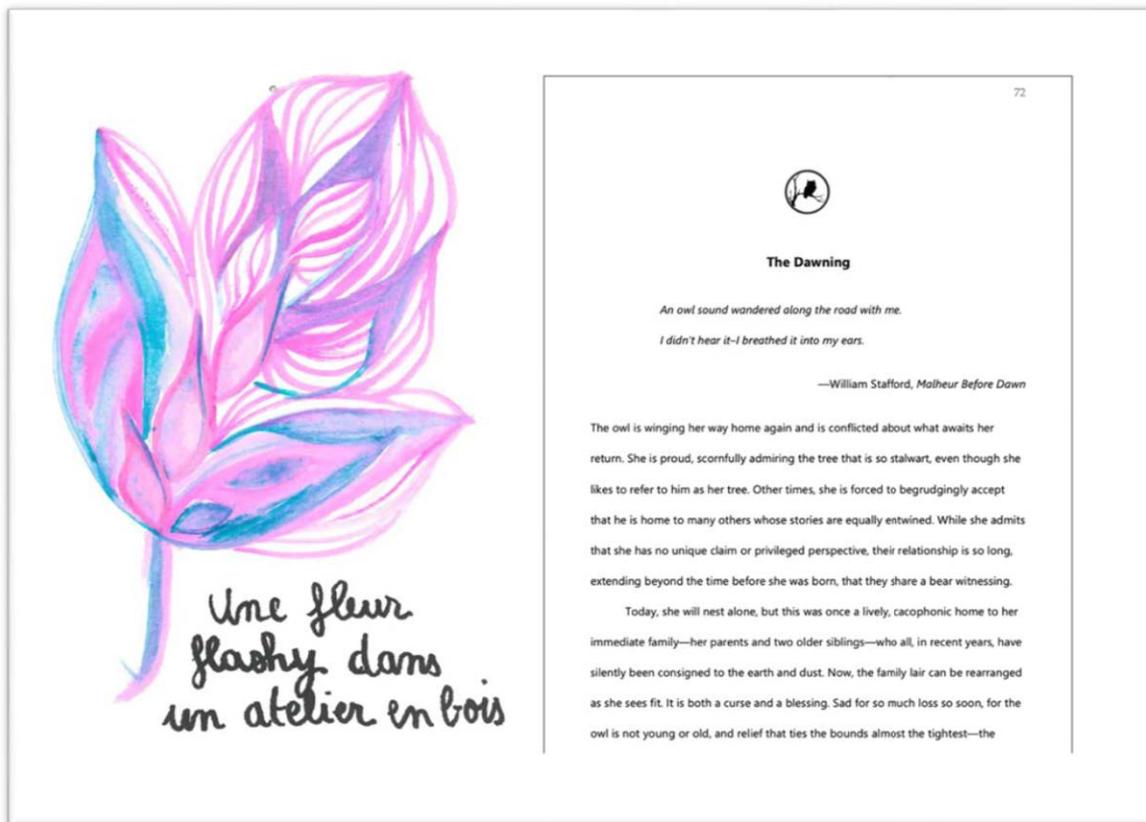
Tacit Knowledge: Personal knowledge that cannot always be articulated in a coded form (Chergui et al., 2020). It is implicit and relates to the experience and know-how of the person who possesses it; it is grounded in their actions, routines, ideas, and emotions.

Transdisciplinary Inquiry: Integrates insights, methods, and approaches from multiple fields to explore complex phenomena, including people's practice (Rigolot, 2020; Scholz & Steiner, 2015b). It transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries to generate richer, more comprehensive insights.

Key Devices

This section introduces two essential devices—watercolours and mythic tales—that embody moments of deferring judgement within this research. These devices enrich the inquiry’s experiential and scholarly dimensions, offering new ways to engage with its central themes. By interacting with these devices, you are invited to experience deferring judgement firsthand, directly contributing to the thesis’s overarching question: *How is the lived experience of deferring judgement embodied and negotiated intersubjectively during creative collaborations to expand possibilities?* Figure 1 provides a preview of how these visual and narrative elements will appear throughout the thesis.

Figure 1: Preview of the Key Devices



This image presents a thumbnail preview of how the watercolour and mythic tales will be integrated throughout the thesis. These devices provide an experiential counterbalance to the academic discourse, encouraging you to pause, reflect, and embrace uncertainty.

Watercolours

The watercolours featured in this thesis were created by participants during the Fractals event, a non-traditional research output (NTRO) designed to explore deferring judgement through multisensory engagement. Participants immersed themselves in a dynamic environment that engaged their senses—visual, tactile, and olfactory—encouraging openness to multiple interpretations and possibilities. The integration of these artefacts demonstrates the transformative potential of engaging the senses, where art elicits complex neurochemical responses that enable profound emotional and cognitive shifts (Magsamen & Ross, 2023).

Mythic Tales

The mythic tales woven throughout the thesis are autoethnographic narratives that blend personal stories with metaphorical imagery, exploring the research's core themes. Tales like the owl and the tree reflect the ongoing dance between beginnings and endings, symbolising continual negotiation and renewal in creative practice. These narratives are not mere metaphors; they are drawn from lived experience, offering insights into the exploration of creativity, ethics, and judgement. Engaging with myth invites moments to pause, reflect, and defer judgement, embracing imaginative possibilities and aligning with Zueva's (2021) argument that combining myth and scholarship deepens understanding.

Myths bridge the conceptual framework and lived experience, illuminating themes of creativity, ethics, and knowledge while inviting you to embrace uncertainties and creative tensions.

Rationale for Key Devices

The watercolours and mythic tales, grounded in scholarly literature and lived experience, invite an embodied engagement that counterbalances cognitive analysis. These devices disrupt linear argumentation, creating space for curiosity and new possibilities. Without them, the thesis might overlook creativity's visceral and emotional dimensions, essential to understanding its complexity. Appearing at key moments, these artistic and narrative elements foster holistic engagement, embodying the interplay between formal learning, hands-on experimentation, and reflection.

Overview and Guide

“Choreographing Possibility: An Autoethnographic Transdisciplinary Immersion into Deferring Judgement” invites you to explore the practice of deferring judgement within creative collaborations. This study transcends traditional academic approaches by embodying the interplay between judgement and its deferral, creating a dynamic interaction between critical assessment and curiosity to uncover new possibilities.

Guided by the question, *How is the lived experience of deferring judgement embodied and negotiated intersubjectively during creative collaborations to expand possibilities?* this research highlights the often-overlooked embodied and dialogic dimensions of judgement, aiming to foster a more holistic and ethical approach to creative collaborations. Through a transdisciplinary, practice-led approach, this thesis bridges theory and practice, offering academically rigorous insights with practical relevance to real-world creative endeavours. It encourages you to engage experientially with this inquiry, exploring how deferring judgement can promote more expansive, ethical, and inclusive creative practices while developing innovative methods for knowledge transfer.

Why This Approach?

To bridge the gap between theory and practice, I have integrated non-traditional research outputs (NTROs) into this thesis, including a culminating piece: *Fractals of Nature (Fractals)*. This immersive theatrical event helped test and refine the key frameworks developed in this research, including the J-Curve model and the Deferring Judgement Framework. The *Fractals* NTRO demonstrates how transdisciplinary inquiry, combined with these new models, can generate fresh understandings and possibilities, illustrating this approach’s practical relevance and transformative potential.

Methodological Approach

Grounded in practice-led research, this thesis employs autoethnography, phenomenological analysis, and arts-based inquiry. Practice-led research situates creative practice as the primary method for generating knowledge, offering real-world contexts to understand how deferring judgement operates within creative endeavours (Candy, 2006; Haseman & Mafe, 2009). Autoethnography contributes a reflective, personal lens that connects individual creative

experiences with broader social and cultural contexts, offering reflexivity to exploring creative practices (Adams et al., 2021). Phenomenology examines participants' lived experiences, highlighting felt, sensed, and tacit knowledge to dimensionalise the ineffable aspects of a creative practice (Gill, 2014).

The methodological framework also includes arts-based methods such as collage, video recordings, and narrative inquiry, which engage a creative practice's sensory, emotional, and imaginative dimensions. These methods provide an alternative way of investigating and communicating the intricacies of deferring judgement beyond traditional textual analysis (Knowles & Cole, 2007; Ward & Shortt, 2020).

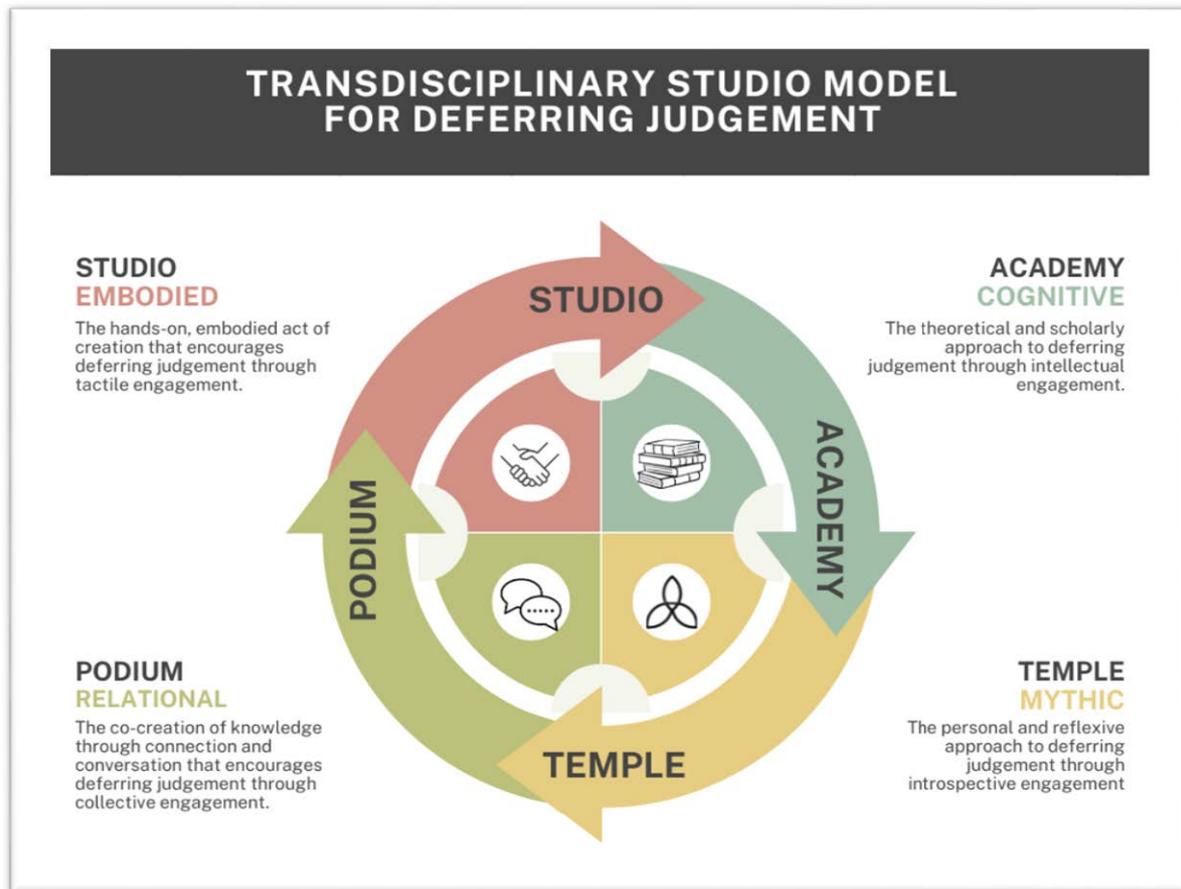
Non-Traditional Elements to Deepen Engagement

This thesis incorporates visual and narrative devices that align with the immersive, reflective nature of deferring judgement, framed within the forthcoming studio model by Dorst (2024). These four interconnected spaces—studio, academy, podium, and temple—offer distinct ways to explore and embody the principles of deferring judgement. This framework complements the Fractals NTRO, creating spaces where intellectual, emotional, relational, and embodied experiences converge, offering a multifaceted engagement with the research themes.

Dorst's (2024) model was introduced to me through my supervisor, who shared it in 2023, and it is anticipated to be published in late 2024 after this thesis's examination. In Chapter 8, where Fractals is discussed in depth, I will note that Dorst's (2024) citation is forthcoming to clarify this timeline.

As part of my practice, I developed a visual representation of Dorst's (2024) work, which, to my knowledge, does not yet exist in published form (Figure 2). This model visually integrates the principles of deferring judgement, reinforcing its role in balancing structured learning, creative expression, and reflective practice.

Figure 2: Transdisciplinary Studio Model



This model, adapted from Dorst's (2024) forthcoming work, visualises four interconnected spaces—studio, academy, podium, and temple—each representing a unique aspect of deferring judgement. Together, these spaces balance intellectual, emotional, relational, and embodied approaches to creative inquiry. Created by the author in Canva Pro (2024).

Research Gap

While deferring judgement has been acknowledged across various fields, its role in creativity studies has seen limited exploration since the 1970s (Basadur, 1979; Parnes et al., 1977; Parnes & Harding, 1962). Most research has focused on its application during the idea generation phase, with little attention given to its impact at the outset of the creative process—arguably the most crucial phase for unlocking creative potential (Getzels, 1982; H. H. Ma, 2009). Addressing this gap is essential because the earliest stages of creativity are where the most significant opportunities for innovation and discovery lie. Deferring

judgement at this stage opens up space for curiosity and exploration, allowing for a broader range of possibilities to emerge before ideas are evaluated or narrowed down.

By investigating deferring judgement at the outset of creative processes, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how creativity can be cultivated more expansively. It also has practical implications for innovation and collaboration, suggesting that when judgement is deferred early on, both individuals and teams can reach higher levels of creative thinking and problem-solving. In doing so, this research offers a framework for applying deferring judgement in real-world contexts, enhancing both academic theory and creative practice.

Contribution to Knowledge

This thesis introduces two original contributions—the *J-Curve model* and the *Deferring Judgement Framework*—both of which offer new tools for understanding and applying deferring judgement in creative practices.

The J-Curve Model focuses on the individual experience of deferring judgement, mapping individuals' emotional and psychological journey. It captures moments of vulnerability, curiosity, and the eventual shift towards new possibilities, illustrating how deferring judgement can transform personal perspectives.

The Deferring Judgement Framework takes a systems approach to collaborative creativity, offering practical guidance for applying deferring judgement within group settings. Centred on three interconnected states—doing, feeling, and being—it provides a holistic view of how deferring judgement operates across individual and collective dynamics, supporting inclusive and ethical practices within creative collaborations.

In addition, this thesis formalises and extends Montuori's (2005, 2012) tenets into a structured Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model, offering both a visualisation and a conceptual framework. This model bridges theory and practice, fostering a more holistic, embodied understanding of creativity across disciplines.

The thesis contributes across theoretical, methodological, practical, and ethical domains:

- **Theoretical Contribution:** This research broadens the concept of deferring judgement by integrating phenomenology, embodiment, and arts-based methods, bridging theory and practice in a way that illuminates the embodied dimensions of

creative inquiry using the Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model as a guide to bridge epistemologies.

- **Methodological Contribution:** The thesis itself is designed as an NTRO, embodying the principles it examines. By incorporating non-traditional methods like autoethnography, collage, performance, and other arts-based inquiry methods, including the Fractals event, this research offers immersive and experiential tools that extend beyond conventional academic formats, providing new ways of exploring and communicating complex concepts.
- **Practical Contribution:** The J-Curve model and Deferring Judgement Framework provide actionable tools for navigating the individual and collective dimensions of deferring judgement, making them applicable to real-world creative processes and collaborative settings.
- **Ethical Contribution:** The research promotes inclusive, empathetic practices that honour diverse ways of knowing, including a more-than-human perspective that acknowledges the interconnectedness of human creativity with environmental and ecological considerations.

By the conclusion, you will have engaged with both the intellectual and embodied dimensions of deferring judgement, offering new pathways for creativity, collaboration, and ethical engagement in scholarly discourse and practice.

To provide a sensory understanding of deferring judgement, refer to the watercolour “Splash” from the Fractals NTRO (Figure 3). This visual embodies the practice of deferring judgement, inviting you to reflect on the interplay between judgement and deferral. Let it inspire curiosity, openness, and new insights, much like the process of deferring judgement itself.

Figure 3: Splash Watercolour



“Splash” from the Fractals NTRO is your invitation to dive in. Feel the shock of the cold rush of water as you take the plunge. For a moment, everything is uncertain—the quiet beneath the water with the weight of the unknown holding you under. Then, a push upwards, a gasp of air, and a shimmering rush of light as you resurface and breathe in the possibilities. Created by a participant, this piece reflects the shared journey of exploring the depths of judgement and its deferral. Note: Unless featured in the structured review of Fractals, these watercolours will appear unexpectedly, inviting you to pause, reflect, and immerse yourself in the unpredictable currents of creative thought. They are visual reminders to embrace uncertainty, defer judgement, and discover new meanings in the unanticipated.

Chapter Overviews

Chapter 1: My Creative Practice and the Dance of Judgement

This chapter is an autoethnographic exploration of my creative practice, documenting how personal academic and professional experiences have shaped an understanding of creativity. It introduces the concept of deferring judgement and charts my personal transition towards a more holistic approach to understanding creativity.

Chapter 2: Transdisciplinary Framework

Building on Montuori's (2005, 2012) framework of transdisciplinary inquiry, this chapter develops a new integrated model for understanding creativity. It combines multiple disciplinary perspectives, creating a holistic framework that enhances the comprehension of creativity across different contexts.

Chapter 3: Transdisciplinary Exploration

Focusing on creativity from a transdisciplinary perspective, this chapter challenges conventional chronological approaches, favouring a dynamic and interconnected exploration of creativity.

Chapter 4: Origins of the Deferring Judgement Concept

This chapter traces the evolution of deferring judgement from a tool in creative problem-solving to a broader practice that transcends disciplinary boundaries. It explores the concept through multiple lenses, including non-Western philosophies fostering a more inclusive and dynamic understanding of creativity.

Chapter 5: Research Question and Methodology

This chapter outlines the research questions and methodology. It discusses the choice of methods and illustrates how these align with the thesis's objectives and facilitate the practical application of deferring judgement in fostering creativity and innovation.

Chapter 6: Autoethnographic Immersion

This chapter provides an in-depth autoethnographic immersion into my creative practice, with a particular focus on the J-Curve model's application. It reflects on the research

findings, examining how deferring judgement has shaped my own creative process and considering its broader implications for fostering creativity and scholarly inquiry.

Chapter 7: Unveiling Fractals

This chapter introduces the Fractals of Nature, a non-traditional research output (NTRO), an immersive, multisensorial event designed to embody and explore the principles of deferring judgement.

Chapter 8: Deferring Judgement Framework

This chapter explores the Deferring Judgement Framework, detailing its emergence, key components, and how it functions within creative collaboration. The chapter links the framework to deeper ethical practices that catalyse change in collaborative environments.

Chapter 9: Contribution to Knowledge

This chapter consolidates the key contributions of this research to creativity studies, transdisciplinary inquiry, and creative practice. It presents new theoretical insights, actionable frameworks, and innovative approaches that redefine how creative collaboration and the practice of deferring judgement can be applied across varied contexts. By bridging theory and practice, this chapter underscores the transformative potential of deferring judgement in fostering more expansive, inclusive, and ethical approaches to creativity.

Introductory Invitation to Engage with Deferring Judgement

Before engaging with the central arguments of the thesis, I invite you to experience deferring judgement through the watercolour prompt below (Figure 4). As you gaze upon the layers and colours, suspend immediate interpretations, allowing the artwork to guide your awareness. Let this be a lived experience of deferring judgement, where meanings and possibilities emerge beyond the visible.

Figure 4: Unfolding Watercolour



The “Unfolding” from the Fractals NTRO invites a moment of suspended judgement. Feel the warmth radiate from each petal, softening your gaze as you explore the layers and shades. In this openness, let unconscious connections arise, sensing possibilities beyond the visible. The complementary colours create a visual dance of letting go, allowing new meanings to emerge. Created by a participant.

Chapter 1

My Creative Practice and the Dance of Judgement

1.1. Introduction

This chapter explores my creative practice through an autoethnographic lens, revealing how my academic journey and personal experiences have shaped my understanding of creativity. Central to this inquiry is the concept of deferring judgement, which I first encountered in structured creativity training. In these early stages, the concept was taught as a procedural tool, emphasising technique over intuition. Over time, I found this application limiting, as it overlooked more embodied and metaphysical dimensions of both deferring judgement and creativity. By integrating these often-overlooked aspects, my practice evolved into a holistic framework that transcends disciplinary boundaries, supporting my pursuit of a transdisciplinary approach to creativity.

This chapter sets the stage for the thesis's broader exploration of how deferring judgement can open new possibilities for creativity and collaboration, aligning theory and practice. Before you begin, take a moment to pause: What might unfold if you were to defer judgement as you explore the personal narratives within this chapter? Allow yourself to engage with the contrasts between structured methods and intuitive approaches, remaining open to the tensions so possibilities may arise.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.

—Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

Dickens's iconic words, reflecting the paradoxes and dualities of his time, surfaced in my mind during an ordinary walk to work—a moment where an embodied experience sparked a deeper understanding of my research into deferring judgement. This seemingly simple

incident exemplifies a key finding—creativity is inherently embodied, often emerging in unexpected moments of everyday life.

The contradictions Dickens explores, born from revolutions that promised freedom and liberty but were marked by bloodshed and brutality, resonate deeply with the central tension I explore in this thesis: the power and necessity of judgement alongside the transformative potential of its deferral.

Judgement, much like the revolutions of Dickens's era, wields a dual-edged sword. It can catalyse change, bring clarity, and carve paths through chaos. Yet, it can also restrict possibilities, impose rigid structures, and sustain cycles of conflict and inequity. This thesis explores how engaging with judgement—and learning to defer it—can open fertile ground for creativity, ethical reflection, and collaborative innovation.

1.2. Studying Creativity

My academic journey into the study of creativity began with a Master of Science in Creativity at the International Center for Studies in New York State from 2012 to 2014. During this formative period, I encountered the crucial concept of deferring judgement, which would later shape my doctoral research profoundly. Despite the valuable insights gained from this programme, I felt a persistent discomfort with the field. There seemed to be a reluctance to engage fully with the embodied and intuitive dimensions of creativity. These elusive, yet palpable, aspects suggested an unexplored language of creativity waiting to be articulated, ultimately inspiring me to pursue a PhD.

Reflecting on my earlier experiences, I appreciate that the focus on structured creative processes made creativity more accessible. However, it also imposed a specific judgement on how it should function. My current research aims to integrate both structured methods and the more intuitive, embodied aspects of creativity, demonstrating how these dimensions can work together synergistically.

At that time, I lacked the language to fully understand the tension between mechanised, formulaic approaches to creativity and more embodied, intersubjective ways of knowing. Over time, however, deferring judgement became a catalyst for more profound insights. As I began to understand its fuller implications, this embodied approach reshaped my perspective, revealing how the often ineffable aspects of creativity are essential to a complete understanding—extending beyond discourse into a way of being.

I started my doctoral journey in the business school at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS). Despite my two decades in industry leading innovation projects and teams, the business school was not the right choice for me. The rigid insistence on quantitative methods contradicted my holistic approach to understanding creativity. Fortunately, I was directed to the Transdisciplinary School (TD School) at UTS, marking a pivotal shift in my academic journey. The true essence of transdisciplinarity became clearer through engaging in transdisciplinary scholar Alfonso Montuori's work, particularly his article on *Gregory Bateson and the Promise of Transdisciplinarity* (2005). Montuori's ideas catalysed a profound shift in my understanding.

First, Montuori's (2005) refusal to dismiss creativity's metaphysical dimensions resonated with my quest for a more nuanced exploration. In a field often dominated by quantifiable outcomes and structured methods, his recognition of the intangible—those aspects of creativity that transcend the material—gave me permission to embrace the ineffable. This was a significant turning point for me, as it helped clarify that creativity is not merely about producing artefacts or ideas but is also a profound, emergent process that touches on something deeper and more elusive.

Second, Montuori's (2005) challenge to psychology's reductive claims about creativity affirmed my own experiences as a creative practitioner. His acknowledgement of creativity's artistic aspects counterbalanced the overly cognitive approaches I had encountered. As I understood it, creativity could not be fully captured through psychological frameworks that compartmentalised and categorised human behaviour. His work supported my view that creativity thrives in spaces where artistic expression is free from rigid analysis, allowing for a richer and more authentic engagement with the process.

Moreover, Montuori's (2005) embrace of transdisciplinary thinking was another key element that shaped my journey. His critique of reductionist academia aligned with my growing discomfort in contexts prioritising narrow disciplinary boundaries. He offered a way of thinking that integrated multiple ways of knowing—an approach that felt both liberating and essential for understanding the complexity of creativity. This shift towards transdisciplinary inquiry allowed me to explore creativity holistically, acknowledging that it exists at the intersection of diverse fields, experiences, and insights.

Finally, Montuori's (2005) insistence on going beyond theory and grounding creativity in practice profoundly influenced my own approach. He honoured creativity's

multifaceted, emergent, and relational nature, bridging the gap between academic study and lived experience. This was a significant revelation for me. I realised that creativity is not just something to be studied from afar but something to be lived and embodied. His perspective helped me better understand the nuances of collaborative creative work, where creativity unfolds in dynamic, unpredictable ways shaped by the interactions and relationships of those involved.

Montuori's (2005) recognition of creativity's metaphysical and artistic dimensions validated my growing discomfort with mechanistic models of creativity. This shift also highlighted the potential of transdisciplinary inquiry in practice, helping me navigate the complexities of collaborative creative sessions more effectively. For example, in my facilitation work, I began inviting participants into more embodied, intuitive exercises, directly applying these insights on creativity as a dynamic, emergent process.

1.3. Defining My Creative Practice

As a creativity trainer, facilitator, and coach, my work is grounded in the embodied experience of facilitating collaborative creative sessions. Throughout my doctoral journey, the way I have characterised my creative practice has evolved—from a focus on procedural aspects (what I do), to relational and contextual dimensions (why it matters and what is happening between us), and finally, to an ontological perspective (a way of being). This evolution has been broadly placed under the banner of “creativity training and coaching,” an elegantly vague term that says what it is but leaves much to the imagination, which suits me, as I view these descriptors as mere navigation tools. However, I appreciate that a certain level of granularity is necessary, especially in a doctoral journey about practice-led research. Nevertheless, I now empathise deeply with those who resist characterising their practice, as this process can diminish some of its magic by making it procedural and clinical.

Despite my reluctance and frustration each time I have tackled this section on describing my practice (judgement), I have found that insightful discoveries emerge from sitting with it (the deferral, which is an embodied, intuitive, and abductive process). Initially, I whinged about the boredom of trying to capture in words the ineffable. For instance, when I take a brief to run a creative session, am I listening, attuning, sensing, discerning the words or their subtext, or all of the above? These questions come from experience and represent more

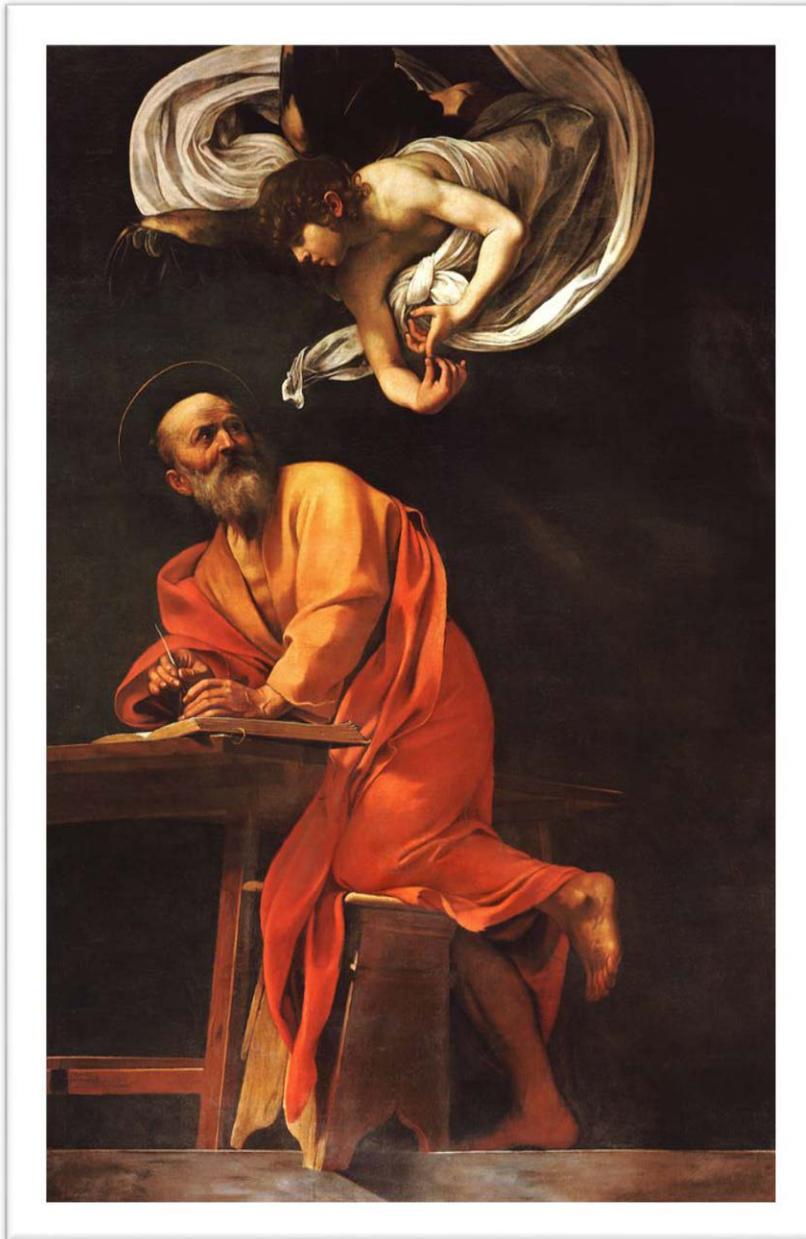
nuanced skills than those taught in creativity training and coaching, yet they do not solve the dilemma of describing my practice.

I liken this to knowing how to dance but being compelled to break it down into steps when the beauty of movement comes not from the steps themselves but from the rhythmic flow honed over years of practice. Even film cannot fully capture this essence; hence, I resist describing my practice, as it feels overly clinical.

In light of this, I invite you to pause and engage in a sensory experience: perhaps take a walk or make a cup of tea before we continue with the next section, which unites the procedural, contextual, and ontological aspects of my practice. *As I did the same and walked down the hallway, I wondered if this brief interlude would have any effect.*

However, when I returned to my writing, the phrase “chiaroscuro spirit” emerged spontaneously, and I realised I had travelled back in my mind to Rome when I was nineteen. I had studied painting and drawing there during the summer between graduating from high school and starting art school in the autumn. During that time, we were given an art history tour of Rome, which included a visit to a Michelangelo Caravaggio (1602) masterpiece, *The Inspiration of Saint Matthew*, tucked away in the chapel of the Church of San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Inspiration of St. Matthew



The painting's interplay of light and shadow, secrecy and revelation, mirrors the tensions in my creative process—balancing vulnerability and protection, structure and spontaneity. It embodies the profound journey of deferring judgement and embracing transformation, which is central to my practice. The licensed image is courtesy of The Creative Method, 2019, and it is used with permission.

The painting is one of my favourites, and its story is an apt allegory for discussing the vulnerabilities of laying bare the intricacies of a creative practice. What draws me in is the

dynamic interplay between secrecy and revelation, temptation and awakening. While the painting was once interpreted through a purely sexual lens, a great scandal at the time, I see a more profound, more intimate charge—one that heralds a profound awakening yet is tinged with fear and hesitation.

In the image, Saint Matthew seems almost to hide the words he is writing, shielding them from the revealing gestures of the angel. His richly hued saffron robes symbolise creativity and awakening, yet his unshorn feet remind one of the earthly vulnerability that accompanies such moments of inspiration. It is a powerful depiction of the paradoxes inherent in a creative practice—the desire to reveal and the temptation to conceal, the longing for transformation and the fear of the unknown.

This dance between revelation and concealment, between opening oneself to new perspectives and clinging to the familiar, resonates deeply with the tensions inherent in discussing my practice. I can see why it is about deferring judgement at its heart, where my judgements, when fully revealed with my preconceptions and assumptions laid bare, allow me with careful, sacred vulnerability to sense the multiplicities of beingness and identities.

In this light, the act of laying bare the intricacies of my creative practice becomes not merely an intellectual exercise but a profound invitation to embody the very principles I seek to elucidate—a willingness to hold paradox, defer judgement, and remain open to the ongoing process of revelation and transformation that lies at the heart of creative endeavours.

This experience mirrors the final distillation of my practice. My work is fundamentally intersubjective, embodied, and emergent—unfolding in the unseen spaces of intuition, tacit sensing, and the interplay between catalyst and collaborators. How could such ephemeral dynamics be rendered into a sterile set of procedures?

Pushed to the brink of surrender, I stepped away, allowing the entire endeavour to incubate. Moreover, in that respite, that liminal space of deferred judgement, the truth emerged with striking clarity: Beneath the seeming chaos of my process lay an elegant schema. This choreography had been guiding my steps all along. The true essence of my practice unfolds in the liminal spaces; it is the connective tissue binding my practice and making it complete.

The journey of deferring judgement begins by cultivating a state of vulnerable openness akin to what is depicted in the Caravaggio painting. Through techniques such as

activating peripheral vision, breathwork, and physical movement, I shift into a state of deep curiosity and attunement.

From this fertile ground, the process unfolds as an intricate choreography of structure and spontaneity. The familiar rhythms of questioning, ideation, optimisation, and decision-making provide a sense of momentum, a container within which true alchemy can take place. Nevertheless, it is in the liminal spaces between these structured elements where the real magic emerges.

As a catalyst and a creative practitioner, I create a crucible where vulnerability and protection coexist by keeping participants engaged through varied activities, shifting physical environments, and allowing ample space for connection and reflection. It is a space where paradoxes can be held, tensions explored, and where the unfolding possibilities of the creative process can be experienced without the constraints of judgement or the need for complete comprehension.

It demands an acute presence, an attunement to the ebb and flow of the collective, and a willingness to surrender to the currents of emergence. My practice is not about solving issues or imposing solutions but about opening spaces for collaborative creativity to flourish. At its core, my creative practice is an ontological way of being—a holistic approach honouring the full depths of human experience and the paradoxes inherent in the creative process. It is a living, breathing practice that resists rigid categorisation, instead embracing the dynamic interplay between structure and emergence, vulnerability and protection, individual and collective.

This conception of creative practice as an ontological, transdisciplinary way of being carries profound implications for my specific research aims and the broader field of creativity studies. By resisting rigid categorisation and embracing the paradoxical dynamism of creative endeavours, new pathways for understanding and catalysing it are unveiled.

In many ways, the vivid descriptions of my practice evoke the ephemeral and embodied qualities of music or dance. Just as Caravaggio's (1602) masterpiece invites endless reinterpretation, my creative practice also resists facile categorisation. It is a living embodiment of the very principles it seeks to illuminate—a willingness to embrace uncertainty, to hold multiple perspectives, and to remain ever-present in the unfolding mystery at the heart of creativity.

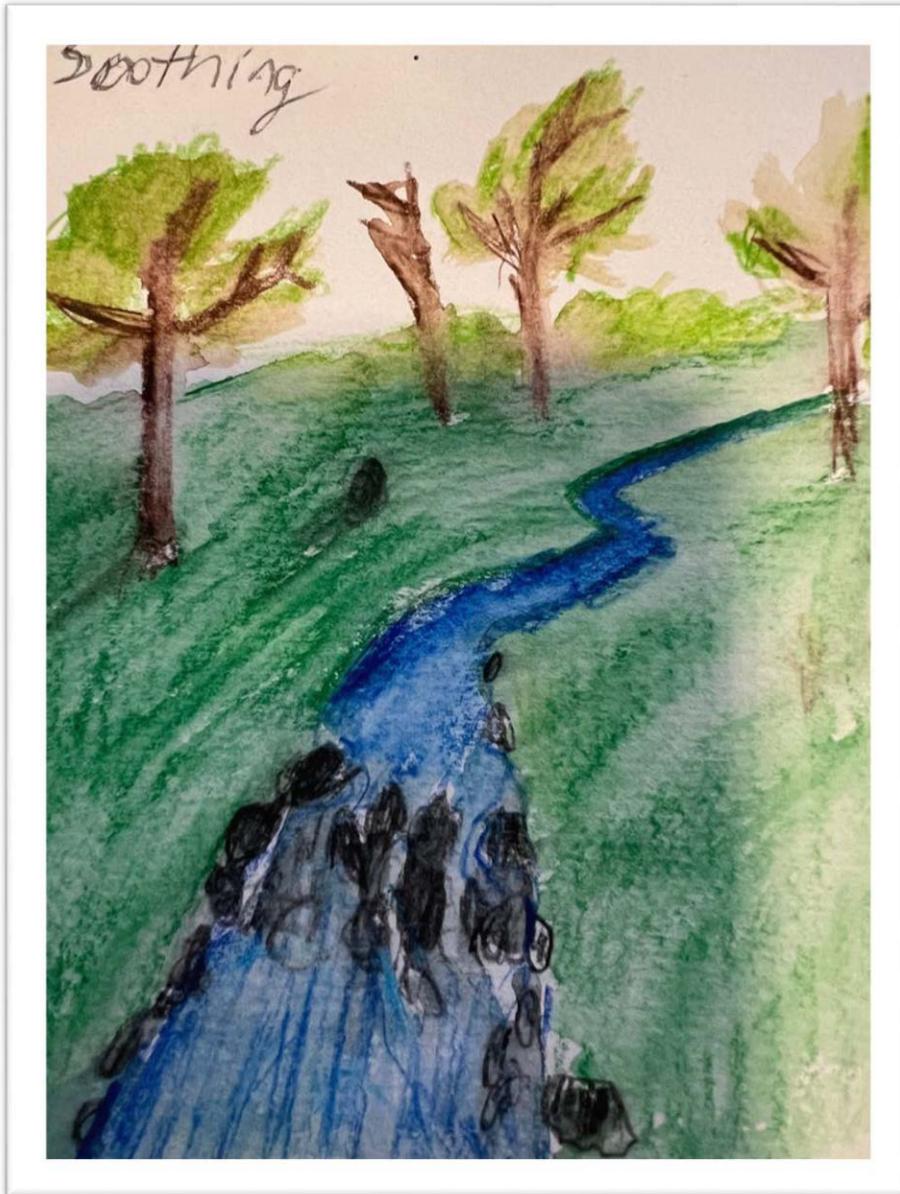
1.4. Summary

This chapter has provided an autoethnographic account of my creative practice, illustrating how deferring judgement has emerged as a foundational principle in my work and research. I have developed a more holistic understanding of creativity by integrating structured methodologies with more intuitive, embodied approaches.

This reflective process forms the foundation for the rest of the thesis, which will explore how deferring judgement transforms collaborative environments, fostering inclusivity and ethical engagement. As we move forward, we will explore these themes through both theoretical inquiry and the experiential elements of this research, offering practical insights into how deferring judgement can revolutionise creative processes.

As you reflect on this chapter, consider how deferring judgement might shape your understanding of creativity and collaboration as we explore this concept more broadly. Stay open to the layers of meaning that may continue to emerge as you move forward in this exploration of creativity. On the next page, you will find the watercolour “Flow of Presence,” which serves as an embodied prompt to provide another way into deferring judgement.

Figure 6: Flow of Presence Watercolour



“Flow of Presence” from the Fractals NTRO. It serves as a reminder of the delicate balance between judgement and deferral, inviting you to step into this liminal space where new meanings can emerge beyond initial interpretations. Like the creative practice I have described, the watercolour reflects the fluid, ever-unfolding nature of creativity, encouraging you to pause and embrace the possibilities that arise in moments of suspended judgement—created by a participant.

Chapter 2

Transdisciplinary Framework

2.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a transdisciplinary framework for understanding creativity, grounded in spaces where diverse perspectives intersect and transform. I build on Montuori's (2005, 2012) foundational framework for transdisciplinary inquiry, which outlines key principles but stops short of offering a fully applied model. My research advances this by developing two versions of the framework: the original and the final, evolved Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model.

The original version was developed early in my research, drawing on Montuori's framework and incorporating elements such as an inquiry-driven focus, cross-paradigmatic connections, and reflexive practices. However, further reflection revealed a need for greater clarity and practical application, which led to the creation of the final, evolved version. This model provides a more robust structure for integrating multiple ways of knowing and bridges theory and practice by demonstrating how creativity can be explored and applied across disciplines. Through this visualisation, I offer a tangible tool for creative inquiry, illustrating how transdisciplinary principles can be operationalised in real-world contexts.

By discussing both versions, I demonstrate the progression of my thinking and the model's increasing applicability. The final, evolved version significantly contributes to transdisciplinary inquiry, facilitating more effective creative collaborations that transcend disciplinary boundaries.

Before you begin, take a moment to consider how deferring judgement could broaden your perspective as you explore the transdisciplinary framework. What possibilities might arise if you approach this exercise with openness? Allow yourself to remain curious about how integrating multiple disciplines can reveal new insights into creativity and complexity.

It's not beginnings and ends that count, but middles. Things and thoughts advance or grow out from the middle, and that's where you have to get to work, that's where everything unfolds.

— Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972-1990*

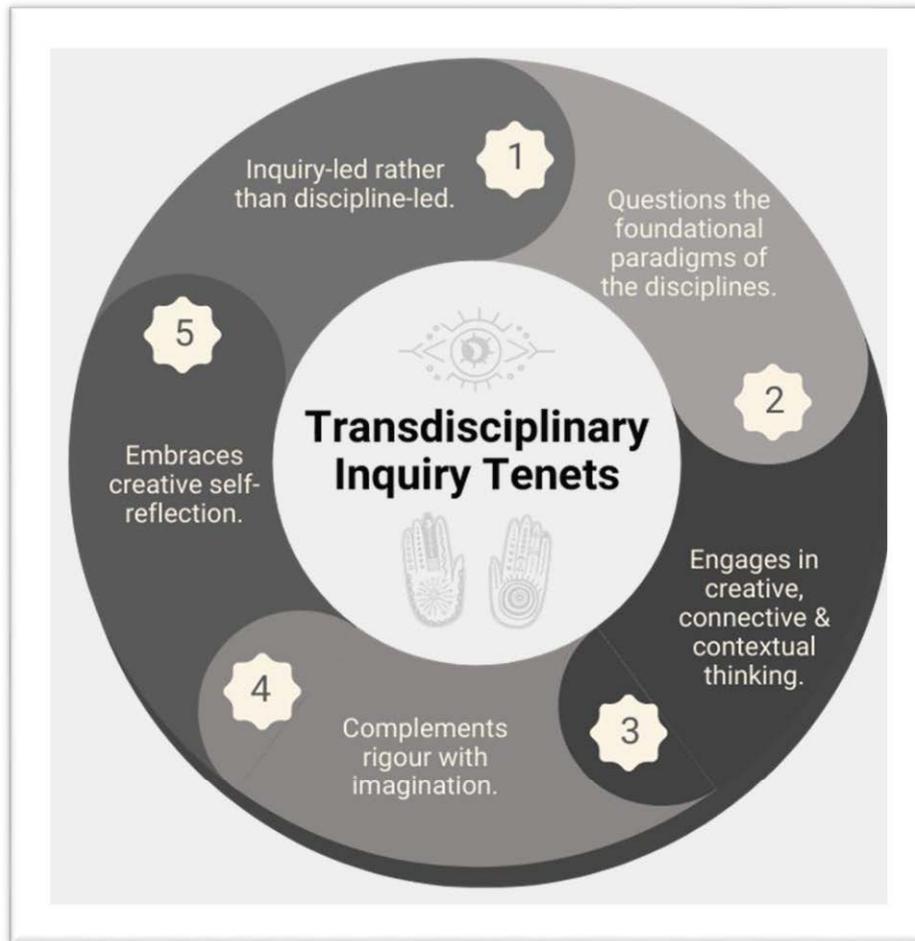
Deleuze's concept of 'middles,' where creativity grows and unfolds from dynamic intersections, echoes the transdisciplinary nature of this thesis. It complements Montuori's (2005, 2012) framework by reinforcing the idea that creativity emerges at the intersections of diverse perspectives, providing fertile ground for deferring judgement and exploring new possibilities. This understanding aligns with the aim of this thesis—to demonstrate that creativity is not static but unfolds through embodied, reflective engagement and by integrating knowledge from various disciplines.

Montuori's (2005, 2012) framework of transdisciplinary inquiry provides a foundation for this thesis, guiding the exploration of deferring judgement, integrating diverse perspectives, and navigating intersections where new possibilities arise. His work promotes open, imaginative, and reflective engagement with complex phenomena, aligning with this thesis's principles of embracing complexity, uncertainty, and deferring judgement.

2.2. Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model

Montuori's (2005, 2012) framework, grounded in his scholarly, artistic, and educational practice, offers a heuristic for navigating complex phenomena by balancing rigour, imagination, and reflexivity. While his framework provides a conceptual foundation, he did not formalise it into a specific model. Building on his ideas, I have developed a visual representation that illustrates how these foundational principles have evolved through my research. This model is grounded in a relational ontology, drawing on phenomenology, complexity theory, and practice-led research, where knowledge is understood as emergent, embodied, and co-constructed. It assumes that reality is not fixed or universal but formed through interaction, perception, and intersubjective processes. This visualisation marks the progression and iterative nature of transdisciplinary thought, reflecting my engagement with these concepts and their practical application (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model (Original)



This visual depiction of Montuori's (2005, 2012) framework conveys knowledge beyond words. It includes symbolic and sensory elements such as hands (representing the body in action and relationality) and the third eye (suggesting intuition and awareness beyond rational cognition), which point to a metaphysical stance grounded in multiplicity and experiential knowing. These elements are not intended to reference specific cultural cosmologies but to evoke the diversity of epistemologies required to address complex, transdisciplinary challenges. The author created it in 2023 using Canva Pro.

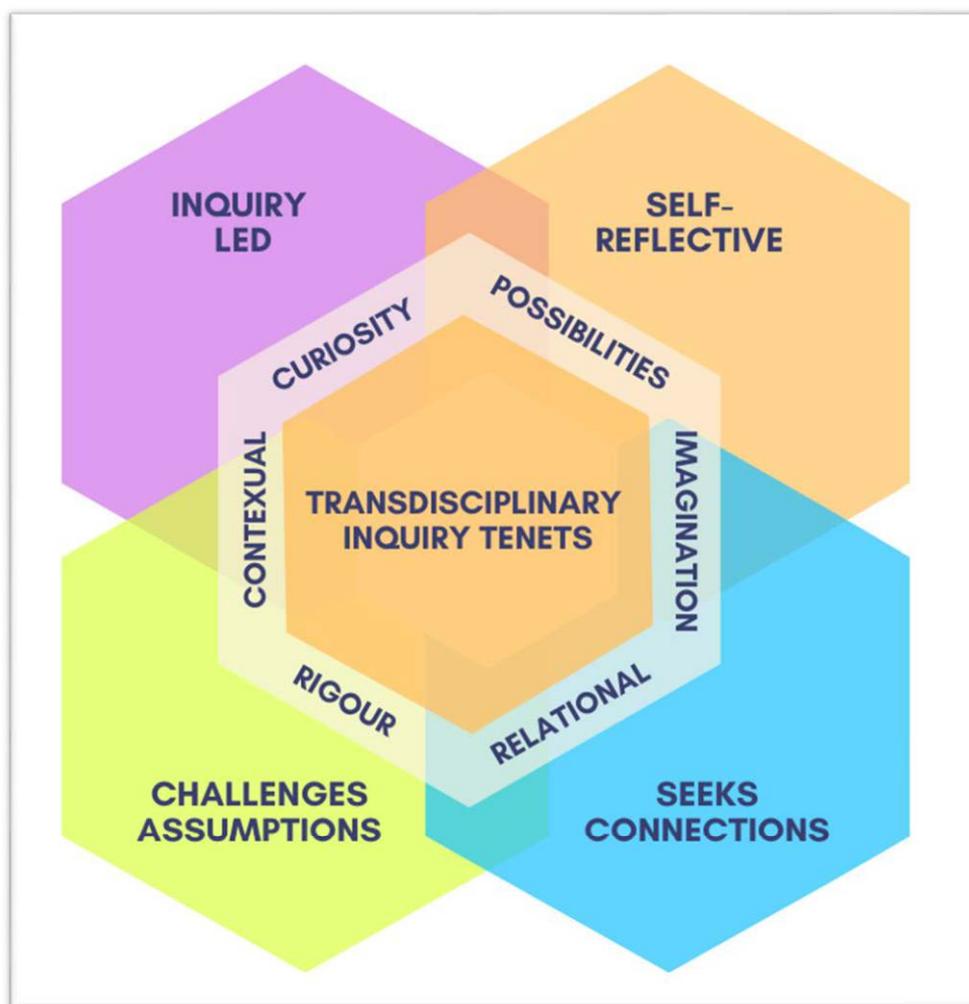
Evolution of the Framework Visuals

The shift from a circular model (Figure 7) to the hexagonal design (Figure 8) marks a deeper understanding of transdisciplinary thinking. The hexagon, chosen for its strength and adaptability, symbolises interconnectedness, reflecting the principles of transdisciplinary inquiry. In nature, hexagonal forms like honeycombs support collective organisation and

efficient information flow, making it a fitting metaphor for this model's integrated approach to knowledge sharing and creativity.

This model also aligns with sensory principles in natural systems, such as the complex communication found in superorganisms. These elements later inform the immersive Fractals NTRO, where participants engage with sensory cues and interconnectedness, illustrating how structured systems and sensory experiences intersect to create space for deferring judgement and fostering creative insights.

Figure 8: Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model (Evolved)



This hexagonal model illustrates the evolved Transdisciplinary Inquiry Framework, building on Montuori's (2005, 2012) principles. Each hexagon represents core elements like curiosity, rigour, and relationality, with overlapping colours emphasising their fluid, interconnected nature. Created by the author in 2024 using Canva Pro.

2.3. Exploring the Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model

The evolved Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model, which builds on Montuori's (2005, 2012) framework, offers a dynamic, integrative approach to understanding creativity and other complex phenomena. By transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries, it seeks to bring together diverse fields through five interrelated principles that are foundational to this thesis and applied throughout, particularly in the literature review. These principles are outlined below with illustrative examples that foreshadow their application in later chapters.

- **Inquiry-Driven Focus:** This model begins with open-ended inquiry, encouraging questions that push beyond conventional thinking. For instance, instead of relying solely on psychology's established theories of creativity, the literature review delves into unexpected contexts like creation myths, high art, and non-Western epistemologies, setting the stage for more nuanced insights.
- **Cross-Paradigmatic Approach:** The model promotes cross-disciplinary synthesis, drawing from multiple paradigms to reveal overlaps. In the literature review, perspectives from cognitive science, anthropology, and philosophy are brought together to form a more integrated understanding of creativity as both an individual process and a socio-cultural phenomenon.
- **Holistic Thinking:** This principle advocates for examining creativity through interconnected lenses—cognitive, emotional, social, and environmental. The literature review, for example, explores how economic conditions, cultural histories, and personal experiences shape creative expression, highlighting its dynamic, relational nature.
- **Balancing Rigour with Imagination:** By integrating scholarly rigour with openness to novel insights, the model demonstrates how these approaches can complement each other. For example, the literature review juxtaposes complexity theory with artistic exploration, reframing creativity as an emergent, context-dependent process and blending analytical depth with imaginative perspectives.
- **Embracing Reflexivity and Creativity:** This principle recognises the influence of personal positionality and bias on knowledge creation. Throughout the literature review, a reflexive stance examines how my background and experiences shape my understanding of creativity, allowing for a more engaged and critical approach to the material.

2.4. Applying the Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model

The evolved Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model is applied throughout this thesis, particularly in the literature review, where it guides an exploration of creativity across diverse contexts. This model not only shapes the research structure but also cultivates an environment where deferring judgement becomes an integral part of the inquiry process. By fostering openness and adaptability, the model encourages a deeper, more nuanced engagement with complex phenomena like creativity.

The *inquiry-driven focus* of the model is realised through open-ended questions, such as “How does creativity manifest across different cultures?” and “What role does the environment play in fostering creativity?” These questions challenge conventional assumptions, inviting a transdisciplinary approach that goes beyond the confines of any single discipline and defers judgement by remaining open to multiple possibilities.

Adopting a *cross-paradigmatic approach*, the literature review draws on cognitive theories from psychology, socio-cultural theories from anthropology, and critical theories from the humanities. This synthesis of perspectives prevents premature conclusions, encouraging a comprehensive, multifaceted view of creativity that values both depth and breadth.

Holistic thinking ensures that the review considers creativity through interconnected factors—cognitive, emotional, social, and environmental. By holding these factors in dynamic tension, the model promotes a reflective stance that resists oversimplification, thereby deferring judgement to allow complex relationships to emerge organically.

Through *balancing rigour with imagination*, the review reframes established knowledge while generating new hypotheses. This principle aligns with deferring judgement by blending scholarly analysis with imaginative exploration, enabling insights to unfold without immediately constraining them within rigid frameworks.

Embracing reflexivity acknowledges the influence of personal assumptions and biases, encouraging a critical self-awareness that aligns with the practice of deferring judgement. Reflexivity keeps the inquiry open to revision and new discoveries, grounding the research in a dynamic, evolving understanding of creativity.

The application of the Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model throughout this thesis exemplifies transdisciplinary inquiry’s flexible, evolving nature, enabling it to adapt to the complexities of creativity. This approach fosters a research process where deferring

judgement is not merely a strategy but a foundational ethos, enabling a richer exploration of diverse perspectives.

While this model's practical application highlights its strengths, it also reveals several challenges and limitations inherent to this open-ended approach. Deferring judgement can lead to ambiguity and require a tolerance for uncertainty, underscoring the importance of balancing open exploration with structured analysis. This tension reflects the model's commitment to both theoretical rigour and adaptive, creative engagement, showcasing the potential and challenges of applying transdisciplinary inquiry in real-world contexts.

Addressing Challenges and Limitations

While the Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model offers a holistic approach to understanding creativity, its openness introduces several challenges. One of the most significant is balancing depth with breadth. Engaging deeply with specific domains while drawing connections across multiple fields requires navigating a fine line—avoiding a superficial exploration that loses disciplinary richness, yet remaining integrative enough to foster meaningful connections.

This model's value lies in its structured flexibility, which enables researchers to hold space for complexity while providing a scaffold for integrating insights across disciplines. By fostering an inquiry-driven, open-ended approach, the model invites researchers to explore creativity as a dynamic, emergent phenomenon rather than a fixed attribute confined to any single field.

Another key challenge is bridging different epistemologies. Transdisciplinary work often demands the integration of diverse knowledge systems and methodologies, ranging from qualitative to quantitative approaches and from subjective cultural perspectives to more universal scientific paradigms. Reconciling these different epistemological assumptions can be difficult, as each discipline operates within its own frameworks and standards. Successfully navigating these divides is essential for moving beyond traditional disciplinary thinking, and the model's structured yet adaptable design provides a unique contribution in guiding this reconciliation process.

Moreover, the wide range of perspectives can lead to cognitive overload, complicating the maintenance of focus and clarity. The sheer volume of information can be overwhelming, potentially diluting the quality and coherence of insights. Additionally, the absence of established frameworks for transdisciplinary inquiry makes it challenging to

assess the quality or validity of the research. Without clear guidelines, the process can feel more uncertain and experimental.

Collaboration across disciplines also presents challenges. Transdisciplinary work often involves stakeholders from various fields, each with distinct terminologies, methods, and expectations. Effective communication can be difficult, and the interdisciplinary nature of the work may lead to misaligned goals or misunderstandings.

Despite these challenges, the flexibility of the Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model enables researchers to embrace complexity and navigate the tension between structure and openness. By balancing structured inquiry with adaptability, the model empowers researchers to connect diverse perspectives without compromising depth. This dynamic, evolving approach mirrors the essence of deferring judgement, encouraging a more nuanced understanding by integrating diverse perspectives. By acknowledging and engaging with these challenges, researchers can foster deeper insight and innovation, making the model a powerful tool for exploring creativity in all its complexity.

Closing Reflections: Embodied Knowledge and Fluidity of Knowing

The Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model advances Montuori's (2005, 2012) framework by providing a structured yet adaptable pathway for applying transdisciplinary principles in practice. By operationalising these principles through an interactive model, this thesis contributes to the growing field of transdisciplinary inquiry, offering a scaffold that other researchers can build upon to foster creative collaborations across disciplines.

As I navigated the intricacies of this framework, it became clear that knowledge is not a static entity but an evolving, dynamic process. The shift from a circular to a hexagonal model captures this ongoing understanding, illustrating how diverse perspectives intersect to generate new perspectives. Yet, this process is never truly complete. Much like creativity itself, understanding continually unfolds—always partial, always in motion. The progression from the original circular model to the final hexagonal model exemplifies this evolution, marking a direct contribution to transdisciplinary inquiry.

At the heart of this inquiry lies the interplay between intellectual knowledge and embodied experience. While theories and models provide structure, they must also acknowledge the role of the body and lived experience. Multisensory engagement allows individuals to experience and integrate knowledge both cognitively and through embodied

interaction, deepening understanding and enhancing knowledge transfer. This process reflects how knowledge flows through systems in both conscious and unconscious ways. It is less about reaching final answers and more about staying open to the emergent nature of understanding. By deferring judgement and embracing incompleteness, this process creates space for creativity to flourish within the tension of the unknown. This dynamic movement—between certainty and uncertainty, intellect and embodiment—is a reminder that creativity and knowledge are in constant flux, inviting deeper engagement with their complexity.

Personally, I found that engaging with this framework and linking the theory and history of creativity with its practice was invigorating. This process unearthed insights that might have been missed in a strictly linear, disciplinary approach. However, I also encountered challenges. The inherent complexity of a transdisciplinary approach can feel disorienting for those accustomed to chronological or narrowly focused disciplinary views. Bridging epistemologies is demanding, yet essential for fostering innovation. At times, the diversity of perspectives felt diffuse or overwhelming, particularly when striving to maintain a coherent narrative.

Despite these challenges, embracing this complexity is crucial for a richer understanding of creativity. This approach, embodying the principles of deferring judgement, ultimately offers a more nuanced and holistic exploration that bridges theory and practice. It sets the stage for the next chapter's exploration of how other scholars have illuminated the pathways of innovation and the embodied nature of creative breakthroughs.

2.5. Summary

This chapter advances the study of creativity by proposing a transdisciplinary model that transcends traditional, discipline-specific boundaries. By integrating Montuori's (2005, 2012) foundational ideas. Integrating diverse perspectives fosters a holistic understanding of creativity and deferring judgement, inviting active knowledge construction. The next chapter's literature review will contextualise these insights, showing the model's relevance to scholarship and creative practice. Deferring judgement aids in navigating this model's complexity, enhancing openness to interconnected viewpoints and enriching the exploration of creativity.

Reflect on how deferring judgement shapes your transdisciplinary perspective and how it might deepen your engagement with the ideas that follow.

Mythic Tale Introduction

Before moving into the transdisciplinary literature review, I invite you to pause and engage with a metaphorical reflection that encapsulates the essence of this inquiry—the interplay between stability and transformation, judgement and deferral, presence and absence.

In the following story, “The Dawning,” the owl and the tree embody the ongoing dance of a creative practice, where beginnings and endings blur, and each return becomes a space for continual negotiation and renewal. As you read, I encourage you to open yourself to the possibilities it presents, embracing the uncertainties and creative tensions at the heart of deferring judgement.

From this point onward, these tales will appear unannounced, marked by a distinctive font and bordered to signal a shift into the mythical and embodied. Each story invites you to suspend certainty, linger in ambiguity, and welcome unexpected insights. Engage deeply with the unknown, exploring spaces where creativity flourishes and new understandings emerge. As these narratives unfold, allow yourself to withhold judgement and remain open to their multiple layers of meaning, much like the creative process— a journey that resists predetermination yet beckons you home.



The Dawning

An owl sound wandered along the road with me.

I didn't hear it—I breathed it into my ears.

—William Stafford, *Malheur Before Dawn*

The owl is winging her way home again, conflicted about what awaits her return. She is proud, scornfully admiring the sturdy oak tree she calls “her” own, even as she knows he belongs to others whose stories are entwined with hers. Though she holds no unique claim, their bond extends far back—before she was born—bearing witness to a shared history.

In the harsh sun of the day, she will sleep alone, her visage nocturnally drawn. Her hollow was once vibrant with her family’s voices. Her parents, her two older siblings—one by one, they have been consigned to the earth and dust. Now, the family lair is hers to rearrange as she wishes, both a curse and a blessing. She mourns the loss, for she is neither young nor old, yet she finds relief in the quiet unshackling from those who named her, who anchored her identity.

Their voices linger, not in flesh but as ghosts crowding her thoughts, offering peace and grief. She is thankful that this steadfast tree holds their memories. When their echoes grow too loud, the owl gathers them as feathers to line her nest, softening the down to comfort her when she returns at dawn. These memories, woven into her nest, cradle her in solace and bittersweet reflection.

In the constant unfolding of creativity, in the spinning stories of grief and joy, the owl and the tree reflect a dance of change and renewal. Each time she returns, she is not the same, and the judgements of who she once was fade into memory,

shifting with each visit. There is no creation from nothing; every beginning holds an ending, and each ending, a beginning. It is always a choice of where to begin, shaping how it ends.

The oak, rooted in a past born under a Northern Hemisphere canopy, stands as a witness under the Southern Cross, its branches reaching into a sky that is at once foreign and familiar. In the glow of nightfall, familiar constellations shift subtly, casting their light in a new orientation. Under this moonlit sky, the owl finally takes flight, embracing the uncertainties and possibilities that await her—a journey between memory and becoming, grounded in the past but open to the unfolding mystery of what lies ahead.

Chapter 3

Transdisciplinary Exploration

3.1. Introduction

This chapter explores creativity through a transdisciplinary lens, weaving together history, philosophy, myth, and anthropology to form a more interconnected understanding.

Embracing a non-linear approach, you are invited to move fluidly between different domains of thought. Each section offers a distinct perspective, contributing to a larger tapestry of creativity.

As you read, consider how these perspectives mirror and reflect one another. Phenomenological insights on lived, embodied experience intersect with critiques of positivism's focus on objectivity, while the modern history of creativity echoes earlier philosophical tensions between subjective intuition and scientific rationality. These intersections create opportunities for synthesis, revealing creativity as a rich, multifaceted process.

The Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model introduced in the previous chapter serves as a guiding framework for understanding the interactions of diverse knowledge systems (Montuori 2005, 2012). It encourages a holistic view that balances unity and diversity. As you engage with the multiple perspectives presented, reflect on how they integrate to form a broader understanding of creativity that transcends traditional boundaries.

The purpose of this chapter is not to present a single, unified theory but to invite you into a dialogue with these diverse traditions. By deferring judgement and remaining open to complexity, you are encouraged to see how these ideas might interconnect, offering a richer and more comprehensive view of creativity.

Before you begin, consider what might unfold if you defer judgement as you navigate this chapter's evolving perspectives. Let curiosity guide your exploration of creativity through these varied lenses.

3.2. Origin Story of Creativity

Understanding the multifaceted nature of creativity begins with exploring its etymology—a journey through the linguistic heritage of the term *create*. This exploration establishes a foundation for understanding creativity as a concept that spans both divine and human realms, encompassing mythic dimensions as well as artistic expression.

The term *create* has a rich linguistic heritage, drawing from Latin, Hebrew, Greek, Sanskrit, and Proto-Indo-European roots, all of which share themes of bringing into being, growth, and renewal (Glăveanu, 2013; Götz, 1981). Related words like *re-create*, *pro-create*, and *creator* prompt questions about whether creative acts arise from nothing or build upon existing elements and whether their origins are divine or secular (Pope, 2005). These concepts also align with the cognate *to generate*, meaning to give birth. Together, they suggest a working definition of creativity as a dynamic and transformative process of bringing something into existence—growing, renewing, and giving birth—guided by an agent imbued with the quality of creation.

This multiplicity reveals a tension between the divine and human aspects of creativity, suggesting a phenomenological perspective that sees creativity as a lived experience and a transdisciplinary approach that transcends single-domain boundaries. Extending creativity to include a divine or non-human agent aligns it with *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*—an awe-inspiring mystery beyond ordinary human understanding (Campbell, 1991). This mystical dimension interweaves with the artistic, reflecting Shakespeare’s notion that art mirrors nature’s awareness of its own sustaining force (Pope, 2005).

Creativity, Transdisciplinarity and Phenomenology

To fully understand creativity’s transformative nature, consider its relationship with transdisciplinarity and phenomenology, both of which provide essential frameworks for viewing creativity as a holistic phenomenon.

Transdisciplinarity, from the Latin ‘trans’ (across, beyond) and ‘disciplina’ (teaching, instruction), moves beyond traditional academic disciplines to foster integrated, holistic knowledge and problem-solving approaches (Michelkevičius & Gedutis, 2023; Scholz & Steiner, 2015a). This approach is particularly suited to the study of creativity because both creativity and transdisciplinarity require moving beyond established boundaries—whether

disciplinary or creative conventions—to generate new knowledge (McWilliam et al., 2008; Montuori, 2005, 2013; Rigolot, 2020; Scholz & Steiner, 2015b, 2015a).

Phenomenology, focused on the study of lived experience, complements both creativity and transdisciplinarity by emphasising subjective experience (Gallagher, 2022; Gill, 2014; Helin et al., 2014; Husserl, 2012; Macann, 1993; Moran & Mooney, 2002). Etymologically rooted in the Greek terms for ‘that which appears’ and ‘allows to be studied,’ phenomenology involves directly investigating and describing experiences without preconceived theoretical explanations (Gallagher, 2022). It provides a lens through which new ideas emerge from the interplay between perception, consciousness, and the material world.

Viewed through a phenomenological lens, creativity involves the emergence of new phenomena within lived experience, shaped by both chaos and order through intentional, conscious acts. Similarly, transdisciplinarity, by integrating diverse perspectives, operates as both a phenomenological and creative process that aims to grasp the complexity of experiences that cannot be reduced to a single domain. Together, these perspectives offer a comprehensive understanding of creativity as a dynamic, emergent process.

Phenomenology acknowledges the inherent chaos of raw experience while aiming to uncover the essential structures and meanings that emerge through consciousness (Gallagher, 2022; Gill, 2014; Helin et al., 2014; Husserl, 2012; Macann, 1993; Moran & Mooney, 2002). Similarly, transdisciplinarity engages with the diverse perspectives that transcend disciplinary boundaries, integrating them into coherent frameworks (McWilliam et al., 2008; Montuori, 2005, 2013; Rigolot, 2020; Scholz & Steiner, 2015b, 2015a). Creativity harnesses the potential of this experiential chaos to give birth to new phenomena shaped by conscious intentions and choices (Glăveanu et al., 2016; Pope, 2005; Shapin, 2020).

Together, transdisciplinarity’s holistic integration, phenomenology’s focus on subjective experience, and creativity’s fluidity create a foundation for exploring complex, emergent ideas beyond traditional boundaries, inviting an interconnected and open-minded approach to understanding creativity.

Positivist Paradigm

To further understand these ideas, it is essential to consider how they emerged against the backdrop of Western intellectual thought. During the Middle Ages, the fusion of Aristotelian

empiricism with Christian theology shaped how knowledge was conceived, leading to dualistic concepts like mind/body and subject/object that would influence later thinking (B. Hanson, 2015; Tarnas, 1996/2010).

Positivism, a 19th-century movement asserting that knowledge comes from direct observation and empirical evidence, built on the scientific revolution's success in explaining the natural world through empirical observation and mathematical reasoning (Guba, 1967; Lincoln & Denzin, 2003; Shapin, 2020). This revolution, led by prominent scientists such as Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton, established a mechanistic worldview based on universal laws and causal mechanisms (Westfall, 1977). Positivism further emphasised that all valid knowledge must be scientifically verifiable and that metaphysical speculation had no place in serious inquiry.

However, by the mid-20th century, the limitations of this mechanistic approach became evident, particularly in understanding complex human experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 2016). Dissatisfaction with positivism's reductionist tendencies and its inability to address the interconnectedness of reality led to new approaches. Phenomenology challenged positivist objectivity by prioritising lived experiences (Husserl, 2012), while transdisciplinarity responded to the limitations of strict disciplinary separation (McWilliam et al., 2008; Montuori, 2005, 2013; Rigolot, 2020; Scholz & Steiner, 2015b, 2015a). Creativity emerged as a bridge between these approaches, transcending rigid frameworks to embrace more fluid, non-linear thinking (Helin et al., 2014; Pope, 2005). This shift towards creativity, phenomenology, and transdisciplinarity reflects a growing openness to uncertainty and complexity—an approach that encourages deferring judgement.

3.3. Modern History of Creativity

The emergence of creativity as a scientific field is generally attributed to Joy Paul Guilford, an American psychologist whose pioneering work in the 1950s marked a significant shift in the study and understanding of creativity (Runco, 2014; Sawyer, 2011). Guilford's experience as a colonel in the US Army Air Forces during World War II, where he developed selection tests for military personnel, led him to recognise the critical role of creativity in problem-solving and decision-making under pressure (Guilford, 1967; Sawyer, 2011). This wartime context highlighted the value of creativity in high-stakes situations and influenced Guilford's focus on creativity as an essential cognitive skill.

Through these experiences, Guilford likely encountered the importance of embodied knowledge—a practical, situational awareness that extends beyond theoretical understanding. This idea resonates with phenomenological thinkers like Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who explored how the body and consciousness shape human experience (Gallagher, 2022; Gill, 2014). Although Guilford's ideas hinted at a more holistic view of creativity, he ultimately pursued a systematic approach, aligning with the dominant scientific paradigm of his time.

Guilford's Contributions to Creativity Research

In the post-war United States, amid Cold War tensions and the race for technological advancement, Guilford delivered a landmark address to the American Psychological Association in 1950, calling for a systematic, scientific approach to creativity research (Guilford, 1950). His keynote, considered seminal in creativity research, introduced influential concepts like *divergent* and *convergent thinking* (Runco & Pritzker, 2020; Sawyer, 2011). Divergent thinking refers to generating multiple unique ideas or solutions, while convergent thinking involves narrowing down options to identify the best solution.

Guilford also developed the *Structure of Intellect* model, a comprehensive framework identifying various intellectual abilities, including those related to creativity, such as *fluency* (the ability to generate ideas), *flexibility* (the ability to shift perspectives), and *originality* (the ability to produce novel ideas) (Guilford, 1967; Runco, 2014; Runco & Pritzker, 2020). By categorising creativity in this way, Guilford operationalised it as a measurable cognitive skill, aligning creativity with problem-solving and innovation (Pope, 2005; Sawyer, 2011).

American Ideals and the Science of Creativity

Guilford's approach to creativity was deeply influenced by American ideals and democratic principles. He promoted creativity as a universal human capability essential for protecting and advancing the American way of life (M. H. Hanson, 2015; Pope, 2005; Runco, 2001; Sawyer, 2011). His systematic approach reflected a belief that creativity could be developed in everyone and used as a tool for societal progress. This democratic view framed creativity as a valuable skill that could be nurtured and applied broadly, aligning with post-war American ideals of innovation and global leadership.

Guilford's (1950) call for creativity research prompts three key observations. First, creativity as a field of scientific study was infused with American ideals and democratic values (Pope, 2005). Second, Guilford positioned creativity as an essential human capability

that could be harnessed to address societal challenges. Third, he focused on creativity as a problem-solving tool, perhaps to the detriment of other aspects of creativity, such as self-expression and exploration.

A Mechanistic Approach vs. Holistic Perspectives

Guilford's (1950) focus on operationalising creativity as a problem-solving tool diverged sharply from earlier, more metaphysical views. Philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, for example, described creativity as the "principle of novelty," an abstract force that resists mechanistic definitions (Whitehead, 1929/1978, p. 81). His conception, fuelled by imagination, was far removed from the systematic, instrumental approach Guilford advocated.

The tension between Guilford's scientific reductionism and broader, holistic views of creativity set the stage for future developments in creativity research. While Guilford laid the groundwork for studying creativity as a cognitive skill, his approach left room for later perspectives that would see creativity as a complex, multifaceted phenomenon, shaped by individual expression, cultural context, and collaboration (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Runco, 2014).

Tracing Creativity's Roots in the Romantic Movement

Tracing creativity's roots back to the Romantic movement reveals an enduring divide between artistic and scientific conceptions of creativity. The emergence of the notion of *high art*—artistic endeavours considered to possess superior quality or significance within a particular cultural context—has had a lasting impact on how creativity is perceived and studied (Pope, 2005). Flourishing in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Romantic movement emphasised individual expression, emotion, and imagination as central to the creative process. Romantics viewed creativity as a mysterious, almost divine force that could not be fully explained or reduced to a set of rules or techniques.

This conception of creativity as a rare, exceptional quality possessed by a select few led to a dichotomy between everyday creativity and transcendent, "genius" creativity. Creativity became associated with the works of great artists, writers, and composers, contributing to the perception of creativity as an elusive and mysterious phenomenon accessible only to a chosen few. According to Pope (2005), this view has made creativity appear inaccessible to the average person.

Furthermore, the Romantic notion of the solitary, inspired genius reinforced the idea that creativity is an individual trait rather than a social and cultural process. This view downplayed the importance of collaboration, social interaction, and cultural context in shaping creative outcomes, leading to a narrow, individualistic understanding of creativity (Glăveanu, 2010; Montuori & Purser, 1995; Pope, 2005). This fascination with individual genius can also be seen as part of a broader cultural impulse toward mystery, uniqueness, and the unexplained — a desire to attribute creativity to something exceptional or ineffable. While this narrative has persisted, it has also obscured the more grounded, relational, and experiential dimensions of creativity.

The next section shifts focus from the mythologised figure of the genius to the lived experience of everyday creativity — creativity as something cultivated, shared, and embodied within social and material contexts.

Toward a Multidimensional Approach to Creativity

The false dichotomy between everyday creativity and genius-level creativity has influenced the scientific study of creativity by emphasising exceptional achievements while often overlooking the creative potential of ordinary individuals. This approach has reinforced the perception of creativity as a rare and exceptional quality, neglecting its more commonplace, yet equally valuable, manifestations.

Moreover, viewing creativity as an out-of-reach art form has contributed to the notion that creativity is a mysterious, ineffable process beyond scientific study. Sawyer (2012) argues that this perspective has hindered the development of an empirically grounded understanding of creativity, leading to reliance on anecdotal evidence and subjective accounts. In contrast, Pope (2005) suggests that the tension between metaphysical and reductionist approaches reflects the complexity of creativity. According to him, a comprehensive understanding of creativity requires recognising both its subjective, experiential aspects and its cognitive, problem-solving dimensions.

Supporting this broader view, contemporary researchers increasingly advocate for a multidimensional approach that acknowledges both everyday and exceptional forms of creativity (J. C. Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009). This inclusive approach bridges the gap between the Romantic notion of creativity as an inaccessible art form and scientific studies of creativity as a cognitive and social process.

The Social Psychology of Creativity and the We-Paradigm

The emergence of the social psychology of creativity has challenged the Romantic ideal of the lone genius, arguing instead that creativity is inherently a social and collaborative process (Montuori & Purser, 1995). This perspective, known as the *We-paradigm*, emphasises the importance of social interaction, cultural context, and collaborative networks in shaping creative outcomes (Glăveanu, 2010).

The We-paradigm draws on the work of psychologist Lev Vygotsky, who emphasised the role of social and cultural factors in cognitive development (Ayman-Nolley, 1992; Connery et al., 2010). He argued that social interaction and the internalisation of cultural tools and symbols shape higher mental functions, including creativity. This view highlights the importance of collaboration, dialogue, and cultural resources in the creative process.

Empirical evidence supports the idea of creativity as a social and collaborative phenomenon. For instance, studies show that individuals often generate more creative ideas when working in groups than alone, and exposure to diverse perspectives can enhance creative performance (Puccio et al., 2012; Putman & Paulus, 2009).

While collaboration can enhance creative potential, it also carries the risk of *groupthink* — the tendency toward consensus that can suppress dissent and reduce originality (Russell et al., 2015). This is particularly relevant in creative contexts, where the desire for harmony may override the need for divergence. The tension between individual insight and group agreement underscores the importance of deferring judgement not just as a personal strategy, but as a collective ethic — one that holds space for difference and resists the premature closure of ideas.

Beyond Divergent Thinking: The Role of Imagination

While the social psychology of creativity has expanded understanding, it also points to limitations in traditional approaches. Specifically, the focus on *divergent thinking*—the ability to generate multiple, unique ideas—may not fully capture the scope of creative potential (Glăveanu, 2015). Divergent thinking tasks, commonly used to assess creativity, often focus on generating ideas within specific contexts and may fail to account for the ability to transcend or challenge established norms.

To address these limitations, the field increasingly recognises the role of *imagination* in the creative process. Traditionally viewed separately from creativity, imagination involves

generating novel mental representations and engaging in counterfactual thinking (Runco & Pritzker, 2020). Although more image-oriented and less fact-based than divergent thinking, imagination enables individuals to transcend immediate constraints and envision new possibilities.

Vygotsky's work has been particularly influential in emphasising the role of imagination (Glăveanu, 2014). He highlighted the importance of play and fantasy in developing imaginative capacities, suggesting that these processes are central to creating new knowledge and transforming reality.

A Transdisciplinary and Phenomenological Approach to Creativity

The growing recognition of the importance of imagination in creativity, as evidenced by its inclusion in the *Encyclopedia of Creativity* (Runco & Pritzker, 2011), signals a shift towards a more transdisciplinary and phenomenological approach to studying creativity. This approach acknowledges creativity's subjective, experiential aspects and seeks to understand how individuals construct meaning and navigate the boundaries between the real and the imagined (Glăveanu, 2020b). Such a perspective supports a more inclusive, holistic understanding of creativity as both a personal and socially embedded phenomenon.

Tensions as the Field Develops

The field of creativity studies has long wrestled with tensions between viewing creativity as an innate, human-centred trait and its commodification as a tool for economic gain. These debates echo historical divides over the nature and purpose of creativity. As the field evolved, a split emerged between metaphysical and scientifically reductionist approaches to creativity, deepened by the influence of mid-20th-century advertising icons like Ogilvy and Bernbach. These figures popularised the concept of "the big idea," embedding creativity in the public consciousness as a means to produce marketable concepts (Larocca, 2020, p. 42). For philosophers such as Deleuze (1988/1995), this trend marked the troubling commodification of creativity in service of capitalism.

Despite these tensions, the problem-solving view of creativity gained prominence, particularly in the business world. Creativity was increasingly seen as an essential skill for success in the 21st century, with organisations like the World Economic Forum and IBM emphasising its importance in navigating an increasingly complex world (*Here's Why*

Creativity Matters More Than IQ, 2021; *IBM 2010 Global CEO Study*, 2018; *The 10 Skills You Need to Thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution*, 2016).

However, this narrow focus on creativity as a problem-solving tool has inadvertently diminished its importance in generating possibilities through question-posing, self-expression, and transcendence. As society faces increasingly complex challenges, such as environmental degradation, social inequality, and technological disruption, a more holistic approach to creativity is needed (Montuori, 2011).

A need for a more integrative perspective is exemplified by the earlier work of Arthur Koestler, whose seminal book *The Act of Creation* (1969), was notable for taking a *systems approach*, incorporating complexity theories to provide a more diverse, networked, and contextualised view of the world (Koestler, 1969/1990; Montuori, 2005). Koestler's (1969/1990) work plays a significant role in the modern history of creativity and serves as an essential link between phenomenology, intuition, creativity and transdisciplinarity. His concept of *bisociation*, introduced in this book, provides a framework for understanding the creative process beyond the limitations of disciplinary boundaries and disembodied linear problem-solving.

Bisociation is joining two previously unrelated matrices of thought to create a new, innovative idea or solution. This process involves the sudden interlocking of two distinct frames of reference, which Koestler (1969/1990) argues is the basis for all creative acts, whether in art, science, or humour. The concept of bisociation emphasises the importance of drawing connections between seemingly disparate domains of knowledge and experience, a fundamental tenet of transdisciplinary thinking (Montuori, 2013; Rigolot, 2020; Scholz & Steiner, 2015b, 2015a).

Koestler's (1969/1990) work anticipates the emergence of transdisciplinarity by recognising the need for a more holistic and integrative approach to understanding complex phenomena, such as creativity. By highlighting the role of bisociation in the creative process, Koestler challenges the notion that creativity is a purely logical, linear, or discipline-specific endeavour. Instead, he suggests that the most significant creative breakthroughs often occur when individuals can transcend the boundaries of their specialised knowledge and draw upon insights from diverse fields and experiences.

This perspective aligns with the phenomenological approach to creativity, emphasising the importance of subjective experience, intuition, and embodied knowledge in

the creative process (Gill, 2014; Landes, 2023). Phenomenology recognises that people's lived experiences shape their understanding of the world and that accessing this pre-reflective, embodied knowledge is crucial for generating new insights and possibilities.

Koestler's (1969/1990) concept of bisociation can be seen as tapping into this embodied knowledge and intuition, allowing individuals to connect seemingly unrelated ideas and experiences. By embracing a more fluid and open-ended approach to creativity, one that values the role of intuition and the crossing of disciplinary boundaries, individuals can access a deeper level of understanding and generate more innovative solutions to complex problems.

Furthermore, Koestler's (1969/1990) work, particularly his concept of bisociation, plays a crucial role in the modern history of creativity by bridging the gap between phenomenology, intuition, and transdisciplinarity. By emphasising the importance of drawing connections between seemingly unrelated matrices of thought, Koestler anticipates the emergence of a more holistic and integrative approach to creativity, one that recognises the value of embodied knowledge, intuition, and the crossing of disciplinary boundaries.

Role of Subjectivity in Science

Philosopher Thomas Kuhn's influential work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), builds upon Koestler's (1969/1990) insights and further emphasises the role of intuition, subjectivity and creativity in scientific progress. Kuhn's (1962/1996) concept of *paradigm shifts* not only challenges the traditional view of science as a linear, problem-solving endeavour and emphasises the importance of intuition, subjectivity, and creativity in the scientific process.

According to Kuhn (1962/1996), a paradigm is a set of fundamental concepts, theories, and methods that guide scientific research in a particular field. A paradigm shift occurs when a new paradigm emerges that is fundamentally incompatible with the existing one, often driven by anomalies or unexpected findings. These shifts involve a complex interplay of social, psychological, and creative factors, requiring scientists to embrace new ways of thinking and perceiving.

Kuhn (1962/1996) argues that scientific progress is not purely logical or rational but deeply influenced by individual scientists' subjective experiences, beliefs, and intuitions. He suggests that scientists often make significant breakthroughs not through strict adherence to

the scientific method but through a sudden, intuitive insight that allows them to see a problem or phenomenon in a new light.

This emphasis on the role of intuition and subjective experience in scientific discovery aligns closely with the phenomenological approach to creativity as paradigm shifts can be understood as a fundamental transformation in how scientists perceive and make sense of the world.

Moreover, Kuhn's (1962/1996) work highlights the inherently creative nature of scientific inquiry, and points towards the importance of transdisciplinary approaches to understanding and fostering creativity. It also underscores the influence of *metaphysical*, *ontological*, and *epistemological* assumptions that shape how scientists perceive and engage with the world.

Metaphysical assumptions refer to the fundamental beliefs about the nature of reality, such as the existence of abstract entities or the relationship between mind and matter (Lincoln & Guba, 2016). Ontological assumptions concern the kinds of entities believed to exist and the nature of their existence, such as the distinction between physical and mental phenomena. Epistemological assumptions relate to the nature of knowledge, its sources, its limits, and the methods by which knowledge can be acquired and justified.

Kuhn's (1962/1996) work, particularly his concept of paradigm shifts, represents a significant contribution to the understanding of creativity and its relationship to phenomenology, transdisciplinarity, and metaphysics. It points towards the need for a more integrative and holistic approach to understanding the nature of reality.

Process Conception of Creativity

This need for a more holistic approach to creativity is reflected in the *4Ps framework*, proposed by Mel Rhodes in 1961 (Glăveanu, 2013; M. Rhodes, 1961). The 4Ps represent the four key dimensions that creativity research typically focuses on: *Person*, *Process*, *Press* (environment), and *Product*. The 'Person' dimension focuses on the individual characteristics, traits, and abilities that contribute to creativity. The 'Process' dimension examines the stages and strategies involved in creative thinking and problem-solving. The 'Press' dimension considers the environmental and contextual factors that influence creativity. Finally, the 'Product' dimension evaluates the outcomes or results of the creative process.

As represented by the 4Ps framework, the process perspective of creativity has been a dominant approach in the field, providing a structure that makes the study of creativity easily operationalisable (Runco, 2004). However, the focus on *process* has often led to a linear, stage-gate model of creativity, with the *product* becoming one of the most popular conceptualisations (Glăveanu, 2020b; Reiter-Palmon, 2017). Despite this, the process perspective also contains elements that point towards a more phenomenological and transdisciplinary approach to creativity.

Graham Wallas, a social psychologist, is credited with the first creative problem-solving process model in his book, *The Art of Thought*, published in 1926 (H. H. Ma, 2009; Wallas, 1926). Wallas (1926) presented a four-stage creative process model that was notable for its inclusion of *incubation* and *illumination*, in addition to the now standard phases of *preparation* (gathering information) and *verification* (testing solutions). Both incubation and illumination emphasise the importance of unconscious mental processes and the role of subjective experience in creative problem-solving.

The incubation stage, often described as a period of unconscious processing or a break from conscious effort, suggests that creative insights can emerge from a deeper level of embodied knowledge and subjective experience (Wallas, 1926). This idea is supported by the illumination stage, characterised by the sudden emergence of a solution or insight, often described as an “A-ha!” moment. These stages highlight the significance of the creative process’s non-linear, intuitive, and embodied aspects, which are often overlooked in more rationalistic models.

While Wallas’s (1926) model is seen as a basis for other creative problem-solving process models (H. H. Ma, 2009; Runco, 2014), most exclude the formal mention of incubation and illumination as steps, probably because these are unmanageable subjective experiences akin to the anomalies that Kuhn (1962/1996) says science often ignores, hinting at a coming paradigm shift. The exclusion of these stages in subsequent models reflects a broader tendency in creativity research to focus on more easily operationalisable and measurable aspects of the creative process, such as cognitive skills and personality traits (Sawyer, 2011).

However, the importance of incubation and illumination in Wallas’s (1926) model resonates with the concept of *flow* developed by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997), which describes a state of complete absorption in an activity, characterised by a loss

of self-consciousness and a merging of action and awareness. Flow experiences often involve a similar sense of unconscious processing and insight, suggesting that these subjective experiences play a crucial role in the creative process. This parallel further supports that subjective experiences play a vital role in creativity.

Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) *systems model of creativity* further emphasises the importance of context and the interaction between the *individual*, the *domain*, and the *field* in the creative process. According to this model, creativity emerges from the dynamic interplay of three elements: the individual, with their personal background, experiences, and genetic makeup; the domain, which consists of the symbolic rules and procedures that define a particular area of knowledge; and the field, which includes the individuals and institutions that act as gatekeepers and validators of creative work within the domain. This systems perspective highlights the situated nature of creativity and the importance of considering the broader social, cultural, and historical context in which creative individuals operate.

The parallel between Wallas's (1926) incubation and illumination stages and Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) concept of flow, along with the systems model's emphasis on context (1999), further supports the idea that subjective experiences and the interaction between the individual and their environment play a vital role in creativity.

The modern history of creativity reveals a persistent tension between the desire to operationalise and quantify creativity for more accessible study and the need to acknowledge its complex, phenomenological, and transdisciplinary nature. While researchers have often sought to exclude the more subjective and elusive aspects of creativity, such as incubation and illumination, in favour of more easily measurable cognitive skills and personality traits, these concepts continue to re-emerge as essential components of the creative process.

Possibilities and Creativity

In recent years, the work of social psychologist Glăveanu (2020) has further pushed the boundaries of creativity research by focusing on the concept of *the possible*. Glăveanu (2020) argues that creativity should not be limited by the probable or the existing constraints of a given domain but should instead explore the realm of the possible, which is inherently open-ended and transformative. This perspective aligns with the transdisciplinary approach, as it recognises the importance of crossing disciplinary boundaries and engaging with creativity's complex, multifaceted nature.

The study of the possible offers a valuable bridge between the operationalisable and phenomenological aspects of creativity, as it emphasises the importance of imagination, experimentation, and the generation of novel ideas and solutions. By embracing the possible, people can better appreciate creativity as a complex, lived experience that often unfolds unconsciously in a social context while still focusing on its transformative potential.

Moreover, the concept of the possible provides a natural segue into the notion of deferring judgement. Acknowledging people's judgements enables the questioning of them and, in the process, can help people be more open to new ideas and perspectives. This can help people more effectively navigate the complex, uncertain terrain of the creative process. This approach aligns with the Deleuzian (1988/1995) concept of working in the middle, focusing on the dynamic interplay between various perspectives and experiences rather than on a single, definitive understanding.

This coupling of deferring judgement with the exploration of the possible may signal a paradigm shift in creativity research. It challenges traditional, linear models of the creative process and emphasises the importance of embracing uncertainty, ambiguity, and the potential for transformation. As creativity research continues to evolve, it is essential to recognise the value of both operationalisable and phenomenological approaches and to encourage transdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration.

3.4. Transdisciplinarity and Creativity

While the early stages of creativity research were characterised by a linear, stage-gate approach, it has become increasingly evident that creativity is, in reality, a complex systems process (Córdoba-Pachón, 2018; Klein, 2017). The first wave of creativity research ended in the 1970s due to a decline in government funding (Sawyer, 2011; Thomas & Chan, 2013). This shift in funding priorities can be partially attributed to the limitations of creativity research in fully delivering on its promises and addressing complex societal challenges. During this period, cognitive psychologists shifted their focus from exploring creative personality traits to investigating creative mental processes, identifying distinct stages within the creative process and emphasising the significance of domain-specific knowledge, cross-domain idea exchange, and transforming ideas into creative products.

Interestingly, this shift in cognitive psychology paralleled the emergence of transdisciplinary thinking in academia. The development of transdisciplinarity as an

academic discipline was a response to prevalent societal challenges, including the rapid industrialisation of the Western world in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Bernstein, 2015; Scholz & Steiner, 2015b, 2015a). However, by the 1970s, traditional values were increasingly questioned, transforming the role of higher education and research from pursuing intellectual freedom to becoming a significant driver of economic growth within society. Transdisciplinarity emerged as a way to foster creativity and innovation in addressing complex problems by encouraging researchers to suspend their initial assumptions and biases, allowing for a more open and inclusive exploration.

Two early influential figures, psychologist Jean Piaget and astrophysicist and systems theorist Erich Jantsch, played pivotal roles in shaping the concept of transdisciplinarity (Apostel, 1972; Budwig & Alexander, 2021; Scholz & Steiner, 2015a). Piaget introduced the term transdisciplinarity and distinguished it from interdisciplinarity by advocating for a systems approach to knowledge, seeking to transcend disciplinary boundaries and foster a deeper understanding of complex phenomena by integrating diverse perspectives within a broader systemic framework. Jantsch further developed the concept, emphasising the necessity of an integrated approach to knowledge and underscoring the significance of considering the social purpose of knowledge, which is often referred to as *Mode 1 transdisciplinarity*.

Mode 1 Transdisciplinarity

Building on this foundation, Mode 1 transdisciplinarity is often associated with the work of quantum physicist Basarab Nicolescu, who approached it as a methodology that aims to address the complexity of reality by integrating knowledge from various disciplines and ways of knowing (Nicolescu, 2014). Nicolescu's (2014) approach is based on three fundamental axioms: *levels of reality*, *the principle of the hidden third*, and *complexity*. These axioms acknowledge the existence of multiple levels of reality, the importance of looking beyond binary thinking to embrace paradox and contradiction, and the inherent complexity of reality that cannot be fully understood through reductionist or simplistic approaches.

By combining systems thinking, metaphysics, and phenomenology, Nicolescu's (2014) transdisciplinarity offers a promising approach to closing the gaps in creativity research and practice. It acknowledges the interconnectedness of individuals, their

environment, and the embodied creative process, providing a holistic framework for understanding and nurturing creativity in complex, real-world contexts.

Mode 2 Transdisciplinarity

In the 1990s, Mode 2 transdisciplinarity emerged in response to escalating environmental concerns, catalysed by two significant incidents: the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in Ukraine and the Sandoz chemical spill in Switzerland (Scholz & Steiner, 2015a). Both incidents shook public trust in science—Chernobyl’s meltdown released vast amounts of radiation, questioning the oversight of nuclear facilities, while the Sandoz spill contaminated waterways, highlighting the risks of industrial activities. These disasters revealed the limitations of scientific knowledge and the potential consequences of unchecked technological advancements, prompting a call for more collaborative, holistic approaches to complex environmental challenges.

Mode 2 transdisciplinarity differs from Mode 1 by focusing on practical applications and involving diverse stakeholders in collaborative problem-solving methods. This approach treats various knowledge sets with equal respect to address complex systemic issues and emphasises the importance of partnerships between scientists and non-scientific experts (Scholz & Steiner, 2015b). Mode 2 champions inclusivity and diversity as ethically and procedurally essential. Mode 2 has a deferring judgement approach, encouraging people to suspend initial evaluations and remain open to alternative perspectives and insights. This approach is required to bridge the different epistemologies involved in complex problem-solving.

Scholz & Steiner (2015b) found the benefits of a transdisciplinary approach are that it (1) increases creative capacity by diversifying knowledge, (2) generates a more holistic understanding of an issue, and (3) legitimises outcomes as all relevant parties are on equal footing. However, it is challenging to overcome disciplinary limitations (Blättel-Mink & Kastenholz, 2005). It requires accepting another’s epistemology, which can make participants feel insecure about accepting another person’s way of knowing, manifesting as doubts about the research subject and their sense of identity. Further, transdisciplinarity’s aspirations of treating all knowledge as valid have created practical issues determining what counts as valid (Klein, 2017).

Challenges and Potential of Transdisciplinarity

The principle of integrating different forms of knowledge is transdisciplinarity's greatest asset and challenge. It has faced several failures, particularly in sustainability and environmental sciences (Bernstein, 2015; Frame & Brown, 2008). To address these challenges, Frame and Brown (2008) argue for a post-normal science that goes beyond traditional democratic participation by incorporating new processes, open dialogue, and continuous stakeholder engagement. It is transdisciplinary and context-sensitive, embracing methodological pluralism and advocates for active stakeholder involvement throughout the scientific process.

Rigolot (2020) argues that transdisciplinarity has matured to be more than a methodology or a set of practices. It requires a fundamental attitude or disposition towards knowledge and learning—it is becoming a way of being. Embracing transdisciplinarity as a way of being, rather than merely a discipline, methodology, or system can resolve the schism within creativity research and within transdisciplinarity itself.

By exploring the intersection of creativity, transdisciplinarity, and deferring judgement, people can develop a more comprehensive understanding of cultivating creativity and addressing complex societal challenges. This holistic approach, which recognises the importance of the embodied process, and the interconnectedness of individuals and their environment, can transform how people understand and nurture creativity in various contexts. Embracing transdisciplinarity as a way of being and integrating the practice of deferring judgement can foster more inclusive, collaborative, and innovative approaches to problem-solving and knowledge production, ultimately addressing the limitations of traditional creativity research and practice.

Deferring Judgement: A Common Thread

All three approaches—phenomenology, transdisciplinarity, and creativity—share a resistance to the reductive, binary logic inherent in positivism. They reflect a movement towards embracing complexity, ambiguity, and interconnectedness. The critique of positivism's emphasis on objective, empirically verifiable knowledge allowed for a broader, more inclusive understanding of human experience, one that values subjective perspectives, embodied knowledge, and the interconnectedness of different fields of study.

Building upon this critique, *postmodernism* emerged in the mid-20th century as a response to the perceived limitations of modernism's grand narratives and the positivist emphasis on objective truth. It fundamentally challenges the notion of a singular, universal truth and the idea that any method can produce such a truth (Lyotard, 1984). The catastrophic events of the 20th century—World War II, the Holocaust, and the use of the atomic bomb on civilians—deeply shook the faith in progress and reason, prompting a profound questioning of the very foundations of Western thought (Midgley, 2003). This reference is not intended as a thematic case study but as a philosophical anchor, signalling a broader cultural shift away from universalism and toward multiplicity—the very conditions that make deferring judgement an ethical and epistemological imperative. In this context, postmodernism embraces a multiplicity of smaller narratives, each with its own validity and truth claims, thereby creating space for deferring judgement as a valuable approach to understanding complex phenomena.

Alongside postmodernism, *constructivism* also gained prominence as an alternative to positivism. Constructivism posits that knowledge and reality are actively constructed by individuals and societies, rather than existing as objective, universal truths waiting to be discovered (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Constructivism, like postmodernism, suggests that knowledge is not merely a reflection of reality but a product of human interpretation and social interaction.

Deferring judgement resonates with both constructivism and postmodernism, particularly in their recognition of the multiplicity of truths and the importance of considering diverse viewpoints in constructing knowledge (Pouliot, 2004). This perspective allows for an appreciation of multiple narratives, each contributing its own unique insights into the complexities of reality. By embracing the social construction of knowledge, these approaches acknowledge that truth is not fixed or monolithic but rather fluid, contingent, and shaped by various cultural, historical, and social contexts (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994).

The interplay between positivism, constructivism, and postmodernism can be viewed as a form of modern myth-making. Each paradigm offers its own way of explaining the world and people's place within it, much like traditional creation myths provide frameworks for understanding the origins and nature of the universe.

Rather than viewing subjectivity and objectivity as oppositional forces, these different epistemologies can dance together to fully grasp the complexities of the human condition and

the world. Deferring judgement becomes a critical practice in this context, as it encourages a balance between holding space for objective insights and remaining open to subjective experiences and diverse perspectives. This dance between subjectivity and objectivity can create a more holistic and nuanced understanding of knowledge, one that reflects the fluid, interconnected nature of people's lived realities.

By uniting elements from positivism, constructivism, and postmodernism, deferring judgement allows people to navigate the space between certainty and ambiguity, objective facts and subjective interpretations. It recognises that while different paradigms may emphasise different aspects of truth, each contributes valuable insights to the collective understanding. Thus, deferring judgement not only fosters a more inclusive approach to knowledge creation but also honours the complexity and richness of the human experience.

3.5. Summary

This chapter presents a transdisciplinary exploration of creativity, weaving together historical, philosophical, and phenomenological perspectives. It critiques the limitations of positivism and highlights alternative frameworks like constructivism and postmodernism, both of which embrace the complexity and subjectivity inherent in human experience. The chapter traces the origins of creativity through linguistic, divine, and human dimensions, linking these perspectives to modern creative processes. It emphasises the importance of phenomenology and transdisciplinarity in understanding creativity as a dynamic, emergent process shaped by lived experience and diverse epistemologies.

By exploring creativity through these various lenses, the chapter demonstrates the value of deferring judgement as a unifying practice that transcends disciplinary boundaries. This approach fosters openness to new ideas, enhances understanding across multiple domains, and encourages a holistic view of knowledge creation. The contribution of this chapter lies in its synthesis of diverse perspectives on creativity, which challenges traditional models and promotes an inclusive, collaborative approach to knowledge production and problem-solving. This transdisciplinary approach has significant potential to address complex societal challenges by integrating subjective, embodied, and collective insights into the creative process.

Take a moment to pause from the analytical reading and simply engage with the feeling of the watercolour (Figure 9). Imagine the warmth of the sun on your skin, the quiet

morning air, and the soft grass beneath you. How might this moment of presence influence your understanding of creativity? How does deferring judgement feel when you let go of intellectual analysis and allow yourself to engage with sensory experience? What insights emerge when you allow yourself to experience without the need to analyse or interpret?

Figure 9: Feeling Sunlight Watercolour



“Feeling Sunlight” from the Fractals NTRO invites you into a moment of pure presence, where the sensation of sunlight on your skin and the stillness of a Sunday morning converge. The gentle, flowing strokes and the softness of the colours reflect a state of balance and receptivity, encouraging an openness to the unknown and a willingness to defer judgement—created by a participant.

Chapter 4

Origins of the Deferring Judgement Concept

4.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the concept of deferring judgement, tracing its evolution from a tool within creative problem-solving to a broader practice that transcends disciplinary boundaries. While deferring judgement was initially positioned as a critical aspect of idea generation, by examining its more profound significance through various lenses—psychological safety, neuroscience, and Indigenous Australian and Daoist knowledge systems—this chapter reveals how deferring judgement fosters a more expansive and relational understanding of creativity.

Before you begin, pause for a moment and consider what might unfold if you approached the idea of deferring judgement not merely as a tool for creative problem-solving but as a transformative practice? Allow yourself to remain open to the diverse perspectives and knowledge systems that follow, embracing any new connections and insights that emerge.

4.2. Creative Problem Solving

The concept of deferring judgement within the creative problem-solving process has its roots in the work of advertising executive Alex Osborn, who introduced the concept in his book *Applied Imagination*, published in 1953 (Elliott, 2010; Osborn, 1953; Parnes & Harding, 1962). Osborn (1953) believed that the key to generating novel ideas was to postpone critical evaluation until later in the creative process to ensure a sufficient quantity had been generated. He argued that by separating the generation of ideas from their evaluation, individuals could overcome their inherent tendency to judge and censor their thoughts, thereby allowing for a more free-flowing and prolific idea generation process.

Osborn's (1953) principle of deferred judgement became a cornerstone of the Creative Problem Solving process model, which he developed in the 1950s and was later refined by other scholars, such as Sidney Parnes and Ruth Noller (Puccio et al., 2012). The Creative Problem Solving process emphasises the importance of separating divergent and

convergent thinking, with deferring judgement being a key component of the divergent thinking phase.

While Osborn's (1953) ideas originated in the business world, they hinted at a broader approach to creativity, particularly through his emphasis on creating a safe environment where people feel free to share ideas without fear of criticism (Parnes & Harding, 1962; Puccio et al., 2012). This concept, known as psychological safety, fosters a climate of security and openness (Davis, 2004; Parnes & Harding, 1962). Osborn's (1953) emphasis on psychological safety anticipated later work by humanistic psychologists like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow (Parnes et al., 1977), who stressed the importance of accepting individuals unconditionally to support creativity and personal growth.

Additionally, Maslow viewed creativity as a hallmark of self-actualisation, representing the realisation of one's full potential and the pursuit of personal growth and fulfilment (S. B. Kaufman, 2018, 2021). He believed self-actualised individuals are inherently creative and innovative, expressing their unique perspectives and contributing to the greater good. These ideas suggest that creating a psychologically safe environment, characterised by acceptance, support, and freedom from judgement, particularly self-judgement, fosters creativity and facilitates self-actualisation. By deferring judgement, individuals can liberate themselves from self-imposed limitations and fully engage in the creative process, tapping into their innate potential for innovation and expression.

Furthermore, Osborn's inclusion of incubation and illumination in the Creative Problem Solving model, expanding upon Wallas's (1926) work, underscores the role of unconscious mental processes in creativity (Lee et al., 2023). These phenomenological processes recognise the importance of the body and mind in creativity, emphasising the need for periods of rest and unconscious reflection, where ideas can gestate and insights can naturally emerge.

Despite these early intimations of a more expansive approach to creativity, the principle of deferred judgement has largely remained confined within the domain of psychology, the study of individual creativity, and the idea generation phase within the Creative Problem Solving process, which is called *brainstorming* (Puccio et al., 2012). Osborn is considered the originator of brainstorming, which is now, arguably, the most well-known idea generation tool, which typically refers to deferring judgement in the oft-stated instruction, "No idea is a bad idea." However, this distillation has simplified deferring

judgement to its detriment. It does not emphasise the need for psychological safety or describe the process, as Parnes (1977) did, as a dynamic process between judgement and its deferral, highlighting the importance of judgement in the process. With this greater context, the embodied, intersubjective, and transdisciplinary aspects of deferring judgement can be fulfilled, allowing for more safety and assisting with self-actualisation.

The importance of deferring judgement lies in its ability to explore unconventional ideas and develop novel insights that challenge the status quo. Moreover, this acknowledgement of incubation and illumination highlights the phenomenological dimensions of creativity, including embodied and subconscious processes and the social context that nurtures creativity. Furthermore, it subtly hints at the transdisciplinary nature of creativity, underscoring how insights often emerge from synthesising previously disparate ideas.

This understanding of the creative process sheds light on psychology's *standard definition of creativity*: the generation of novel and useful ideas compared to the status quo (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). Much debate exists about the emphasis on novelty and usefulness. However, comparably scant attention is given to its status quo benchmark. The status quo, the state of play, is a social state that collectively determines which possibilities exist at any given time (Buchanan, 2004). As per Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) earlier-mentioned systems model, the status quo maintains social equilibrium by setting the value on things. However, it also curtails creativity by favouring the known.

The standard definition's focus on novelty and usefulness, two seemingly contradictory ideas, further emphasises the Person and Product focus as per Rhodes's (1961) model, the 4Ps, as mentioned earlier. It reinforces the status quo by deliberately excluding more imaginative, transdisciplinary and phenomenological aspects of creativity. Further, this narrow focus helps to explain why imagination, as previously discussed, is less studied in the field of creativity. Moreover, the focus on individual creativity and the cognitive processes involved in idea generation has often obscured the social, cultural, and environmental factors that shape creative expression and innovation (Glăveanu, 2010).

The limitations of the standard definition of creativity and its emphasis on the status quo as a benchmark highlight the need for a more holistic approach to deferring judgement throughout the creative process. By recognising the phenomenological and transdisciplinary

aspects of creativity and going beyond the status quo, the practice of deferring judgement has the potential to transform the study and application of creativity.

These limitations in the current understanding and application of deferring judgement suggest that a more holistic approach, incorporating deferring judgement throughout the creative process and not just within idea generation, could lead towards more transformative outcomes. Recognising the phenomenological and transdisciplinary aspects of creativity and going beyond the status quo could transform the study of creativity.

Furthermore, although individual cognitive approaches have made significant contributions to the study of creativity, the application of deferring judgement has most often been confined to the idea generation phase, particularly in its association with brainstorming. This limited focus reflects a gap in emphasis rather than a limitation of cognitive approaches themselves. Relegating deferring judgement to the idea generation phase overlooks the holistic nature of the creative process, and, importantly, underplays the role of the discovery phase, which numerous scholars have identified as one of the most crucial stage in the creative process (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1971; H. H. Ma, 2009; Runco & Okuda, 1988; Steiner, 2014).

In this context, *problem finding* involves identifying and formulating problems worth solving, while discovery refers to the process of uncovering new insights, perspectives, or possibilities that can lead to the reformulation of problems or the generation of novel solutions. By paying attention to the discovery phase with its potential for challenging the status quo, the current application of deferring judgement may hinder the development of truly transformative ideas and solutions.

H. H. Ma's (2009) meta-analysis found that problem finding has the most significant effect size of all cognitive processes associated with creativity. Runco and Okuda (1988) also discovered that problem construction skills contribute to predicting creative performance, independent of problem-solving skills, suggesting that the two processes are distinct competencies. Furthermore, Csikszentmihalyi and Getzels (1971) identified a continuum between *presented problems* (those that can be solved) and *discovered problems* (those that require creative thinking). They found that individuals with outstanding creative achievements were more interested in discovering problems by using their imagination to uncover and resolve them, and this was significantly related to the originality of the solutions produced. This relationship between discovering problems and the use of imagination reflects

the importance of holding open interpretive space — resisting premature conclusions about what a problem is, or should be. Here, imagination plays a crucial role: it enables individuals to see beyond the obvious or accepted framing of a situation. Deferring judgement supports this imaginative process by allowing ambiguity to persist long enough for new associations, insights, or configurations to emerge. In this way, imagination and deferral are not separate acts but interdependent capacities that together make space for genuinely original problem formulation and creative insight. As these examples show, deferring judgement during the discovery phase allows for the exploration of unconventional ideas and the emergence of novel insights, which are essential for pushing the boundaries of the status quo.

The reasons for overlooking the discovery phase and the potential for challenging the status quo are complex and rooted in the creative process's often neglected phenomenological and transdisciplinary aspects (Demerath, 2002; Montuori, 2005). Demerath (2002) argues that culture is epistemological, meaning that people's emotional attachment to their cultural identity can hinder their ability to transcend the limitations of their worldview safely. The more individuals are invested in their place within a culture, the more resistant they become to information that contradicts it.

This understanding also suggests that the gatekeepers of the domain, as described earlier in Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) systems model, resist change due to their emotional attachment to their cultural identity and the worldview it represents. This resistance limits the potential for genuinely transformative creativity. This current limitation of the creative process further highlights the importance of deferring judgement, as it allows for exploring unconventional ideas and the emergence of novel insights in ways that can safely challenge the status quo because it acknowledges the values of their judgements, which enables them to be gently questioned to explore more possibilities because deferring judgement deliberately oscillates between the two conditions, not preferencing either (Parnes et al., 1977). It uses creative tension to create insights to increase possibilities that the status quo could consider.

This insight further supports the importance of psychological safety in deferring judgement, as individuals need to feel secure enough to question assumptions and explore alternative perspectives (Parnes et al., 1977). Moreover, as novelist David Foster Wallace (2005) eloquently stated in his speech, *This is Water*, "The most obvious, important realities are often the ones that are hardest to see and talk about." This observation underscores the difficulty in recognising and addressing the deep-seated assumptions and biases that shape

people's understanding of the world and the problems they face, which are often entrenched in the status quo.

Transdisciplinary problem-solvers have encountered similar challenges, recognising the importance of identifying the right problem to solve (Steiner, 2014). Integrating diverse perspectives in transdisciplinary collaboration can be challenging due to differing epistemologies, methodologies, and disciplinary cultures. Power dynamics, institutional structures, or communication difficulties can hinder the integration of diverse perspectives in transdisciplinary problem-solving (Blättel-Mink & Kastenholz, 2005).

Navigating Wicked Problems: Possibility Thinking, Transdisciplinarity and the Role of Deferring Judgement

The concept of *wicked problems*, as originally defined by Rittel and Webber (1973), emerged during a period of social unrest and upheaval in the United States, characterised by riots in poor, ethnic neighbourhoods (Skaburskis, 2008). Wicked problems defy conventional problem-solving approaches and require a paradigm shift towards *systems thinking* to address their inherent complexity (Von Bertalanffy, 1972). In this thesis, wicked problems are understood as complex, evolving challenges with no clear solutions, where each attempted intervention reveals new dimensions of the issue. They demand openness, humility, and a willingness to work across knowledge systems — conditions well-suited to the practice of deferring judgement.

Systems thinking is an approach to problem-solving and analysis that considers the interactions and interdependencies between various components within a complex system (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2018; Checkland, 1981). It involves understanding how different parts of a system influence each other and how changes in one part can impact the system as a whole. Systems thinking emphasises the interconnectedness, feedback loops, and emergent properties within systems, aiming to identify underlying patterns and structures rather than focusing solely on individual elements.

Rittel and Webber (1973) emphasised that complex social issues require ongoing deferral of judgement, as new problems continually arise as old ones are addressed. They argue that wicked problems have no definitive solutions but demand continuous attention and will never be resolved but can be improved. Therefore, the practice of deferring judgement can facilitate the navigation of wicked problems by fostering a more open and receptive

attitude towards diverse perspectives and unconventional ideas, which is essential for addressing the complex and interconnected nature of wicked problems.

This perspective aligns with Parnes's (1977) view of deferring judgement as a continuous process rather than a one-off change. The phenomenological, embodied side of creativity and the practice-based, diverse knowledge side of creativity in transdisciplinary collaboration both challenge the traditional, cognitive-focused view of creativity and highlight the importance of situated, contextual, and experiential factors in the creative process. Deferring judgement can bridge these two perspectives by fostering a more open, receptive, and non-judgemental attitude towards diverse ways of knowing and experiencing the world, essential for questioning the status quo and generating transformative ideas.

To effectively navigate these challenges and transcend the limitations of the status quo, it is essential to cultivate a capacity for imagination, which is deeply rooted in the phenomenological dimension of human experience. Additionally, a transdisciplinary approach that integrates multiple points of view without necessarily seeking to harmonise them but rather to augment them is crucial. However, this process is complex; as Demerath (2002) pointed out earlier, culture is epistemological, so people often struggle to accept knowledge that challenges what they know (Blättel-Mink & Kastenzholz, 2005).

Glăveanu's (2020) concept of the possible and Montuori's (2011) advocacy for embracing complexity and transdisciplinarity in the creative process provide valuable frameworks for fostering this kind of expansive, integrative problem-solving. Glăveanu (2020) emphasises the importance of challenging the status quo and exploring alternative ways of framing problems and generating solutions. By embracing *possibility thinking*, individuals and teams can break free from the constraints of the probable and engage in more imaginative and innovative problem-solving that focuses on the possible.

Glăveanu (2020) argues that creativity involves navigating between possible and probable within a given context or paradigm. He suggests that creativity arises from the tension between the constraints imposed by existing norms, beliefs, and expectations (the probable) and the exploration of alternative possibilities (the possible). Individuals engage in creative acts by challenging the boundaries of what is probable, pushing against established norms and conventions to explore new ideas and perspectives. This process involves a dynamic interplay between adherence to existing constraints and the willingness to transcend them in pursuit of innovative solutions.

Glăveanu's (2020) perspective highlights the dialectical relationship between the possible and the probable in creativity, suggesting that creativity emerges at the intersection of what is known and what is imagined, what is expected and what is unexpected. This conceptualisation underscores creativity's complex and multifaceted nature, emphasising the role of constraint and freedom in the creative process. It is also akin to how Parnes (1977) described deferring judgement as moving between polarities, and the tension keeps the process alive. The status quo is no longer the benchmark but part of a vital polarity.

Similarly, Montuori (2011) advocates for embracing complexity and transdisciplinarity in the creative process, arguing that a more holistic and integrative approach to problem-solving can lead to a better understanding of the interconnected nature of wicked problems and the generation of more effective solutions that challenge the status quo. By fostering a more open, receptive, and non-judgemental attitude towards diverse ways of knowing and experiencing the world, these approaches demonstrate the value of deferring judgement in navigating the challenges of transdisciplinary collaboration and embracing the phenomenological, embodied aspects of creativity.

Furthermore, possibility thinking enables individuals and teams to break free from the constraints of the status quo and engage in more imaginative and innovative problem-solving (Glăveanu, 2020). It allows for incorporating play, humour, and paradox into the creative process. These elements, often overlooked in traditional problem-solving approaches, can be powerful tools for challenging assumptions, reframing problems, and generating novel insights that transcend the limitations of the status quo.

4.3. Non-Western Conceptions of Deferring Judgement

The Western intellectual tradition has made significant contributions to knowledge production, particularly through its emphasis on empiricism, reason, and systematic inquiry. At the same time, it has often foregrounded objectivity and abstraction over subjectivity and embodied experience. In contrast, non-Western philosophies offer complementary approaches that bring greater focus to lived experience, relational knowing, and the cultivation of attunement, ambiguity, and compassion. These traditions do not necessarily oppose Western thought, but invite a more pluralistic and expansive view of knowledge — one that is deeply aligned with the ethical, experiential, and open-ended stance of deferring judgement.

One such tradition is *Daoism*, an ancient Chinese philosophy emphasising the importance of non-action, spontaneity, and cultivating a fluid and responsive attitude towards life (Ziporyn, 2009). Daoism emerged as a distinct philosophical and spiritual tradition during the Warring States Period (475-221 BCE), a time of political turmoil and philosophical diversity in ancient China. While *Confucianism*, associated with Confucius (551-479 BCE), emphasised social order, hierarchical structures, and adherence to traditional rituals. Daoism offered an alternative perspective that celebrated naturalness and the harmonious flow of existence. The emergence of Daoism can be understood as a creative response to the perceived limitations of Confucianism, which, over time, became associated with maintaining the status quo and rigid adherence to established norms.

One of the distinguishing features of Daoism is its emphasis on deferring judgement and embracing the inherent ambiguity of existence—a very phenomenological and transdisciplinary point of view well before these ideas formally existed. Instead of prescribing specific rules or edicts, Daoism encourages individuals to cultivate a deep sense of inner harmony and alignment with the natural rhythms of the universe (Y. Ma & Wang, 2024; Tan, 2016). This approach allows for greater flexibility and adaptability in navigating life’s complexities.

Moreover, Daoism employs unconventional means to inspire personal transformation and spiritual growth, utilising paradox, humour, and juxtaposition to provoke insights and awaken intuitive understanding (Ziporyn, 2009). By challenging conventional modes of thinking and inviting individuals to embrace the mystery and uncertainty of existence, Daoism opens the door to new possibilities and perspectives using a deferring judgement frame.

The “Useless” Valuable Tree Parable

The Daoist approach to deferring judgement is exemplified in the story of the “useless tree” from the *Zhuangzi*, one of the foundational texts of Daoist philosophy (Ziporyn, 2009). In this parable, Carpenter Shi encounters a giant, gnarled tree that appears useless for conventional purposes. Initially dismissing the tree as worthless, Shi later dreams of the tree speaking to him, challenging his narrow understanding of value and utility.

The tree questions Shi’s judgement, asking if he wants to compare it to cultivated, fruit-bearing trees subject to human pruning and exploitation, leading to shortened lifespans.

In contrast, the “useless” tree has been working on being useless for a long time, finding great value in its uselessness. The tree asks Shi if he thinks it could have grown so great if it were considered useful by human standards and challenges Shi’s authority to classify and evaluate it.

This story’s humour, paradox, and juxtaposition make it a powerful example of deferring judgement to persuade readers to reconsider value and utility assumptions. The tree’s playful and paradoxical defence of its uselessness invites the reader to question the status quo without feeling lectured or judged. The story does not claim to have the right approach in valuing uselessness; instead, it accepts all points of view as valid and encourages the reader to make up their mind. This open-ended approach fosters a mindset conducive to creative problem-solving and possibility thinking, as it encourages readers to break free from conventional thinking patterns and explore new perspectives.

The story’s transdisciplinary and phenomenological lens aligns with the contemporary understanding of deferring judgement, which seeks to question the status quo in an acceptable way because it does not judge any point of view.

Deferring Judgement and Suspending Judgement

Unlike merely *suspending judgement*, the Daoist approach actively works with and transforms deep-rooted assumptions through paradox, metaphor, and transdisciplinary ways of knowing. Deferring judgement involves a purposeful and temporary postponement of conclusions, aligning with the dynamic nature of creative processes. Intentionally pausing the rush to finalise opinions opens spaces for renegotiating assumptions and unfolding fresh collaborative discoveries.

In contrast, suspending judgement suggests an indefinite distancing from certainty, risking detached disengagement and obscuring awareness of the profound otherness or difference that exists beyond one’s familiar cultural, conceptual, and perceptual frameworks (Epstein, 1988; Kyabgon, 2001). This detachment severs situational embedding and obstructs the necessary vulnerability for transformation to unfold.

The concept of suspending judgement has deep roots in both Western philosophical traditions, particularly during the Enlightenment era, and Eastern spiritual philosophies (Campbell, 1991). Western philosophy explored suspending judgement to attain a more

objective and rational understanding of the world. The emphasis was on questioning assumptions and withholding conclusions until sufficient evidence or reason was available.

During the Enlightenment, scepticism and doubt became powerful tools for intellectuals seeking to break free from dogma and embrace a more critical approach to knowledge. This intellectual movement encouraged individuals to suspend judgement until they rationally justified their beliefs. In this context, suspending judgement was seen as a path to intellectual liberation and cultivating a detached, rational mind.

In contrast, Eastern spiritual traditions, notably Buddhism, introduced a different dimension to suspending judgement. In Buddhism, suspending judgement is closely tied to mindfulness and cultivating a non-attached awareness (Epstein, 1988). The goal is not only to question assumptions but also to transcend the habitual tendency of the mind to grasp onto fixed viewpoints. By suspending judgement, practitioners aim to achieve a more open, present, and compassionate relationship with their experiences (R. Wright, 2017).

While suspending judgement may lead to disengagement and a lack of situational awareness, deferring judgement allows for active participation and transformation and challenging the status quo. Indigenous Australian ways of knowing offer a profound and transformative approach to deferring judgement that goes beyond the Daoist perspective. While Daoism, with its roots in political philosophy, emphasises the cultivation of inner harmony and alignment with the natural order (Ziporyn, 2009), Indigenous Australian knowledge is grounded in a deep, embodied connection to Country that transcends the human realm (Ungunmerr, 2017; S. Wright et al., 2012).

Indigenous Approaches to Deferring Judgement

Indigenous Australian knowledge systems do not merely integrate multiple disciplines or perspectives; they embody a holistic approach where all forms of knowing are interconnected and interdependent. In this worldview, deferring judgement is grounded in a deep respect for the world's inherent unknowability and the limitations of human knowledge. This acceptance of ignorance is not a passive resignation but an active embrace of the complexity and mystery of existence. By acknowledging the impossibility of knowing all points of view, Indigenous Australians cultivate a sense of connection and belonging to the more extensive web of life.

Indigenous Australian knowledge takes transdisciplinary and phenomenological ideas to a new level. The profound connection to Country is not confined to the earthly realm but

extends to the entire cosmos. This cosmic perspective transcends the human sense of time and moves into the realm of axiology—a spiritual way of being (Yunkaporta, 2019) that goes beyond the Daoist cultivation of inner harmony. This demonstrates that transdisciplinarity, when viewed through an Indigenous lens, is not just an intellectual exercise or a methodological framework but a lived, dynamic practice that engages with the world in a deeply relational and reciprocal manner. This emphasis on embracing ambiguity and the unknown is mirrored in Indigenous Australian knowledge practices, which similarly advocate for a dynamic and relational understanding of the world.

For Indigenous Australians, the ultimate form of deferring judgement lies in recognising that judgement and non-judgement are not polarities but mirrors that reflect to infinity (Ungunmerr, 2017). This understanding positions transdisciplinarity as an active, ongoing process of engagement, where openness to multiple perspectives fosters a richer, more nuanced understanding of complex phenomena. It offers a paradigm shift in transdisciplinary thinking by moving beyond the human perspective to embrace a universal, yet profoundly personal, understanding of the world.

Indigenous Australian scholars manifest the concept of deferring judgement through practices deeply rooted in an axiology of respect (Sheehan, 2011). This approach is an example where respect serves as a more nuanced conceptualisation of deferring judgement.

Indigenous knowledge operates from the assumption that the world is alive and active in the same way humans are. Respect is based on an ancestral understanding that humanity stands briefly in a world that existed long before us and will continue to exist long after. From this view, no one can ever fully know the implications of any action. Respect, therefore, involves showing care and awareness in how people identify, explore, and assess meaning, always knowing their view is incomplete. In some contexts, this respect manifests as “productive inaction,” where one remains still to observe shifting patterns as a basis for future life-affirming actions (Sheehan, 2011, p. 68).

Another expression of this respect is found in the Indigenous order of thinking: “Respect, Connect, Reflect, and Direct” (Yunkaporta, 2019, p. 302). Yunkaporta (2019) notes that this contrasts with non-Aboriginal approaches, where problems are quickly assumed, and solutions rushed. Such premature judgements often fail to understand underlying nuances, resulting in unsustainable outcomes. Beginning from a place of respect

demonstrates how a spirit of deferring judgement could be deployed from the start of the problem-solving process to deliver more sustainable solutions.

Nakata (2007) characterises how the spirit of respect should manifest at the “cultural interface,” a concept developed to move beyond binary conceptualisations of Torres Strait Islanders as cultural ‘others’. The cultural interface is a dynamic space where different knowledge, traditions, values, and social, economic, and political systems intersect. It is “a multi-layered and multi-dimensional space of dynamic relations constituted by the intersections of time, place, distance, different systems of thought, competing and contesting discourses within and between different knowledge traditions, and different systems of social, economic and political organisation” (Nakata, 2007, p. 199). This space requires a deep respect for all perspectives and an “ego-egolessness” that embraces tension and differences as opportunities for deeper understanding.

4.4. Foreshadowing the Deferring Judgement Framework

These three distinct yet related conceptions—the cultural interface, the Indigenous order of thinking, and the axiology of respect—transcend the idea of transdisciplinarity as merely a tool or method for problem-solving. They elevate deferring judgement into a fundamental way of being that aligns with the ethos of openness, interconnectedness, and perpetual learning central to transdisciplinary thinking.

To this end, these concepts will be woven into the Deferring Judgement Framework presented later in this thesis. Specifically, Yunkaporta’s (2019; 2020) Indigenous order of thinking—Respect, Reflect, Connect, Direct—will be integrated to deepen the relational and ethical dimensions of deferring judgement. This integration expands the framework’s capacity to engage more holistically with diverse perspectives and complex problems, reflecting a practice-based approach that is attentive to both cultural context and relational ethics.

Incorporating the Indigenous perspective enriches the Deferring Judgement Framework by bringing forward ethical, relational, intellectual, and operational dimensions in knowledge production. It shifts the emphasis from merely reconciling different viewpoints to fostering a deeper, more inclusive, and culturally sensitive engagement with diverse ways of knowing. This integration shows how Indigenous principles can guide and strengthen

contemporary transdisciplinary research and creative practices by fostering a more respectful and collaborative inquiry process.

As a non-Indigenous author living in Australia, I acknowledge that my understanding of Indigenous Australian ways of knowing is limited. I recognise that I will never fully comprehend the depth and complexity of these knowledge systems. However, by respectfully engaging with and continually learning from these perspectives, alongside other cultural traditions such as Daoism, I aim to open new possibilities for transdisciplinary thinking and cultivate a more holistic, inclusive, and life-affirming approach to engaging with the world.

Neuroscience and Deferring Judgement

While the primary focus of this discussion has been on the transformative potential of Daoist and Indigenous Australian approaches to deferring judgement, it is worth briefly acknowledging that contemporary neuroscience and psychology also offer valuable insights into the cognitive processes underlying this capacity. However, it is crucial to emphasise that the inclusion of this perspective is not intended to default back to a Western epistemic way of knowing that privileges scientific understandings of cognition and creativity. Instead, it is to be complementary.

Research in the fields of neuroscience and psychology suggests that the capacity for flexible, paradoxical, and divergent thinking is rooted in specific neurological processes and structures innate to the human body and mind. For example, Damasio's (2000) concept of *extended consciousness* highlights the role of the self in mediating between immediate experience and long-term memory, providing a neurological basis for the kind of reflexive and contextual thinking that underlies the practice of deferring judgement.

Similarly, Beaty's et al., (2015) research on the ability of highly creative individuals to simultaneously engage in divergent and convergent thinking can be seen as a cognitive parallel to the Daoist and Indigenous Australian emphasis on holding multiple perspectives and embracing paradox. McGilchrist's (2010) argument that contemporary Western society is overly dominated by left-brain thinking at the expense of right-brain thinking, which emphasises context, embodiment, and holistic understanding, also resonates with the critique of Western epistemology implied by these non-Western ways of knowing.

S. B. Kaufman's (2014) characterisation of creative individuals as possessing "messy minds" comfortable with ambiguity, contradiction, and uncertainty likewise echoes the

valorisation of not-knowing and the acceptance of the limitations of human knowledge found in Daoist and Indigenous Australian traditions. Finally, Claxton's (2015) work on cultivating a more relaxed, diffuse, and playful mode of attention to foster creativity and insight provides a practical, psychologically grounded approach to implementing the principles of deferring judgement in contemporary contexts.

By acknowledging the contributions of neuroscience and psychology to the understanding of deferring judgement while also recognising the limitations of these frameworks, people can begin to build bridges between different ways of knowing and move towards a more holistic and integrated understanding of the nature of cognition, creativity, and the suspension of certainty. This, in turn, can serve as a foundation for exploring the transformative potential of transdisciplinarity as a way of being, which will be the focus of the next section.

4.5. Summary

This chapter traces the origins of deferring judgement from its beginnings in creativity and idea generation, returning to its core link with psychological safety and then broadening the scope to include perspectives from phenomenology, neuroscience, transdisciplinarity, and non-Western knowledge systems such as Indigenous Australian and Daoist traditions. By expanding this lens, the chapter shows how deferring judgement can facilitate breakthroughs by bridging differing epistemologies and creating space for deeper, more inclusive forms of creativity.

As you reflect on this chapter, consider how deferring judgement might allow you to accept that knowledge is never fully complete or final. What possibilities could emerge if you held space for what cannot be entirely known or understood? Embrace the ongoing process of learning and discovery, recognising that each new perspective, much like creativity itself, is always in a state of becoming.

Before moving into the next section, take a moment to engage with the mythic tale that follows. "Judgement Day" explores the delicate balance between the need to be seen and the risk of misinterpreting how others perceive us. Like the owl and the tree, we often project judgements onto others and ourselves without fully realising the deeper connections beneath the surface. As you read, allow the story to guide you into an exploration of identity, creativity, and the shifting nature of judgement.



Judgement Day

And once the storm is over, you won't remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won't even be sure, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm, you won't be the same person who walked in. That's what this storm's all about.

—Haruki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore*

The owl was tired and flying home. She was satiated—a night of killing and mating—made her entire being yearned to be alone. She was grateful the tree who could be a stern judge could not speak—though after so many years of living together—he did not need words to make his thoughts known. Nonetheless, his silence would be a blessing.

For the tree, he understood a particular way of being that had no words other than tree-ness. In that sense, he expected his owl to want to come home. He would protect her and make her safe, but she wondered if she had outgrown her nest. She felt he only saw her through the stories of the past encased in his rings or his gnarled roots buried deep and unseen beneath the ground. She was more than that, and she scoffed; if he wasn't careful, the hurt of not being fully seen could drive resentment and make her leave not out of adventure but misadventure. Though her camouflage plumage made her indistinguishable from the tree to only the most observant eye—in her mind, she looked more like the iridescent bowerbird that shown as brightly as the Yves Klein blue objects it collected and displayed outside its nest.

The tree heard her silent approach and laughed, which caused its boughs to sway gently. He knew the owl harboured resentment and believed he was judging

her without realising she was the judgy one stifling her creativity with her beliefs about herself. After all, he could not speak directly to her, so how could she be so sure of what he would have to say? It's in our nature to want to be seen shining more brightly, but what he appreciated about her wasn't her obviousness. Her greatest gift wasn't found in overt acts of distinction but in the seamless integration of her unique essence into the intricate tapestry of nature. Therein lay her most profound art form. He knew she would come to realise this as he gently rocked her asleep when they transcended their separateness to become one in their dreams, as he kept one eye awake to marvel at the impending dawn.

Chapter 5

Research Question and Methodology

5.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research approach and question's evolution and addresses a gap in understanding how deferring judgement operates throughout the entire creative process. It details a transdisciplinary research approach integrating practice-led methodologies, autoethnography, and arts-based methods, offering an in-depth exploration of lived experiences and intersubjective negotiations in deferring judgement during creative collaborations.

Before proceeding, consider how deferring judgement might shape your engagement with this chapter. What possibilities might emerge if you resisted drawing immediate conclusions about the research approach and instead remained open to its evolving, creative dynamics?

5.2. Research Gap

Research on deferring judgement has remained limited since the 1970s (Basadur, 1979; Parnes et al., 1977; Parnes & Harding, 1962), focusing primarily on its role during idea generation, with little attention on its impact at the creative process's onset—the most critical phase for unlocking potential (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1971; H. H. Ma, 2009).

5.3. Research Question

At the core of this research is an exploration of how individuals embody and intersubjectively negotiate the experience of deferring judgement during creative collaborations. This inquiry is guided by the central question: *How is the lived experience of deferring judgement embodied and negotiated intersubjectively during creative collaborations to expand possibilities?*

A phenomenological perspective serves as the foundation for this investigation, allowing for a deep engagement with the sensed, felt, and intuited aspects of the creative

process. This approach is particularly valuable in illuminating the ineffable and intangible experiences that are often crucial yet challenging to articulate in creative contexts.

Evolution of the Research Question and Approach

The research began with the question: *How to enable a deferring judgement mindset in the problem definition phase to increase possibilities?* Initially, I selected Grounded Theory for its rigour, planning to gather data through creativity training and coaching sessions conducted via Zoom. However, I soon realised this approach felt restrictive and did not align with the emergent nature of my creative practice. Three pivotal experiences shaped this transformation:

1. **National School of Dramatic Arts (NIDA) Acting Course:** Participating in this course shifted my focus from producing outputs to curating immersive theatrical experiences. I recognised the embodied nature of my practice and the importance of immersion in facilitating creative environments.
2. **Zine Creation:** Repurposing early Zoom recordings into a digital collage zine revealed the imaginative potential of documentation, encouraging me to explore arts-based methods like collage.
3. **Mentor Resistance:** Encountering resistance from mentors advocating for a more traditional research methodology led me to fully embrace a practice-led approach, reflecting the iterative, experiential nature of my work.

Together, these experiences led me to refine the research question, shifting focus from a rigid methodology to a more dynamic, practice-led approach that better aligned with the principles of deferring judgement in creative collaborations.

Methodological Framework

- **Practice-led Research:** This study uses practice-led research to position creative practice as the primary method for generating knowledge. This approach is particularly valuable for understanding the dynamics of deferring judgement in real-world contexts (Candy, 2006; Haseman & Mafe, 2009).

- **Autoethnography:** Autoethnography provides a reflective lens, linking personal experience with broader social contexts enriching the study's exploration of creative processes (Adams et al., 2021).
- **Phenomenology:** Phenomenology allows the study to deeply engage with lived experience, focusing on how deferring judgement is perceived and embodied in creative contexts (J. Smith, 2016).

Research Methods

This study integrates arts-based methods—collage, video recordings, and narrative inquiry—to explore the sensory, emotional, and imaginative dimensions of creative practice. These methods enable a deeper engagement with the complexities of deferring judgement beyond traditional textual analysis (Knowles & Cole, 2007).

Collage is particularly valuable as it allows participants to reflect and explore non-linear experiences. At the same time, video recordings serve as dynamic tools that capture and evoke meanings beyond their original moments. Narrative inquiry helps analyse these video observations by treating each recording as a living narrative, constantly evolving and shaped by collaboration.

Final Research Questions and Approach

As my research progressed, my understanding of deferring judgement and the dynamics of creative collaboration deepened, leading to the final research question: **How is the lived experience of deferring judgement embodied and negotiated intersubjectively during collaborative creative endeavours to expand possibilities?**

Sub-questions include:

- What physical, emotional, and imaginative experiences do participants have when moments of deferred judgement occur or are intentionally created in collaborative spaces?
- How do people use their unspoken, bodily skills during activities where they improvise together, helping to set aside assumptions and keep open to new ideas, beyond their usual thinking patterns?

- What changes happen within individuals and between them when they defer judgement to imagine new perspectives? What new kinds of relationships and ethical attitudes develop?
- How might the richness of these deferring judgement events be translated into shareable pedagogical models while retaining fidelity to their original complexity and ambiguity?

These research questions provide a comprehensive understanding of deferring judgement in collaborative creative sessions, integrating phenomenology within a transdisciplinary framework. All elements of the work, including NTROs (Zoom calls, autoethnographic journals, collage, print-making, photography and theatre lessons, to name a few) informed the final NTRO, *Fractals*, an immersive theatrical event.

5.4. Methodology: Practice-led Research with a Transdisciplinary Lens

My research adopts a practice-led approach integrating transdisciplinary, autoethnographic, creative, and phenomenological lenses. *Practice-led* research positions practice at the centre of generating new knowledge and understanding, with creative outputs to explore and communicate the insights gained (Candy, 2006; Gray, 1996; Haseman & Mafe, 2009; Throne, 2020).

In contrast, *practice-based* research typically positions practice as the object of study, where new knowledge is gained through creating a work of art or a product. The transdisciplinary aspect draws from diverse fields, integrating various ways of knowing from creativity studies, philosophy, anthropology, and the performing arts. This transdisciplinary approach blends insights from phenomenology (philosophy), autoethnography (social sciences), and arts-based methods (performing arts and creative practice), allowing for a comprehensive exploration of deferring judgement in creative collaboration.

NTROs in this research encompass creative forms such as theatrical events, digital zines, and multimedia recordings that extend beyond conventional academic outputs to offer deeper insights into embodied experiences. These NTROs serve as critical tools for engaging participants and audiences in an experiential exploration of the research themes. While NTROs are often categorised under practice-based research, my work demonstrates that they can be practice-led as well, generating theoretical insights that contribute significantly to the field beyond their artistic value.

Practice-led Research and Autoethnography

The evolution of creativity studies and transdisciplinary approaches, as discussed in the previous chapter, has paralleled the development of practice research and autoethnography, the primary methodologies in this research. These methodologies have emerged from similar social conditions, notably the significant economic shifts following World War II, which have left a lasting imprint on academia. The rise of a knowledge-based economy, technological advancements, increasing globalisation, and expanded access to higher education led universities to focus more on practical skills relevant to a changing professional landscape (Barrett & Bolt, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Guba, 1990; Lincoln & Denzin, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These shifts helped establish practice-led research and autoethnography as essential tools for academic inquiry.

By the 1970s, a qualitative revolution transformed research methodologies across many fields (Guba, 1981, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This revolution was driven by a desire to connect research more directly with its practical application, fostering meaningful outcomes. Researchers began to recognise the limitations of rationalistic approaches that relied heavily on quantitative data, deduction, and hypothesis testing. Instead, they turned to more naturalistic methods better suited to the complexities of human experience. These methods emphasised observing and interacting with participants in their natural settings to understand their perspectives, behaviours, and social contexts.

This broadening of research scope encouraged greater freedom and flexibility, moving beyond the rigid technicalities more suited to the physical sciences (Bolt et al., 2014; Gray, 1996). It embraced a more inclusive approach that collectively considered the broader contextual, theoretical, and practical dimensions. This inclusivity laid the groundwork for practice research, integrating creative practices directly into the research process to address real-world challenges and contribute to knowledge.

Simultaneously, previously marginalised ways of knowing began to gain recognition (Lincoln & Guba, 2016). Subjective experiences, embodiment, phenomenology, and metaphysics offered fresh perspectives on understanding the world, challenging traditional notions of objectivity (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003; Pernecky, 2016). Counter-culture movements, including feminism, Eastern philosophies, and Indigenous epistemologies, added new voices to the academic discourse, advocating for a more pluralistic and diverse understanding of knowledge.

These philosophical and epistemological shifts have paved the way for the development of practice research, a methodology that often includes an autoethnographic element. Practice research integrates creative practices, methodologies, and outputs into the research design, recognising them as essential to both the process and its outcomes. I assert that all practices, even those traditionally viewed as non-creative, such as engineering, are inherently creative. This reflects my view of creativity as an intrinsic human quality worthy of rigorous study.

Defining Practice-Led Research

Several terms describe this approach—practice-based, practice-led, research by practice, or practice-as-research—each with nuanced meanings depending on the context or discipline (Haseman & Mafe, 2009). However, all share a common feature: they allow researchers to seamlessly integrate their practice, methodologies, and outputs into the research process.

Within this landscape, my focus is practice-led research, a form of academic inquiry that uses the creative process to generate knowledge, understanding, and insights across disciplines, from the arts to engineering (Candy, 2006; Haseman & Mafe, 2009). To clarify, I use the term “practice-led research” for my specific methodological approach and “practice research” for broader applications in the field. These distinctions underscore the diverse ways practice research can be approached, highlighting its flexibility and adaptability to different disciplinary contexts.

Constructivism and Practice Research

Constructivist thinking has also shaped the development of practice research by emphasising the subjective, experiential, and constructed nature of understanding (Poulos, 2021; Throne, 2020). This perspective holds that knowledge is not an objective entity waiting to be discovered but is actively constructed through individual experiences, interactions, and reflections. This view aligns with the core tenets of practice-led research, which generates knowledge through immersive, experiential, and reflective engagement with creative practices, recognising the subjectivity and contextual nature of the insights produced.

Arts-Science Divide

Despite the inherent creativity that underlies all forms of human inquiry, there remains a cultural divide between the arts and sciences, with the former often seen as less valuable or

legitimate (Ravelli et al., 2014; Snow, 1959/2012). Broader societal changes, such as the rise of postmodernist thinking, have significantly influenced this divide (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lincoln & Denzin, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 2016). Postmodernism, focusing on subjectivity, relativism, and the social construction of knowledge, has challenged traditional hierarchies between disciplines. However, its critique of objective truth and the privileging of scientific knowledge has sometimes inadvertently reinforced perceptions of a divide between the arts and sciences despite its emphasis on multiple perspectives and the validity of diverse inquiry forms.

There have been developments aimed at bridging this divide, particularly the integration of art schools into universities, which has facilitated the development and endorsement of practice research (Gray, 1996; Rust et al., 2007; Schwarzenbach & Hackett, 2015; H. Smith & Dean, 2009; Throne, 2020). This integration has helped to elevate the status of artistic inquiry within academia, promoting inter- and transdisciplinary collaboration and the exchange of ideas between the arts and sciences. It challenges the perception of the arts as less academically rigorous or prestigious while simultaneously enriching both fields through a more inclusive and holistic approach to knowledge creation.

Value of a Practice

The vulnerability inherent in NTROs as a research method is significant, particularly within autoethnographic and practice-led contexts. Philosopher and organisational theorist Donald Schön's seminal concept of "reflection-in-action" suggests that professionals do not merely apply established theories but continually reflect and adapt their methods in response to the complexities of real-world situations (Schön, 1983). This dynamic process involves embracing uncertainty and being vulnerable to changing one's approach based on emergent insights.

By highlighting tacit knowledge—knowledge gained through experience and practice that is often difficult to articulate explicitly—Schön's work reinforces the importance of subjective experiences and contextual understanding, which are central to practice-led research and NTROs. This perspective challenges the traditional privileging of scientific inquiry over the arts, suggesting that creative and reflective processes are equally valuable in generating knowledge and advancing understanding.

NTROs allow researchers to be more vulnerable, honest, and open, creating new forms of knowledge production that embrace uncertainty and emotional engagement. This openness is often dismissed as “less rigorous,” yet, as Schön (1983) argues, it contributes to a deeper, more nuanced understanding of human experience and creativity. By engaging in reflection-in-action, researchers acknowledge the evolving nature of practice and the importance of adaptability, mirroring the dynamic processes inherent in creative inquiry.

Ongoing Challenges for Practice Research

Despite increasing acceptance, practice research continues to face significant challenges within the academy. It is still often perceived as a lesser form of knowledge production compared to more established methods of inquiry (Bolt et al., 2014). This perception persists due to entrenched hierarchies and power structures that privilege certain forms of knowledge over others. These challenges underscore the ongoing struggle to validate practice research as a legitimate academic approach.

The roots of this divide can be traced back to Charles Percy Snow’s 1959 lecture series, *The Two Cultures*, in which he highlighted the split between the arts and sciences (1959/2012). Snow’s argument encapsulates the enduring tensions between these fields, where scientific methods are often privileged over artistic or creative approaches. This legacy persists today, with many artists and creative practitioners remaining reluctant to engage with academia, fearing it might limit their capacity to challenge norms and innovate (Schwarzenbach & Hackett, 2015).

Conversely, the academy has often been slow to recognise the value and rigour of creative practices, viewing them as too vocational or practical to be considered substantive research. This is particularly evident in the United States, where arts-based doctoral degrees are often not recognised due to their perceived practicality, reinforcing the marginalised position of the arts within academic settings.

Navigating the Landscape

Navigating the practice research landscape presents opportunities and challenges due to its lack of a universally accepted definition within the research community (Haseman & Mafe, 2009; Rust et al., 2007; H. Smith & Dean, 2009; Sweat et al., 2022). While this inherent

flexibility encourages creative exploration, it can be perplexing for those accustomed to more standardised approaches.

In his book *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*, John Law, an English sociologist, critiques the pursuit of methodological “hygiene”—the desire for clarity and precision in research (2004, p. 41). He argues that methods do not merely describe social realities but actively shape them. This perspective suggests that methods are inherently political and raises critical questions about the kinds of social realities that society seeks to construct. Traditional approaches often dismiss messiness and ambiguity, favouring more straightforward conclusions. However, Law (2004) asserts that many realities are inherently vague and ephemeral. Methods must embrace these complexities to understand and shape the world effectively, particularly within creative processes. This messiness is a significant challenge for practice research, which demands rethinking methods and their underlying assumptions.

Compounding this challenge is the variability in how practice research is interpreted across disciplines, contexts, and individual perspectives (Haseman, 2006; Sweat et al., 2022). For example, while an architect or engineer might engage in practice research focusing on technical precision, a performance or visual artist may take a more autoethnographic or phenomenological approach. Such differences in emphasis create a lack of shared understanding, which can diminish perceived rigour and exacerbate the science-art divide discussed earlier (Ravelli et al., 2014).

In the UK, for instance, architects often need to explicitly label their work as practice research, potentially missing opportunities for cross-pollination and transdisciplinary learning (Rust et al., 2007). This terminological ambiguity may hinder the broader dissemination and application of innovative practices and ideas across fields.

Consequently, this confusion about what constitutes valid knowledge leaves it open for contestation, challenging researchers and assessors. The uncertainty surrounding expected outcomes or contributions further complicates determining appropriate forms for outputs and how they should be evaluated.

Ethical Considerations

As practice research continues to evolve and confront methodological ambiguities, it faces unique ethical challenges that demand careful and continuous reflection. Given its personal,

subjective, and often autoethnographic nature, ethical issues surrounding representation, consent, and harm minimisation become paramount (Adams et al., 2015; Ellis et al., 2018; Ellis & Bochner, 2013). Researchers must navigate complex questions about what constitutes private or sensitive information, whose stories they have the right to tell, and how to protect the identities and dignity of those involved, including themselves. This is particularly pressing in the case of practice-led and arts-based methodologies, where lived experiences, cultural traditions, and marginalised voices are frequently intertwined with creative outputs.

Researchers must ensure that the portrayals they generate are accurate, respectful, and culturally sensitive, especially when these artistic practices intersect with marginalised communities or cultural knowledge systems. There is always a risk of misrepresentation, cultural appropriation, or inadvertent harm, even with the best intentions. Blurring boundaries between the researcher and the research subjects introduces further ethical complexity, as practice researchers often engage in reflexive, co-constructed processes with participants. This dynamic can shift power relations, requiring ongoing dialogue about consent and transparency, as the roles and relationships in such projects are rarely static.

The practice researcher's dual role—as both a creator and investigator—necessitates carefully negotiating power dynamics, where issues of exploitation or over-exposure of participants must be actively addressed. Researchers should adopt reflexive and iterative ethical approaches, continuously revisiting their ethical decisions throughout the research journey. Ethical considerations must concern how participants' stories are gathered and how research outputs are disseminated and presented—whether through public exhibitions, performances, or multimedia installations. These outputs may reach diverse audiences, including those not part of the research process but whose lives, experiences, or cultural symbols are represented.

This highlights the vulnerability inherent in practice research, both for participants and researchers, as creative and reflective processes often expose deeply personal dimensions that are difficult to protect in traditional ways. Schön's (1983) concept of reflection-in-action is crucial here, as it emphasises that practice researchers must continually adapt their methods in response to emerging ethical challenges, mirroring the dynamic and context-dependent nature of creative inquiry. Schön's work also highlights the role of tacit knowledge, underscoring how the embodied, intuitive, and often experiential nature of practice research creates new ethical terrains that require both flexibility and deep attentiveness.

Given the evolving, emergent nature of these methodologies, ethical concerns cannot be addressed through static protocols. Instead, engaging in ongoing dialogue with participants, community stakeholders, and ethical review boards ensures that ethical considerations remain a living, integral part of the research process rather than a one-time checklist (Ellis et al., 2011). Reflexivity, adaptability, and a commitment to cultural and social responsibility are essential for researchers to navigate these complex ethical terrains while fostering creative processes that are both inclusive and ethically sound.

5.5. Autoethnography

Given these ethical complexities, it becomes clear that methodologies like autoethnography, which navigate subjective and personal terrains, offer both opportunities and challenges for practice researchers. As an established methodology, autoethnography complements practice research by providing a framework for integrating personal experience into scholarly inquiry (Haseman, 2006; Smith & Dean, 2009; Throne, 2020).

Autoethnography creatively connects personal, lived experiences with broader cultural and social contexts, transforming individual narratives into universal contributions to knowledge. This methodology's strength lies in its ability to explore complex topics holistically and inclusively, making it highly versatile and practical. In my experience, practice research and autoethnography are two methodological lenses that naturally complement each other.

Autoethnography has a rich and diverse lineage. Although the term formally emerged in the 1970s, its roots can be traced back decades or even centuries, with earlier works using personal narratives to explore specific subjects or cultural practices (Adams & Herrmann, 2020).

Its value extends to making sense of both ordinary and extraordinary life events (Adams et al., 2021). It normalises experiences that are often concealed by shame, providing a therapeutic release. This cathartic quality is particularly powerful during periods of uncertainty, fear, and adversity, as it enables practitioners to delve deeply into themselves, expanding their emotional and empathetic capacities for themselves and others.

Unlike autobiography, autoethnography situates individual experiences within broader cultural, social, and political contexts. It employs rigorous self-reflection to illuminate and scrutinise cultural beliefs, practices, and identities, challenging the dichotomy

between subjective experience and objective knowledge. This approach is invaluable in my practice-led research, where my personal experiences have provided insights into broader cultural phenomena.

Phenomenology and Autoethnography

Autoethnography aligns well with phenomenology and Heidegger's focus on *being in the world*—a concept that describes the way human existence is fundamentally situated within and intertwined with the world around them (Gallagher, 2022; Moran & Mooney, 2002). This perspective reinforces the idea that understanding and experiences are always contextual, influenced by an individual's engagement with the world.

Merleau-Ponty further expanded phenomenology to include the concept of *embodiment*, emphasising that the body is not merely an object but the primary means of engaging with the world (Hamrick, 1994). This embodied approach is directly relevant to my research, especially the concept of deferring judgement, as it underscores the role of lived experience and the body in understanding and interacting with the world.

Similarly, Levinas's idea of *radical alterity*, which emphasises ethical responsibility to the "other," introduces a crucial ethical dimension to my exploration of judgement and its impacts, highlighting how people's encounters with others demand a continuous reassessment of their preconceived notions (Levinas, 1998).

By integrating phenomenological insights into autoethnography, researchers can achieve a more comprehensive understanding of their experiences, allowing for a deeper exploration of personal and cultural dynamics. This integration enriches the practice of autoethnography and broadens its scope, opening new possibilities for creative and innovative knowledge production that connects deeply personal insights with broader cultural and social contexts.

Applying NTROs in Practice

Throughout the PhD process, I often used arts-based methods as a form of escape from the relentless didactic nature of academic writing. It became a craving to do something visual instead of constantly being immersed in the world of discourse and words. One of my favourite activities was to capture images on my iPhone and then upload them to Canva, an online graphic design tool. From there, I would engage in "mindless" play sessions, exploring patterns, shapes, and colours. Though the immediate outcomes were not always related to the

research, these moments offered a sense of relief and detachment. Often, while walking home afterwards, I would experience a breakthrough—a new association or insight catalysed by my mind’s freedom while wandering during these creative moments of distraction (see Figure 10 for an example of this process).

Figure 10: Letting Water Move Me



Digitally manipulating a water snapshot to evoke creative fluidity allowed me to explore emergence, revealing insights beneath the surface. Created by the author in 2023 using a camera phone photograph, transformed with Canva Pro.

Observation and NTROs

Observation, a standard method in qualitative research, takes on a distinctive character within the arts-based paradigm. Traditionally utilised in case studies and ethnographic research to document social behaviours and contexts, observation has increasingly gained recognition for its utility in capturing the rich, often intangible dynamics of creative processes (Espedal et al., 2022; Siedlecki, 2020; H. Smith & Dean, 2009). In arts-based research, observation is not merely about recording data but about immersing oneself in the lived experiences of the subjects and engaging in creative inquiry that aligns with the broader ethos of practice-led research.

When applied to arts-based research, observation is deeply informed by phenomenological principles, particularly regarding researcher positioning and reflexivity (Brien, 2006; Hampton et al., 2021; Haseman, 2006; Knaack, 1984; November, 2023; H. Smith & Dean, 2009; Thorburn & Stolz, 2020). A phenomenological approach requires the researcher to acknowledge how their perspectives shape the research process, from question formulation to data interpretation. This aligns with the concept of bracketing or epoché, where researchers suspend their preconceived notions and biases, allowing for a more unprejudiced engagement with the observed phenomena (Hampton et al., 2021; Husserl, 2012; Macann, 1993).

Arts-based observation methods offer several advantages, particularly in capturing nuanced details of lived experiences and creative processes (November 2023; Siedlecki, 2020; Thorburn & Stolz, 2020). Observations facilitate a transdisciplinary systems approach, revealing how creative phenomena are situated within broader cultural, social, and environmental contexts. Additionally, they enable researchers to directly engage with the subject matter, uncovering subtleties that might elude more traditional methods reliant on verbal articulation. Observational methods can be particularly valuable when exploring experiences that resist easy expression, focusing on direct perception rather than relying solely on linguistic descriptions.

However, the use of observation in arts-based research is not without its challenges. As Espedal et al. (2022) and Polit & Beck (2020) noted, observation can be time-intensive and requires significant training and oversight to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected. Observers must be mindful of the potential for systematic or random errors, whether due to inherent biases in the observation process, measurement tools, or the subjective interpretations that may arise based on the observer's mood, context, or other factors. This necessitates a rigorous approach to data triangulation and ethical considerations to maintain the integrity of the research process.

However, as Schein (2013) suggests, arts-based observation brings unique dimensions to research. For example, art fosters enhanced perception, encouraging deeper immersion and heightened awareness of external surroundings and internal experiences. This is critical in arts-based research, where attention to detail and nuanced perception are vital for capturing meaningful data. Moreover, the arts provoke emotional and intellectual responses, which can lead to unexpected insights and a deeper understanding of the phenomena under study.

Observations informed by arts-based perspectives, therefore, gather data and engage the observer in a dynamic interplay of sensory and emotional experiences that can reveal hidden layers of meaning and understanding.

As a method within arts-based research, observation allows for engagement with the world in ways that reveal unexpected insights. For example, while attending an exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum in May 2022, I was captivated by a metal crown inspired by the eucalyptus leaf. This imagery lingered with me and later emerged as a critical insight into how organic forms can be sturdy and soft. This combination of natural inspiration and mythical elements contributed to a deeper understanding of creating a sense of an extraordinary world, which was reflected in the Fractals NTRO detailed later in this thesis (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Metal Leaf Crown



Inspired by a May 2022 Powerhouse Museum exhibition, this piece captures the strength and softness of a eucalyptus-leaf metal crown, symbolising Australia’s resilience. It became a metaphor in my work, intertwining myth and reality and influencing my Fractals NTRO design—photographed by the author on a camera phone.

Video Recordings as NTROs

The use of video recordings in this research is approached from an arts-based perspective, recognising the unique capacities of film and video as dynamic mediums for creative expression and reflection. While video is often employed in research to capture data visually, this study positions video recordings as more than mere documentation tools; they are treated as vibrant, living entities that actively engage viewers and evolve.

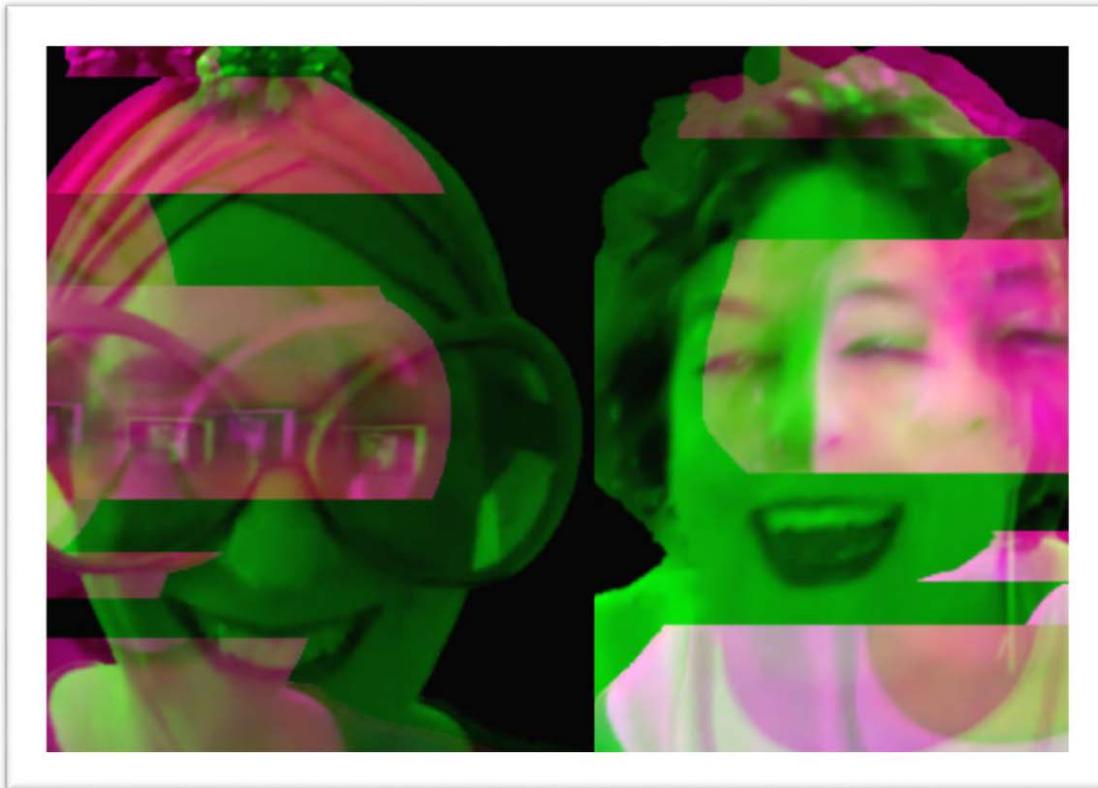
Deger (2016) explores this perspective by challenging the typical portrayal of video as a medium that ‘flattens’ human lives and experiences into static frames. Drawing from research with Indigenous Australians, Deger (2016) argues that films and videos serve as sensory conduits that evoke emotions and meanings beyond the original moments captured.

In this context, video becomes a powerful tool for communicating broader and more profound meanings that transcend the constraints of static images or in-person experiences.

Building on this view, Bruno (2014) introduces the concept of screen membranes, where films and videos act as connective tissues that convert static images into supple planes of meaning. Rather than treating videos as lesser substitutes for face-to-face interaction, Bruno (2014) argues that they establish an alternative environment with its unique vessel and repository. In this way, video recordings are not confined to capturing a moment in time; they actively engage with viewers, becoming integral actors in the interpretative process. By treating video recordings as living entities, this research leverages their transformative potential, allowing for a richer, more holistic understanding of the creative processes and phenomena under study.

For example, I took screenshots from one of my online creative collaboration sessions and brought them into Canva, a graphic design tool, to reimagine the otherwise static, mundane video frames (see Figure 12). Drawing inspiration from Huizinga's (1944/1980) concept of the "extraordinary world," I transformed what is often considered a sterile, constrained environment—the digital meeting room—into a "Willy Wonka" world of colour, layers, and playful technographic manipulation to aptly reflect the feelings that were surging between us. The result reflects the inherently fluid, dynamic, and often unpredictable nature of creativity.

Figure 12: Down the Rabbit Hole We Go!



This digitally manipulated screenshot from an online collaboration session uses vibrant, Willy Wonka-inspired colours to capture creativity's playful energy. The transformation of a mundane digital space reflects the fluidity and unpredictability of the creative process. Created by the author in 2021 with Canva Pro.

What is traditionally seen as a rigid, flat space became a visually engaging and immersive experience, where colours and abstract forms captured the depth of interaction and collaboration. The vibrant visual elements were not simply aesthetic choices but emerged from our creative energy. These manipulated images from the Zoom call capture more than just visual interaction; they embody the essence of creativity in motion, presenting new ways of seeing and understanding the digital collaboration process.

The digital manipulation facilitated new layers of interaction, revealing the hidden, often subconscious dimensions of the collaborative process. In this way, the otherwise flat and distant digital medium became a portal into a whimsical, vibrant world, echoing the kind of collaborative energy one might associate with a creative studio—despite the participants being miles apart.

This process reflects the creative possibilities within a digital medium. It demonstrates how arts-based inquiry can break down barriers in remote collaboration, turning constraints into opportunities for innovative, creative engagement.

Narrative Inquiry for Analysis

Narrative inquiry is employed as a critical arts-based method for analysing video observations in this study, recognising its value in providing a more nuanced, contextually grounded understanding of human experiences. Originating in the 1960s as a response to the dominance of positivist epistemologies, narrative inquiry has since established itself as a key methodological approach within the social sciences, offering an epistemological framework that aligns with the complexities of social life (Czarniawska, 2017; C. Rhodes & Brown, 2005).

Narrative inquiry allows for a detailed exploration of how individuals make sense of their experiences and construct their identities through stories. This method acknowledges the fragmented, adaptable, and inherently social nature of meaning-making by treating narratives as interpretative acts rather than mere representations of reality. As Connelly and Clandinin (2006) suggest, narrative inquiry is a way of thinking about experience, where stories serve as portals through which people enter and make sense of the world.

The application of narrative inquiry in this research involves treating each video recording as a narrative and examining how personal and social contexts co-construct, evolve, and shape stories. This approach aligns with the arts-based methodology's emphasis on fluidity and openness, embracing multiple interpretations and the inherent ambiguity of lived experience.

However, narrative inquiry has challenges, particularly concerning ethical considerations and relational responsibilities. Adams (2008) notes that researchers must be deeply mindful of their roles within relationships and collaborative inquiry processes. The relational nature of narrative inquiry spaces creates domains of belonging characterised by ethical principles such as openness, mutual vulnerability, reciprocity, and care. This aligns with the broader ethos of arts-based methods, which emphasise empathy, reflexivity, and co-creation of meaning.

The transition from field texts to interim and final research texts in narrative inquiry is complex and iterative, involving ongoing reflection and refinement. This process is never

conclusive; instead, it embraces the fluidity and evolving nature of human experiences, reflecting the dynamic, co-constructed character of narrative knowledge. This flexibility is essential in capturing the unfolding of lives as they are lived and experienced, making narrative inquiry a particularly suitable method for arts-based research.

During this research, a significant ethical dilemma emerged when reviewing video observations. While most of the narrative inquiry remained focused on the content and context of the recorded sessions, I found that my reflection often went beyond the immediate material to the ineffable qualities of the collaboration—the undercurrents of creativity and connection that were not directly verbalised but felt in the moment. The collaborative process continued to grow by sharing these reflections, leading to deeper exchanges.

One such reflection prompted my collaborator to share a personal video that had not been part of our original work. This spontaneous exchange catalysed a new creative project, which we began referring to as a *dictionary of play* (see Figure 13). This evolving work demonstrates how narrative inquiry, when treated as a living process, can extend beyond the boundaries of formal sessions and yield new, organic collaborations.

Figure 13: Prototype of a Dictionary of Play



This work incorporated independently shot footage from outside our creative session, which organically contributed to building a larger concept around a dictionary of play. It captured the liminality of the deferring judgement moment, highlighting the fluidity and openness in the creative process. It was created by the author with a Canva Pro in 2021.

However, the process also brought to light some thorny ethical questions. The video recordings captured deeply vulnerable moments, exposing emotions and thoughts that went beyond the scope of the research. While these insights significantly informed my understanding of the creative process, I realised that including these deeply personal moments in my analysis could violate the trust we had built. Therefore, I used arts-based methods to bring these to life in a way that did not compromise respect and trust. For a fuller picture of some of those explorations, see Appendix A.

This dilemma underscores the importance of ethical considerations in narrative inquiry. The method's relational and reflexive nature requires ongoing attention to how stories are shared, interpreted, and represented in a way that honours the vulnerability of all involved. In line with Adams (2008), narrative inquiry must be grounded in mutual respect and care, ensuring that participants' experiences are treated with the dignity and ethical mindfulness they deserve.

Collage as NTROs

As an arts-based method, collage offers a unique approach to representing experiences, emotions, and insights in a non-linear, visually engaging manner. As an art form, collage challenges traditional modes of representation, allowing for the creation of new visual realities by juxtaposing fragments of images from diverse contexts (Raaberg, 1998).

My engagement with collage as a research method was significantly influenced by the work of Deborah Kelly, an Australian artist who uses collage to craft new worlds and explore alternative realities. Inspired by her innovative approach, I participated in Kelly's collage workshops, which profoundly shaped my understanding of the medium and its potential to uncover new insights (see Figure 14). These experiences underscored the power of collage to surface metaphors and generate meanings that might not be readily accessible through other forms of representation.

Collage is a valuable visual thinking and conceptualisation tool, allowing for exploring ideas in ways that transcend words (Richmond, 2022; Roberts & Woods, 2018). Unlike linear methods of expression, collage promotes reflection and the examination of assumptions, enabling participants to engage deeply with their experiences and uncover new layers of meaning.

By offering a non-linguistic, non-linear mode of expression, collage fosters a creative space for re-familiarisation and de-familiarisation, making the familiar strange and the strange familiar (Burge et al., 2016). This process can lead to unexpected insights and connections, enriching the research process and outcomes.

Figure 14: Deborah Kelly Mask-Making Workshop



Deborah Kelly Mask-Making Workshop, December (2022). This workshop shaped my understanding of collage as a research method, revealing its power to craft new realities by juxtaposing fragments and surfacing metaphors—the photo taken by the author.

However, the use of collage in arts-based research is not without limitations. Participants may be constrained by the availability of materials or their comfort level with the medium, potentially hindering the emergence of deeper meanings. Furthermore, there is a tendency to

view collage primarily as a tool for researchers to explore their ideas rather than as a participatory method involving collaboration with participants (Gorman et al., 2023). To address these challenges, this research adopts a broader, more inclusive approach to collage, engaging participants directly in the creative process to gain valuable insights.

Integration of NTROs

Integrating arts-based methods within this research—observation, video recordings, narrative inquiry, and collage—provides a comprehensive, multifaceted approach to understanding complex phenomena. These methods enable a deeper engagement with the subject matter, capturing the richness and ambiguity of human experiences in ways that traditional methodologies might overlook. By embracing arts-based methods, this research aligns with the ethos of practice-led inquiry, emphasising creativity, reflexivity, and the co-construction of meaning.

Through this integrative approach, the study seeks to provide a holistic understanding of the creative processes and lived experiences at its core, demonstrating the unique potential of arts-based research to contribute to knowledge production in innovative and meaningful ways.

Arts-based methods offer several advantages for research by enhancing sensory engagement and capturing sensory, emotional, and embodied aspects of experience that are often difficult to articulate through traditional, text-based approaches. These methods facilitate reflexivity and co-creation by encouraging a reflexive stance where the researcher actively creates and interprets data, continuously reframing their understanding. Additionally, they provide flexibility and support innovation, promoting creative and experimental data collection and representation that aligns with a practice-led approach and encourages transdisciplinary exploration.

However, arts-based methods also come with limitations. They rely heavily on the researcher's interpretation, which introduces a degree of subjectivity and potential biases that are difficult to control or measure (Knowles & Cole, 2007). The non-traditional nature of these methods presents challenges in establishing validity and reliability according to conventional academic standards, making it challenging to demonstrate rigour and gain acceptance from traditional audiences. Moreover, arts-based methods can be resource-intensive, requiring significant time, specialised skills, materials, and technologies. The

interpretative complexity associated with their non-linear, non-verbal nature can also result in findings open to multiple interpretations, complicating the process of drawing definitive conclusions or effectively communicating results.

In this practice-led research, arts-based methods were essential, offering unique ways to explore and communicate complex, multi-layered phenomena. These methods bridge the gap between theory and practice by fostering a “learning by doing” approach that emphasises the importance of practice itself, valuing the process over the outputs. They enhance sensory engagement by capturing sensory, emotional, and embodied aspects of experience that are often difficult to articulate through traditional, text-based approaches. This approach extends beyond what is observed, encompassing what is touched, sensed, intuited, and felt—fundamental to human experience but frequently overlooked in conventional research.

While arts-based methods may not always align with traditional notions of rigour, they invite researchers to rethink what constitutes valid inquiry. By embracing the full spectrum of human experience, they offer an alternative route to knowledge — one that is expansive, resonant, and reflective of the complexity of lived experience. As suggested by Kuhn (1962/1996) and Koestler (1969/1990), such approaches can generate paradigm shifts by challenging existing frameworks and offering new modes of understanding. Arts-based methods situate the arts as a serious mode of inquiry, uncovering dimensions of meaning and perception that may remain inaccessible through conventional methodologies. In this thesis, they proved essential for engaging with the sensory, affective, and embodied aspects of creative collaboration — aspects often marginalised in more text-based or analytic approaches.

Arts-based methods, such as collaging and zine-making, were utilised as essential tools in this research to explore tacit knowledge, subjective intuition, and embodied experience. These methods provided a way to access insights that were not immediately accessible through conventional analytical approaches. For instance, the process of collaging enabled an intuitive engagement with research material, allowing new connections and meanings to emerge that may have otherwise remained obscured. This approach aligns with practice-led research, which is inherently open-ended and relies on felt experience and embodied knowledge to inform the research process.

Within the transdisciplinary methodological approach of this research, arts-based methods complement other methodologies, such as autoethnography and phenomenology.

While autoethnography provides a means to reflect on personal experience and its broader social context, and phenomenology offers a framework for understanding lived experiences, arts-based methods provide practical tools to surface and explore these experiences. These methods facilitate a more holistic inquiry that captures the complexity of creative processes and the practice of deferring judgement, allowing the researcher to engage with the material in a dynamic, non-linear fashion.

The theoretical underpinnings of practice-led research and phenomenology inform the use of arts-based methods in this research. As Barrett and Bolt (2014) and Haseman and Mafe (2009) suggest, practice-led research benefits from an approach that embraces intuition, emergence, and the embodied nature of knowing. The research creates a space for subjective, tacit, and felt knowledge to come to the forefront by integrating arts-based methods, such as creative writing, collage-making, and visual memory palaces. This is particularly relevant in a study exploring deferring judgement, where the process is as significant as the outcome.

The practice of deferring judgement often involves navigating ambiguity, embracing uncertainty, and allowing for the emergence of new insights—all of which align closely with the principles of arts-based inquiry. These methods provide a means to engage with the complexities of creative processes in ways that traditional research methodologies might not fully capture. They allow for a more nuanced exploration of the lived experience of deferring judgement, capturing not just the cognitive aspects but also the emotional, intuitive, and embodied dimensions of this practice.

Furthermore, using arts-based methods in this context supports the iterative and reflective nature of practice-led research. It allows for a continuous dialogue between theory and practice, where insights gained through creative engagement can inform theoretical understanding and vice versa. This cyclical process of creation, reflection, and theorisation is fundamental to practice-led research and is particularly well-served by the flexible and expressive nature of arts-based methods.

Integrating arts-based methods in this study of deferring judgement within a practice-led research framework offers a rich and multifaceted approach to understanding complex creative processes. It acknowledges the value of embodied knowledge, embraces the ambiguity inherent in creative practice, and provides innovative ways to explore and communicate research findings. Doing so contributes to the broader discourse on the role of arts-based inquiry in academic research. This transdisciplinary approach enriches creative

practices and opens new pathways for applying deferring judgement across diverse fields such as education, leadership, and social innovation, where intuitive, embodied decision-making can be a crucial element in navigating complexity. It underscores the unique insights gained when artistic practice and scholarly investigation are brought into meaningful dialogue.

By embracing non-linear sensory methods such as collage and video manipulation, I could deeply engage with the process of deferring judgement. For example, the collage method has proven effective in surfacing tacit knowledge—allowing participants to intuitively engage with the material and uncover insights that might remain obscured through more traditional verbal methods. The process of collaging revealed how participants' choices of texture and imagery represented their tacit engagement with deferring judgement—allowing for intuitive associations that might have remained unspoken in verbal reflection alone. This approach aligns with my transdisciplinary lens, which values non-linear, intuitive engagement as central to the deferral of judgement.

The NTROs in this research serve as creative outputs and analytical tools through which the embodied, tacit knowledge of deferring judgement can be explored. By engaging directly with creative practice, these outputs allow for a multi-layered exploration that brings the implicit, intuitive aspects of the creative process into sharper focus.

Methodological Limitations

While practice-led research and arts-based methods offer rich opportunities for exploring embodied, experiential knowledge, these approaches are not without limitations. One significant challenge is the potential for subjectivity and bias inherent in these methods. As both the creator and interpreter of the outputs, I recognised the risk that personal perspectives or unconscious biases could shape the findings. To mitigate this, I employed strategies such as reflexivity and iterative feedback loops, consistently questioning my assumptions and engaging with collaborators to ensure a balanced perspective. Additionally, triangulating arts-based outputs with autoethnographic reflections and theoretical frameworks helped reduce bias by incorporating multiple layers of understanding.

Another challenge is the legitimacy of arts-based research within more traditionally scientific or empirical disciplines. Arts-based methods are sometimes perceived as less rigorous, especially in fields that prioritise quantifiable or reproducible outcomes. However,

my research bridges this divide by integrating a transdisciplinary approach that combines creative outputs with academic inquiry. By situating NTROs within a broader research framework, including autoethnography and phenomenology, I demonstrate that arts-based methods contribute meaningfully to knowledge production, offering insights that are otherwise inaccessible through conventional methodologies. Despite these challenges, the use of arts-based methods in this study has proven essential in capturing the nuanced, embodied experiences central to deferring judgement. By acknowledging these limitations, I aim to present a transparent, balanced account of the methodology while highlighting the unique contributions that creative practice can bring to academic research.

Moreover, arts-based methods bring unique advantages that traditional research methods often overlook. By engaging with sensory, emotional, and embodied dimensions of experience, these methods allow for a fuller exploration of complex, subjective phenomena, such as creativity and collaboration. While quantifiable outcomes are often prioritised in scientific disciplines, arts-based research contributes a different kind of rigour—one that values the depth of lived experience and the nuanced understanding of phenomena that cannot be easily reduced to numbers. In this way, integrating arts-based inquiry into a broader research framework enhances the study of complex processes like deferring judgement and pushes the boundaries of knowledge production, encouraging new ways of seeing and understanding creative practice.

A standard critique of arts-based research is its perceived lack of reproducibility and objectivity compared to empirical methods. To address this, I adopted a transdisciplinary approach that integrates arts-based methods within a structured framework, drawing on phenomenology and autoethnography. This allowed me to leverage the strengths of qualitative inquiry, which prioritises depth, context, and complexity. For instance, the NTROs were not stand-alone artistic outputs. However, they were systematically analysed alongside autoethnographic reflections and theoretical insights, creating a rigorous, multi-layered investigation into the phenomenon of deferring judgement. The arts-based outputs provided a rich, experiential understanding that complemented and expanded upon more conventional data, offering insights into tacit knowledge and embodied experience that could not have been accessed through text-based methods alone.

In addition to reflexivity, I actively engaged collaborators in the creative process, allowing multiple perspectives to inform the outputs. This collaborative dialogue helped

challenge my preconceptions as collaborators contributed their interpretations and experiences to the NTROs, ensuring my perspective did not solely shape the outputs. By integrating this iterative feedback into my process, I sought to balance subjective insight with external validation, thereby reducing the risk of bias.

One of the ethical challenges in using video recordings, for instance, involved navigating participants' vulnerability. To address this, I employed arts-based manipulations of the video to abstract the visual content, focusing on movement and creative interaction, which allowed me to preserve anonymity while maintaining the richness of the embodied interactions.

An example of reflexivity in action occurred during the collage-making workshops, where my initial interpretation of the materials shifted after reviewing feedback from collaborators. Their different perspectives opened up new avenues for exploration that I had yet to consider, particularly in how they used textures and fragmented images to express tension. This iterative feedback helped me see deferring judgement as a collaborative act where new possibilities emerge from my perspective and the collective exchange of ideas.

Ethical considerations remained central throughout the research process, requiring continuous reflection as new challenges emerged. By maintaining an ongoing dialogue with participants and collaborators, I adapted my methods to ensure their experiences were represented respectfully and accurately. This was especially crucial given the personal and emotional depth captured in the arts-based outputs.

5.6. Summary

This chapter examines the evolution of the research question and the methodological framework applied to explore deferring judgement in creative practices. It highlights a gap in the literature concerning how deferring judgement can be operationalised throughout the creative process, not just during idea generation. A transdisciplinary, practice-led approach is employed to address this gap, integrating autoethnography and arts-based methods—such as collage, video recordings, and narrative inquiry. These creative methods offer a tangible way to explore the embodied, emotional, and intersubjective dimensions of deferring judgement, illuminating aspects of the creative process that traditional methodologies might otherwise obscure. By doing so, they enrich the study of creative collaboration, expanding the

understanding of deferring judgement as a dynamic force that fosters innovative thinking and creative potential.

Ultimately, deferring judgement, as explored through these arts-based methods, extends beyond creative collaboration to offer broader implications for academic inquiry. By embracing uncertainty, navigating ambiguity, and valuing sensory, emotional, and embodied experiences, deferring judgement fosters a richer, more inclusive approach to research—one that opens the door to new insights and possibilities in both creative practice and scholarly investigation.

Take a moment to pause and reflect on deferring judgement and how you approach research—whether with judgements or feelings. What balance might you strike between the two after reading this? How could deferring judgement and allowing for a more open, felt approach influence your understanding of creative processes? What new possibilities might emerge when you pause and hold back, allowing more space for emotional insight?

Figure 15: Breathing It In Watercolour



“Breathing It In” from the Fractals NTRO invites you to experience the interplay of light and wood—an unexpected moment of stillness that evokes both simplicity and depth. The vivid strokes and earthy tones encourage you to pause, observe, and breathe in the quiet beauty of the natural world. This watercolour captures a fleeting, sensory moment where light meets matter, reflecting the essence of deferring judgement: staying open to what emerges in the spaces between thought and experience—created by a participant.

Chapter 6

Autoethnographic Immersion

6.1. Introduction

This chapter is a reflective overview of my autoethnographic learnings from September 2022 to September 2023, which played a significant role in developing my final immersive, theatrical NTRO, *Fractals*. It also serves as an NTRO, blending diary entries, autoethnographic memoirs, and arts-based activities to explore the key insights and experiences that shaped my understanding of deferring judgement in the creative process. I have chosen to maintain a conversational tone to create an approachable narrative flow. Detailed definitions of key terms and concepts are intentionally omitted here to preserve the conversational tone of this chapter. For readers seeking conceptual clarity, these terms are defined and discussed in depth in Chapters 2 through 5.

The following sections explore the multifaceted nature of my creative practice, examining themes such as the power of autoethnography, the role of embodiment and performance, the dance between judgement and creativity, the shift from empathy to compassion, the navigation of power dynamics in creative spaces, and the value of liminal spaces. Each theme contributes to a holistic understanding of how deferring judgement can catalyse transformative creative experiences.

As you move through this chapter, I encourage you to pause and reflect on the contrasts presented in each section. Rather than seeking immediate conclusions or judgements, allow yourself to engage with the tension between certainty and curiosity. Consider how the interplay between your own experiences, the perspectives shared, and the emergent ideas might unfold if you deferred judgement for a moment longer. By doing so, you open space for new connections to emerge, inviting deeper engagement with the material and a more expansive understanding of the creative process and its potential.

6.2. NTROs in Action

As a creative practitioner, my practice is deeply integrated into my daily life, forming a continuous, dynamic inquiry process. This chapter demonstrates how NTROs are more than

just artefacts—they are active agents that deepen understanding of deferring judgement. Arts-based methods, such as collage-making, zine-making, and creative workshops provided the space to explore the unspoken, sensed, felt, tacit, and liminal dimensions. It extended my understanding beyond cognitive processes, moving it into the relational and contextual layers where creativity unfolds. Through these practices, I was able to refine the J-Curve model and they would later inform the thinking for the Deferring Judgement Framework.

In 2023, as an example of how my research, work, and life became one, I began teaching at UTS and facilitated creative sessions one day per week for a year, using various arts-based methods. These sessions and my involvement in the Superorganism Collective—a performance ensemble exploring complex systems, such as the behaviour of bees—became pivotal in shaping my research. Under the mentorship of my supervisor, Barbara Doran, these collaborative performances embodied deferring judgement in action. Whether through collage-making workshops with artist Deborah Kelly or zine-making sessions, each engagement provided opportunities to suspend judgement, embrace curiosity, and reframe assumptions. These processes allowed deeper connections and insights to emerge, illustrating how deferring judgement can catalyse creative breakthroughs.

The iterative and reflective nature of these arts-based practices closely aligns with the principles of deferring judgement. Each session—whether in teaching, facilitating, or artistic exploration—embodied the act of pausing, reflecting, and engaging with new perspectives. These methods' physicality and emotional depth offered insights beyond verbal or cognitive analysis, revealing essential elements for successfully deferring judgement in individual and group settings.

A pivotal moment in this process was a session that led to the development and naming of the J-Curve model. Engaging with tangible, arts-based practices shaped the emotional and cognitive journey of deferring judgement, as captured in the J-Curve. These NTROs became integral to my research, providing embodied experiences that helped refine my theoretical frameworks and revealed the subtle dynamics of judgement and transformation.

This chapter shows how NTROs and arts-based methods played a crucial role in shaping my understanding of deferring judgement. These practices allowed for cyclical exploration, where moments of tension and uncertainty led to creative breakthroughs, reinforcing the importance of NTROs in testing and refining this research.

6.3. Emergence of the J-Curve Model

Background

Between December 2022 and June 2023, I conducted fortnightly Zoom calls—creative sessions designed to explore deferring judgement in action. These individual sessions involved Elaine and Heather (pseudonyms), both American creativity consultants in their early to mid-50s. With Elaine, we discussed the application of deferring judgement within coaching, while with Heather, we explored potential creative collaborations, including helping her finish her first book on creativity. Since they were both based overseas (Elaine in the USA and Heather in Spain), the sessions took place over Zoom.

Initially, both Elaine and Heather were professional colleagues. However, the frequency and intimacy of our regular deferring judgement practice led our relationships to evolve into close friendships. The conversations quickly shifted from having a specific outcome to more fluid, organic exchanges—a form of meta deferring judgement where we maintained an agenda but did not try to force an outcome. This flexible approach provided a structure that enabled experimentation and self-expression, allowing unexpected insights to emerge.

One particular session with Elaine is a compelling example of deferring judgement in practice and the emergence of what would later be termed the J-Curve model (see Figure 16). Following this Zoom call, as we reflected on the learnings, Elaine and I spontaneously coined the term “J-Curve” to describe the journey of moving through judgement—from its perilous descent to its eventual release, reaching more profound insights and transformation. This moment was an embodied action; we both instinctively moved our fingers to trace the letter “J,” simultaneously recognising the shape and flow of this unfolding process.

Figure 16: Visualisation of the J-Curve Model



The J-Curve model illustrates the emotional and cognitive journey of deferring judgement. Stage 1 represents homeostasis, where the figure stands in a state of safety and certainty. At stage 2, judgement occurs, causing the figure to slip down the curve into frustration, anger, or hopelessness. In stage 3, symbolised by the question marks and upward movement, curiosity emerges, prompting the person to ask new questions and shift their perspective. Finally, at stage 4, the figure reaches a breakthrough, gaining new awareness and insight. The J-Curve represents the transformative power of deferring judgement, fostering growth and creative thinking. It was created by the author using a Canva Pro license in 2024.

The J-Curve model describes the process of deferring judgement through a journey that begins with a sense of security and unawareness. As new perspectives challenge existing views, individuals may become reactive, feeling judged or judgemental. At the lowest point of this curve, a critical juncture arises—a moment of re-evaluation and curiosity that sparks the upward climb toward new possibilities and expanded perspectives. This progression leads to a renewed equilibrium at the top of the “J,” marked by personal and professional growth.

Elaine and I were already familiar with the concept of deferring judgement through our Master of Science in Creativity studies at Buffalo State, where deferring judgement was primarily applied during the ideation phases of creativity. However, we sensed that deferring judgement could be applied more broadly, even before identifying a problem, and we were both interested in exploring this in our coaching practices. Our conversations became an application and exploration of deferring judgement, particularly revealing how thoughts and beliefs can cause people to become stuck. We learned that it is not about assuming that those struggling with judgements or perceptions are wrong; instead, it is about maintaining genuine curiosity and respect for the other person’s lived experience. This fosters an environment where they can reflect on their beliefs and begin to question them gently.

This approach effectively slows the descent into judgement and allows for more open and reflective engagement, as was evident in the Zoom call with Elaine. She began the session by mentioning a recent coaching interaction in which a colleague had publicly criticised her. Although Elaine initially conveyed that she was “fine” with the situation, her tone and body language suggested otherwise—there was underlying tension and unease. This discrepancy prompted me to ask, “So if everything’s fine, what’s the problem?” This simple question opened the gateway to the first of many J-Curves during the call, where each descent and ascent through judgement revealed more profound layers of emotion, assumptions, and ethical dilemmas.

While Figure 16 provides a visual representation of the emotional journey, the model itself was not a solo construction. It emerged through a dynamic relational process. Although Elaine’s transformation is foregrounded in the narrative, my presence as coach and co-researcher played an equally vital role. The question “So if everything’s fine, what’s the problem?” was not drawn from a script—it arose from a felt sense, a bodily knowing that something in Elaine’s tone and posture contradicted her words. This moment reflected my

own practice of deferring judgement: resisting the urge to interpret too quickly, staying present, and allowing uncertainty to do its quiet work.

In many ways, our conversation became a co-created space of descent. As Elaine explored her emotional landscape, I too was navigating ambiguity—trusting that by not rushing to problem-solve, we might discover something deeper. My interest in this experiment was grounded in a growing discomfort with conventional coaching models that often privilege neat resolutions. I was curious about what might emerge if we embraced the mess: if we allowed the unknown to stretch a little longer. That curiosity, along with Elaine’s willingness, shaped the conditions for the J-Curve to form—not just as a conceptual insight, but as a shared, embodied experience.

6.4. Iterations Through the J-Curve

First J-Curve: Questioning the Surface Narrative

The process began with Elaine’s initial story, which seemed straightforward—she had faced criticism but brushed it off as a simple confidence issue. However, I sensed something deeper beneath the surface. By asking, “What’s the problem?” I invited Elaine to reflect more deeply. This was not a direct challenge but a way to hold space for exploration.

- **Process of Deferring Judgement:** At this point, we descended into the first J-Curve. Elaine’s body language shifted as she admitted, “I did not show up how I wanted to.” This shift revealed that the feedback she initially dismissed was triggering a more profound fear: not being respected for her intuitive coaching style.
- **Ascent through the J-Curve:** Elaine moved from defensiveness to self-reflection as she explored her feelings. “Maybe it’s less about them changing their training and more about me not being a perfect fit,” she said. This reflection marked her ascent from judgement, revealing that the issue wasn’t about confidence but feeling undervalued for her unique approach.

Second J-Curve: Broadening the Context

To deepen the conversation, I shared my own experiences with self-doubt, showing vulnerability and signalling that it was safe to explore uncomfortable feelings.

- **Process of Deferring Judgement:** I offered a reflection: “Sometimes, it’s not about what they think of you but what you think they think.” Elaine immediately resonated with this, and the descent into the second J-Curve began as she questioned her assumptions about the criticism.
- **Ascent through the J-Curve:** Elaine realised that the issue was not about her skills but a misalignment between her coaching style and workplace expectations. She laughed, recognising how personally she had taken things. This reflection completed the second J-Curve, opening new perspectives.

Third J-Curve: Recognising Intuitive Strength

With this newfound clarity, we continued to examine the feedback Elaine had received. She began to see her intuition, once seen as a weakness, as a strength.

- **Process of Deferring Judgement:** Elaine reflected, “My instincts, although I couldn’t articulate them, were spot on.” This acknowledgement marked the descent into another J-Curve as she grappled with trusting her instincts while feeling judged for them.
- **Ascent through the J-Curve:** I suggested, “That’s where you were really compromised.” Elaine paused, reflecting deeply. “And now that we’ve talked about it, I actually don’t suck [at coaching],” she concluded. This marked the beginning of her ascent, as she recognised the real issue was a conflict between her values and her environment.
- **First Naming of the J-Curve:** Elaine coined the term “J-Curve” during this discussion: “It’s like you go down, start to look around, and experience the bend in the J.”

Fourth J-Curve: Ethical Epiphany and Self-Respect

The most profound J-Curve came near the end of our call when Elaine recognised that what had been troubling her was not simply the external criticism she received but that she had crossed her own ethical boundaries. The exercise that had started the entire process—the one she was criticised for—was one she intuitively felt was wrong but had gone along with it.

- **Process of Deferring Judgement:** Elaine admitted, “I crossed my own ethical line,” her body language becoming more inward as she spoke. This realisation—that she had compromised her values—was the source of her distress, much more than any

external feedback. This descent marked the deepest point of the J-Curve, as she faced the uncomfortable truth that she had betrayed her own standards to meet others' expectations.

- **Ascent through the J-Curve:** After a long pause filled with reflection, Elaine confessed, "I participated in something I felt was wrong just to meet expectations. I compromised my values." This marked the turning point, where she moved from self-betrayal to self-awareness. She began to acknowledge that her pain was not from failing as a coach but from violating her own ethical compass. Her voice lightened as she accepted this truth, releasing the shame that had weighed her down.
- **Final Ascent:** As Elaine recognised the full impact of compromising her values, she sat up straighter, her body language shifting as she began reclaiming her self-respect. She acknowledged that her discomfort was not about fear of failure but fear of acknowledging her own power and potential. Realising she needed to leave the environment that did not respect her intuitive style marked her final ascent from this J-Curve.

Nuances and Abrupt Ending

The session ended abruptly, highlighting the emotional complexity of deferring judgement. Despite the profound insights gained, Elaine's deflection pattern resurfaced, an important reminder that addressing profound ethical dilemmas takes time. The call's sudden end underscored that deferring judgement is not a quick fix but a gradual, ongoing process requiring continued reflection and growth.

For a complete understanding of the nuances of this conversation, including the detailed iterations, screenshots and exchanges, see the full transcript with annotations and analysis in Appendix 2.

Compassion in the J-Curve Journey

The J-Curve model, at its core, illustrates the process of moving through judgement—descending into discomfort and then ascending towards greater understanding and insight. While empathy plays a crucial role in this process, allowing individuals to recognise and resonate with the feelings of others, the journey ideally moves beyond empathy to embody compassion.

Empathy involves sharing the feelings of another person—momentarily stepping into their shoes to understand their emotional state (Singer & Klimecki, 2014). It is a vital element of connection, fostering emotional resonance and a sense of shared experience. However, empathy alone may not be sufficient for transformative growth. While empathy can help people feel with others, it can sometimes lead to emotional overwhelm or a focus on personal discomfort rather than on the needs of the person that they are empathising with.

Compassion, on the other hand, goes further. It not only involves understanding and sharing another person's feelings but also encompasses a genuine desire to support their well-being. Compassion implies action; it motivates people to alleviate the suffering of others, not merely to acknowledge it. The movement from empathy to compassion signifies a shift from a self-focused engagement—where people's own emotions and reactions might dominate—to a broader, more expansive concern for others.

In the context of the J-Curve model, compassion represents the upward movement from the depths of judgement towards a more expansive, constructive engagement with others. The descent of the J-Curve is often marked by negative emotions such as defensiveness, frustration, or discomfort, which can stem from self-judgements, which are deflected as criticism of others. This descent can feel isolating and self-focused, as people grapple with their feelings, biases, and assumptions.

However, as people progress upward on the curve, they engage more openly and curiously with the situation. This is where compassion becomes essential. It allows the shift from discomfort or defensiveness to a genuine concern for the well-being of others, particularly those who have just been judged. This movement involves recognising that others, too, have complex emotional landscapes, and that their behaviours and responses are shaped by their experiences, contexts, and struggles. What initially appeared as an attack can now be seen through a broader lens of each person doing their best in the circumstances.

By cultivating compassion, people can move beyond merely understanding others' perspectives to actively supporting their well-being. This shift transforms a person's engagement from one of judgement to one of care, facilitating a deeper, more meaningful connection that can lead to transformative outcomes for all parties involved.

Elaine's Transformation

On a personal note, Elaine's transformation following our session was remarkable. She made the courageous decision to leave the coaching company, where she felt her values were compromised. Freed from this environment, her own business began to flourish. Elaine leaned into her intuitive strengths, experimented with new approaches, and embraced her instincts with renewed confidence. She started taking more risks, exploring new avenues, and engaging with life and work more fully.

This newfound freedom allowed Elaine to blossom—she became more self-assured, more willing to try new things, and more comfortable with herself as a coach, which opened many unexpected doors, including a return to academia. She rediscovered the joy in her work, explored creative paths she had previously hesitated to pursue and grew into a more expansive version of herself. Elaine's story vividly demonstrates the power of the J-Curve model and the practice of deferring judgement in fostering growth, resilience, and transformation.

Compassion, as demonstrated through the J-Curve, is not merely a theoretical concept but a dynamic force that catalyses change and growth in real-world contexts. Elaine's experience is a vivid illustration of how compassion can transform not just the judgement process but also the individual undergoing that process.

Implications for the J-Curve

The insights gained from this specific session with Elaine informed and shaped the broader trajectory of my research and practice on deferring judgement and the development of the J-Curve model. This case study served as a foundational moment, illustrating how the iterative process of moving through multiple cycles of judgement could lead to deeper self-awareness, ethical realignment, and transformative personal growth. The iterative nature of the J-Curve model, with its multiple descents and ascents, proved crucial in understanding that deferring judgement is not a one-time event but an ongoing, dynamic process requiring continual reflection, adaptation, and engagement.

- **Model Refinement and Iterative Learning:** This session demonstrated the importance of allowing space for multiple iterations of the J-Curve process, which informed my decision to integrate more cyclical and reflective practices in my research and practice. For example, in later coaching and facilitation sessions, I

introduced reflective pauses at various stages, encouraging participants to revisit their initial assumptions and explore new insights before reaching conclusions. These iterative cycles helped deepen participants' understanding and allowed for more nuanced perspectives to emerge, aligning with the ongoing nature of the J-Curve.

- **Focus on Non-Linear Learning:** The experience underscored the need to embrace non-linear learning paths in deferring judgement. The conversation with Elaine revealed that breakthroughs often occur through seemingly circuitous routes, where insights emerge as individuals re-evaluate their assumptions. In subsequent workshops, I developed exercises like storytelling and zine-making, where participants could explore their thoughts and ideas non-linearly, allowing for unexpected discoveries. These activities helped participants embrace the uncertainty of the creative process, fostering resilience and flexibility.
- **Practical Application in Varied Contexts:** The understanding gained from this session also influenced my broader practice, particularly in applying the J-Curve model to different professional and creative contexts. For example, I integrated these learnings into my creative sessions at UTS, where I encouraged participants to explore the iterative nature of deferring judgement through arts-based methods like collage-making and storytelling. These activities helped to create a safe environment where participants could navigate their own J-Curve journeys, fostering creative thinking and ethical reflection.

6.5. More Experiences Applying the J-Curve

While my sessions with Elaine were foundational in conceptualising the J-Curve model and understanding how deferring judgement unfolds in real-time interactions, my collaborative work with Heather offered a different dimension. As a reminder, Heather was the other person with whom I was doing regular Zoom calls. With Heather, the focus was more towards envisioning creative collaborations and navigating the complexities of finding a suitable project we could work on together. Our discussions explored the nuanced terrain of shared creative ideation, negotiation, and synthesis, where both judgement and its deferral played equally critical roles. This next stage of my journey brought new insights and challenges, ultimately enriching my understanding of how these principles operate across diverse creative contexts.

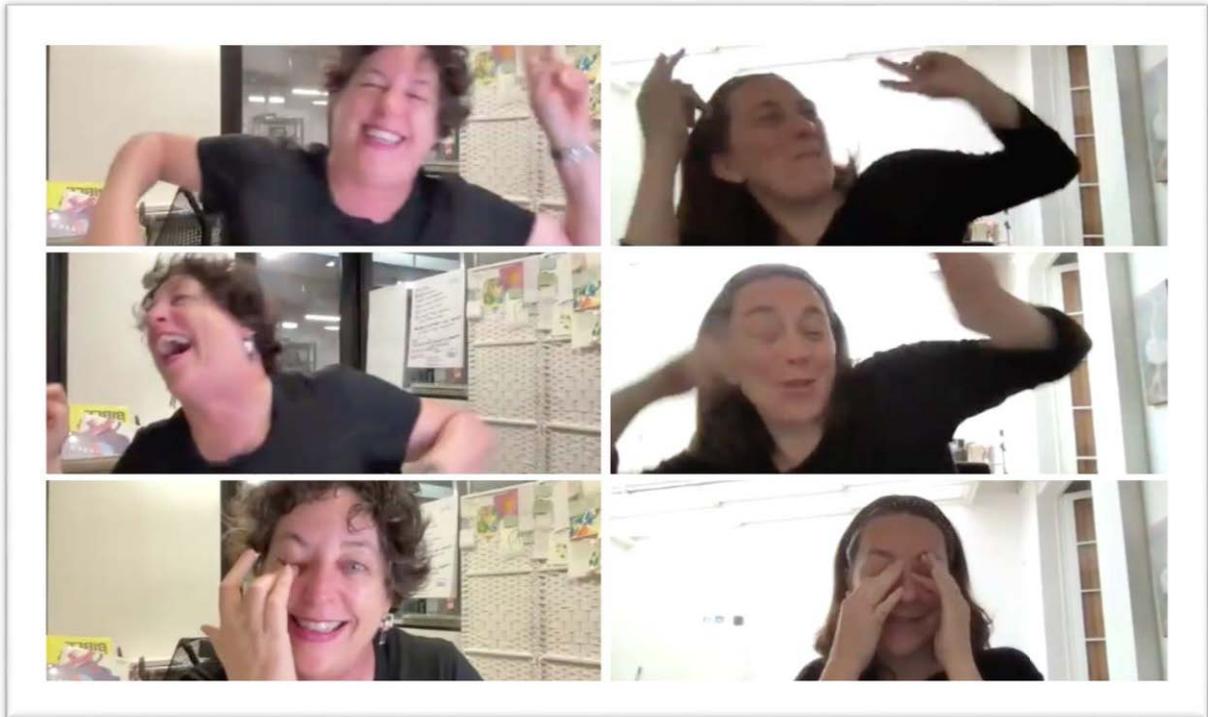
Judgement Releases Creativity

To bring these insights to life and demonstrate their universality in practice, a recent creative session with Heather illustrates the catalytic power of deferring judgement in facilitating collaboration. In this session, Heather and I spontaneously co-created a rap song and dance to reclaim our power from the judgements we had faced that week. The energy was infectious—filled with laughter, playful banter, and a sense of freedom that encouraged full engagement, as evident in Figure 17.

This spontaneous act of co-creation vividly demonstrated how deferring judgement can ignite creativity. By laughing in the face of judgement—literally dancing and rapping our way through it—we transformed what could have been a stifling force into dynamic fuel for our creative fire.

The experience also underscored the importance of compassion in the creative process. By approaching ourselves and each other with kindness, we created an environment where we were less likely to judge and more sensitive to each other's vulnerabilities. Compassion allowed us to move from defensiveness to genuine care for one another's well-being, recognising that the judgements we faced were not just personal but shared. In this way, compassion became essential to our creative collaboration, fostering a space to explore, express, and ultimately transform through deferring judgement.

Figure 17: Performing the Judgement Rap



Screenshots from one of my creative collaboration sessions held on Zoom in October 2023, depicting the joyful co-creation of a song and dance. The images capture the creative tension, laughter, and release experienced by us as we engage in spontaneous improvisation to reclaim our power from corrosive judgement.

This experience underscored a critical realisation: that judgement, when acknowledged and openly articulated, can provide an incredibly cathartic emotional release. During the session, we were not judging one another; instead, we were collectively judging the very process of being condemned—singing about feeling inadequate, useless, and devalued. By naming these judgements and confronting them head-on, we stripped them of their power. This judgement released possibilities we did not even know existed.

Nuanced Understanding of the J-Curve

- **The Paradox of the J-Curve and Finding Joy in the Descent:** This example demonstrates that the J-Curve is not always a straightforward journey from discomfort to resolution. Instead, it can be a paradoxical process where moments of descent—those challenging or stagnant phases—can become opportunities for joy, creativity, and connection. What seemed like a conflict or creative block transformed into a

playful, energising upswing. This shows that even the J-Curve’s low points or “descent” phases can contain seeds of positive transformation when approached with openness, compassion, and a willingness to defer judgement.

- **The Variability of the J-Curve Experience:** This experience with Heather highlights that it is as varied as the individuals going through it. It is not a one-size-fits-all model but adapts to each situation’s unique dynamics, emotions, and circumstances. For Heather and me, the descent was not marked by despair or conflict but by a sense of creative stagnation, which we disrupted by co-creating a rap song. Our upswing was not about overcoming a deep struggle but rediscovering joy and spontaneity in collaboration.
- **Embracing Uncertainty and Reframing Perspectives:** This story also illustrates how the J-Curve involves reframing perspectives amidst uncertainty. By shifting our focus from seeking a fixed outcome to embracing playful experimentation and compassion for ourselves and each other, we deflected judgement and opened up new possibilities. This experience highlights the importance of staying flexible, curious, and compassionate, allowing the J-Curve to unfold in unexpected ways.
- **The Collaborative Dimension of the J-Curve:** Finally, this rap dance story demonstrates that the J-Curve is not just an individual journey; it can also be shared. Our willingness to engage in spontaneous creativity allowed us to move together through the phases of the J-Curve. The joy we found in our upswing was relational—created through mutual engagement and the release of judgements. This reinforces that deferring judgement can foster deeper connections and collaborative creativity, turning potential conflicts or stagnations into shared growth and innovation.

A further nuance that emerged from this experience is the distinction between self-compassion and compassion towards others. Self-compassion proved especially vital during the descent of the J-Curve — those initial moments of self-doubt or stagnation — enabling me to remain with discomfort without self-judgement. In contrast, compassion for the other became central during the ascent, where shared vulnerability and mutual recognition allowed us to move forward together. These dual movements of compassion — towards the self and towards the other — formed a reciprocal rhythm, expanding the emotional and creative space

in which deferring judgement could thrive. By naming and working with both, the J-Curve becomes not just a cognitive or relational model, but an ethical and emotional one as well.

This creative session illustrated the powerful role that deferring judgement plays in igniting creativity. By fostering an environment where we could laugh at and confront the judgements we had faced, we created a space that encouraged playful risk-taking and spontaneous expression. This open, judgement-free atmosphere unlocked unexpected creative potential and allowed us to engage with the process entirely.

Moreover, openly naming and articulating the judgements provided a deep emotional release. Acknowledging these judgements stripped them of their power, transforming what could have been stifling into a source of creative energy. This act of confronting judgement head-on allowed us to reclaim our power and turn inhibiting feelings into opportunities for empowerment. By embracing vulnerability and engaging with feelings of inadequacy, we unlocked new creative possibilities that might otherwise have remained untapped.

6.6. Overcoming Creative Invalidation

The J-Curve model illustrates the transformation of discomfort and doubt into opportunities for growth and highlights the challenges faced when external forces invalidate creative practices. When societal, familial, or institutional forces dismiss or undermine creativity, the process of deferring judgement becomes even more complex. In this section, I explore three vignettes demonstrating how deferring judgement can turn creative invalidation into an opportunity for growth and reclamation of creative agency.

6.6.1. Being Discouraged in Pursuing a Creative Path

Societal and familial pressures have discouraged my mother and me from pursuing creative careers. My mother's dream of becoming an artist was stifled when she was encouraged to become a nurse, a career deemed financially secure. I, too, faced resistance when I expressed a desire to attend art school. My first-generation immigrant father was concerned that pursuing art would lead to failure and financial instability. He believed success meant following a traditional, well-paid career path and equated creativity with a lack of security.

Despite my passion, I dropped out of art school due to academic struggles and the lingering doubt about whether pursuing a creative career was viable. This sense of

failure resurfaced during my doctoral journey, where I questioned the legitimacy of my creative practice because I did not identify as an artist. This self-doubt, influenced by external judgements, pushed me to question my research's value and validity.

The reality is that while these feelings have not entirely disappeared, they have evolved. The creative process is inherently vulnerable, often leading to self-doubt and questions of whether the work is good enough. Instead of viewing these feelings as purely negative, I now see them as essential growth drivers. By decoupling self-worth from external validation and creative output, I have embraced the notion that the act of questioning can fuel creative breakthroughs.

Ultimately, societal judgements about creative careers often reflect deep-seated misconceptions about success and financial stability. These judgements can become internalised and stifle creative potential. However, deferring judgement makes it possible to reframe these limiting beliefs and move beyond societal pressures.

The “starving artist” narrative often prevents individuals from fully embracing their creative identities. By deferring judgement, we can create space to redefine what it means to be successful in creative fields and free ourselves from limiting societal narratives.

This process mirrors the J-Curve journey—moving from discomfort and self-doubt towards insights and breakthroughs. Deferring judgement allows us to reclaim creative agency and engage more fully with our potential.

6.6.2. Creating a Path and Overcoming Resistance

At the beginning of my PhD, I encountered scepticism about using autoethnography and arts-based methods. These approaches were seen as less rigorous, and this academic judgement initially influenced me to consider more conventional methods like Grounded Theory. My experience of being seen as a ‘failed artist’ in the past made me hesitant to embrace arts-based methods fully.

However, as I engaged deeper in creative practice, I let go of my doubts. I allowed my research to evolve naturally, leaning into the uncertainty and complexity of arts-based approaches. This process helped me realise that rigour is not about conforming to academic norms—it can come from embracing creative practice fully.

Deferring judgement on conventional expectations allowed me to see the value in autoethnography and arts-based methods. This deepened my understanding of the creative process, highlighting the importance of embracing uncertainty.

6.6.3. Deferring Judgement is a Way of Being

Through these experiences, I learned that deferring judgement is not just a tool but a way of being. Rather than avoiding judgement, I embraced it as part of the creative process, using it as an opportunity for transformation. Whether internal or external, judgement can be a catalyst for growth when approached with openness and curiosity.

Deferring judgement helps shift the focus from limiting beliefs to creative possibilities. It fosters an environment where creativity can thrive, using judgement as a moment for reflection and change.

6.7. Role of Theatre and Performance

As demonstrated in the previous section, judgemental invalidation can diminish potential by imposing external judgements that stifle expression and creativity. In this next section, I explore how the principles of deferring judgement are applied in the context of theatre and performance, particularly through my experiences at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA). This section comprises six vignettes that highlight different aspects of learning about deferring judgement from theatre practices:

6.7.1. Role of Play and Risk

At the beginning of my research journey, I was advised to take acting classes at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), known for its rigorous training. Over six weeks, I spent six hours every Saturday immersing myself in the actor's role within theatre, an experience that significantly expanded my understanding of deferring judgement and its role in creative practice. NIDA is known for its intensity and high standards, but it also taught me something unexpected: the value of deferring judgement as a way to unlock creativity without causing people undue harm.

The intense scrutiny of creative work is not unique to NIDA; many art schools maintain environments that can be harsh and often leave students feeling vulnerable and questioning their potential. Frequently, students must navigate these challenges

alone, which can lead to feelings of alienation and detachment from their creative journeys, potentially hindering their development. Reflecting on my own experience at art school, I understand how easy it is to become discouraged and to lose faith in your creative abilities.

However, my experience at NIDA offered a different perspective. The course was grounded in ancient theatrical traditions that went beyond teaching acting skills. Through ritualised warm-ups, improvisational exercises, and a focus on presence, we learned to connect with ourselves and others, embracing mistakes as opportunities for growth. This approach revealed the power of deferring judgement—not to avoid criticism but to view it as a chance to explore, adapt, and discover new creative possibilities.

These exercises, which I initially encountered as playful activities in creativity workshops, took on new meaning when seen through the lens of theatre. They were not just tools for sparking creativity but were deeply grounded practices that honoured the craft and tradition of performance. I realised that deferring judgement was not about ignoring mistakes but about using them to deepen the connection to the creative process and to each other.

In theatre, actors are encouraged to step beyond the boundaries of their scripts and characters, exploring the broader context and deepening their understanding through interaction and relationship-building. This openness to multiple perspectives aligns closely with the practice of deferring judgement, where the goal is to remain open to possibilities, even when they challenge initial perceptions or expectations.

As I connected these insights to my practice, I began to see my creative role as multi-dimensional. Creativity flourishes when the environment fosters mutual respect and openness, allowing for dynamic exchanges that elevate the entire group. Judgement, if handled poorly, can be corrosive; but if approached with respect and openness, it can enhance creative outcomes by challenging and expanding people's understanding.

Play, much like deferring judgement, is inherently risky and daring. It involves temporarily suspending ordinary rules and co-creating new ones, which makes the creative process both exciting and challenging. This insight extends beyond theatre into any form of creative collaboration, where the impact of judgement can

either elevate or inhibit the group's performance. Recognising this helps us see that the way people judge—constructively, respectfully, and relationally—makes all the difference.

Moreover, the experience taught me that failure is not the problem—getting stuck in failure is. Growth comes from acknowledging mistakes, sharing them openly, and using them as stepping stones to new creative heights. This requires a broad perspective, where you see yourself as part of a larger, interconnected creative ecosystem.

Reflecting on these lessons, I also began to consider how they apply to my work. I am not just an observer or analyst; I am also a director, a storyteller, and an active participant in the creative process. This recognition comes with a responsibility to be mindful of how I interpret and present others intentions, motivations, and actions. Every story is, in a sense, a play—an interpretation that privileges the narrator's perspective.

By embracing deferring judgement as a way of being, I learned that it is not simply about adopting a mindset; it is about cultivating an awareness that extends beyond oneself. It involves accepting the unknowable nature of motivations, intentions, and outcomes and recognising that creativity thrives in spaces where we are willing to explore the unknown together.

Deferring judgement, I found, is not just a mindset but a way of being that embraces uncertainty and uses it to fuel creative growth. It creates an environment where creativity can thrive without fear of criticism or failure. Rather than avoiding mistakes, deferring judgement encourages seeing them as opportunities for exploration and growth, shifting the focus from perfection to fully engaging in the creative process. Respect and openness are fundamental to this, fostering effective creative collaboration by recognising the interconnectedness of participants and valuing each contribution.

Play and risk are also essential components of creativity, keeping the process dynamic and alive as we co-create new rules and embrace the unknown. Mindfulness is critical, especially in recognising the multiple roles we play during creative sessions, allowing us to navigate challenges and enhance our contributions. By

balancing risk with safety, we create spaces where people can explore their creative boundaries without fear of harm.

Importantly, deferring judgement is not just an individual practice but a collective one, demanding a deep ethical awareness that extends beyond the self. Respect and compassion are essential in fostering a collaborative and creative environment. The experience also reinforced the importance of being mindful and respectful in all interactions, recognising that creativity is always at play, even in everyday conversations. Deferring judgement is not something that can be instructed; it requires cultivating a way of being that accepts the unknown nature of motivations and outcomes. Finally, performance and embodiment are now seen as essential elements of this practice, allowing collaborators to transcend self-imposed limitations and fully engage in the process of deferring judgement.

6.7.2. How Context Shapes Judgements

Reflecting on my experience at NIDA, I learned that context plays a critical role in shaping judgements. This insight became clear through a simple exercise where we, as actors, were tasked with delivering three words without any contextual backdrop. Although we had a scenario in mind, we had not deeply considered our characters' motivations, leading to flat and uninspiring performances. However, when we were guided to develop a compelling backstory—exploring motivations, intentions, and relationships—those same three words took on a profound significance. Suddenly, it was possible for an actor to convey deep emotion and meaning with just three words, moving the audience powerfully.

This experience catalysed a realisation about the importance of considering context when making judgements about others. Judgements can function as both theatre and facts, but these are not always mutually exclusive. Judgements may be perceived as facts, like in a courtroom where a verdict determines guilt, yet they also have a performative aspect that shapes perceptions and influences outcomes (Deutscher, 2013). When judgements are delivered with congruence, they are more likely to be accepted without much scrutiny. Therefore, changing the context or subtext of a judgement can dramatically alter its content.

I was taught as a facilitator of creative problem-solving sessions to spend time understanding the problem space, which inadvertently reaffirms the problem, inherently filled with judgements. Even the notion that “a problem well defined is half solved” suggests that there is a single, clear understanding of the problem when, in reality, this often privileges one perspective over others and limits the creative potential of the process. By deferring judgement, it acknowledges that the initial understanding of the problem may be incomplete or biased, allowing space for multiple viewpoints and unexpected solutions to surface.

Reflecting on my experience at NIDA, I realised how critical context is in shaping judgements and communication. The same words, when presented within a well-developed backstory, can take on entirely new meanings and emotions. This understanding led me to see judgements as factual and performative—shaping perceptions, outcomes, and how messages are received. Judgements are often present as objective truths, yet their meaning can be dramatically altered by shifting the context or subtext. This tendency to frame judgements as fixed facts in creative problem-solving can limit creative potential by privileging certain perspectives over others. Deferring judgement, on the other hand, invites a more open process, allowing space for multiple viewpoints and unexpected solutions to emerge.

6.7.3. Problem-Solving to Possibility-Finding

My experience at NIDA taught me that adopting the mindset of an actor, mindful of context and the inferences people draw from it, can shift a creative session from problem-solving to possibility-finding. This approach encourages imagination by practising scenarios where the “problem” does not exist, thereby surfacing the judgements and beliefs that sustain it, making space for a broader range of possibilities. Problem-solving, even when creatively framed, often privileges the viewpoint of those defining the problem, which can lead to narrow-mindedness and creative limitations.

Further, when contributions, expertise, and wisdom are disproportionately valued, they can heavily shape creative interactions and limit the roles others feel empowered to assume, especially those with less status, rank or seniority.

Judgements serve as performative elements and perceived facts, shaping how situations and people are understood. Without an awareness of this dual nature, judgements can lead to unexamined assumptions. The context and subtext surrounding a judgement play a crucial role in determining how it is received; when delivered with conviction, judgements are often accepted without scrutiny. There is also an ethical dimension to judgements, where avoiding “othering” others is essential. By becoming more mindful of the potential harm caused by casual judgements, we can help reduce inequities and power imbalances in creative settings.

In creative processes, exercises that focus on deferring judgement are crucial to building trust and reducing vulnerability. However, they must go beyond the limitations of predefined solutions to truly nurture creativity. Shifting from a problem-solving mindset to one of possibility-finding opens up new perspectives and roles for participants, allowing tension to fuel creativity rather than stifle it. Furthermore, the disproportionate valuing of expert contributions can undermine this dynamic, limiting the roles others feel able to take on. In creating a more balanced and open creative space, it is vital to treat all participants as equal contributors, ensuring that expertise does not overshadow the potential contributions of others.

6.7.4. The Role of Judgements in Catalysing Deferral

Theatre offers a unique stage for exploring the complexities of judgements and their relationship with creativity. In theatre, complete clarity is not required; rather, the ambiguity and tension inherent in judgements create a space where risks can be taken safely. Bohm’s (1998) concept of building bridges across differences encourages people to see these differences not as barriers, but as catalysts for innovation and breakthroughs. Instead of viewing judgement and creativity as opposing forces, the process of deferral begins with recognising that judgements are an integral part of the creative journey.

Judgements are not limited to words or facts; they encompass the subtle nuances of a person’s surroundings. Elements such as lighting, mood, temperature, costumes, and appearances all contribute to the overall atmosphere. Even in virtual environments, these elements are felt and shape perceptions. Every individual brings their own unique physical conditions, which affect how they relate to others. These

differences can either be perceived as barriers or as sources of curiosity and interest. Engaging the imagination allows individuals to inhabit different worldviews momentarily, fostering greater understanding and connection.

This is the essence of theatre, books, film, and storytelling—mediums that provide the freedom to step into any role, whether that of a despicable character, a foreign persona, or a familiar one in a new circumstance. These mediums make these roles as vivid and tangible as one's own narratives about the world, identity, beliefs, and values. They create an inviting environment for experimenting with diverse perspectives. Creating extraordinary worlds that captivate the imagination is more than mere creativity; it is an exploration of possibilities that transcends the conventional definition of creativity as something novel and useful (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). It moves beyond the probable to explore the possible, bringing new realities into existence.

Judgements play a crucial role in the creative process; they are not simply obstacles to be avoided but can serve as catalysts for deferring judgement and fostering creativity. By recognising the productive tension that judgements create, creative spaces can be transformed into safe environments for taking risks. Differences—whether in physical conditions, emotions, or perspectives—should not be viewed as barriers but as opportunities for curiosity, understanding, and creative exploration. These differences can spark innovation by encouraging more profound engagement with diverse viewpoints.

Imagination becomes a powerful tool in this context, allowing individuals to step into different roles and worldviews. This imaginative engagement fosters empathy and strengthens connections with varied perspectives central to storytelling and creative expression. Through theatre and storytelling, extraordinary environments are created where diverse perspectives can be explored, and new realities can come into existence. These spaces move beyond conventional creativity, inviting participants to explore new possibilities.

Ultimately, creativity transcends the simple act of making something novel and useful. It involves envisioning what is possible, exploring the unknown, and bringing new realities into being — expanding the boundaries of what creativity can achieve. These outcomes may include not just new products or inventions but also

more profound shifts: a reimagined way of relating to others, the healing of internalised creative blockages, the cultivation of alternative worldviews, or the reorganisation of systems that support more equitable and life-affirming futures. In my own practice, the co-creation of the J-Curve model with Elaine was not just a conceptual breakthrough but a relational and ethical shift — we both came to see discomfort and descent not as failure, but as necessary ground for insight, integrity, and transformation. In this sense, creativity is not only about making things — it is about reshaping how we relate, think, and live.

6.7.5. Navigating Judgement in Creative Sessions

After my experience at NIDA, I realised that my previous understanding of the role of a facilitator or collaborator needed more depth and nuance. I once saw these roles as distinct, but they are deeply interconnected. Each thought, person, and action contributes intricately to the overall dynamic of a creative session.

I now recognise that, as a facilitator, I am not merely a neutral guide. The very act of directing the process contradicts any claim to neutrality, which has heightened my sense of responsibility for my role and its impact on the group's collective creativity.

My experiences at NIDA taught me that even subtle directiveness—asserting my ideas about how the creative process should unfold without acknowledging others' contributions—can lead to resistance. Shifts in direction that do not fully consider preceding ideas can make people feel unheard, stifling creativity. I initially believed that guiding the process was necessary for the greater good, but I now understand that such behaviour carries an implicit 'I know best' attitude, which diminishes creativity by implying that not all voices are valuable or deserve to be heard equally.

Reflecting on the nature of creative facilitation, I have come to understand that the roles of facilitator and collaborator are not separate entities but are deeply intertwined. Each action and idea we contribute significantly shapes the creative dynamic, influencing both the process and the outcome. Recognising this interconnectedness is crucial, as it underscores that there is no true neutrality in facilitation. The very act of directing a creative process inherently undermines

neutrality, placing a greater responsibility on the facilitator to be acutely aware of their influence on the group's creativity.

Moreover, even slight attempts to guide the process without fully recognising others' contributions can create resistance and diminish creativity. When participants feel unheard or undervalued, it can stifle their willingness to share ideas, leading to a less vibrant and innovative environment. This dynamic highlights the importance of challenging the "I know best" mentality. The belief that the facilitator knows best can unintentionally suggest that some voices are more valuable than others, which undermines the collective creativity of the group.

Effective facilitation, therefore, involves promoting inclusivity in creative sessions by recognising and valuing all contributions equally. By ensuring the process remains open, inclusive, and dynamic, we create a space where participants feel empowered to share their unique perspectives. This approach enriches the creative process and fosters a collaborative atmosphere where innovation can flourish.

6.7.6. Offering Suggestions Without Judgements

I learned that while suggestions can carry inherent judgements, they should not be presented as the only correct path or something that must be accepted. The most effective way to share an idea is by connecting it to the other person's experiences. For example, when I say, "This reminds me of the time you did [insert my idea and show how it links to their experience]," the idea is almost always met with curiosity. If they do not immediately see the connection, they work with me to find it, leading to a more creative space than I initially intended. This approach also makes it easier for me to release attachment to my original idea as we start co-creating in a more expansive space.

However, when I entered a session in a highly judgemental state, skipping the grounding exercises I had learned at NIDA and thinking I could start the process without them, I struggled to connect. Although the strength of my relationships often helped me get through the session, it required much more effort because judgement was in the atmosphere. This experience highlighted how sensitive and aware people are of subtext—you cannot fake it to make it. However, once subtext is openly

expressed, judgement can be addressed. For example, once I acknowledged that I was rushed or distracted, trust and connection were able to be reestablished.

I also found myself caught in a reciprocal dynamic during interactions. Whenever I offered an idea and was met with instructions to “wrap it up,” I felt frustration and resentment, as if my contributions were brushed aside. In situations with power imbalances, asserting myself felt like walking a tightrope, and I often withdrew, creatively disengaging rather than confronting the issue. This was partly due to a fear of backlash and reprisal, but beneath this was the raw feeling of being dismissed and invalidated.

Reflecting on past creative sessions, I now understand why some of my ideas, offered as a facilitator, went unnoticed. I also discovered the power of injecting a bit of whimsy. Occasionally, I would playfully suggest absurd ideas, like “What about [insert idea here about my cat, Thomas]?”—not because I expected them to be taken seriously, but to infuse the session with playfulness. One such instance led to the concept of “first-class yoghurt,” which, despite its absurdity, captured the group’s imagination and even became the name of our WhatsApp group. The key was timing and context; when the energy was right, people were more open to embracing the unconventional.

Non-judgemental suggestions play a vital role in fostering receptivity during creative sessions. When ideas are presented not as the only correct option but as connected to the experiences of others, participants are more likely to embrace them. This approach makes suggestions feel more inviting and collaborative rather than directive. To further enhance this dynamic, grounding exercises, combined with a non-judgemental attitude at the start of a session, help establish a positive atmosphere. Since people are highly sensitive to subtext, any underlying judgement can easily strain relationships, making it essential to be mindful of the tone and context of contributions.

In environments marked by power imbalances, it is crucial to maintain a balance between assertiveness and respect. Mutual respect is the foundation for productive interactions, preventing participants from feeling dismissed or frustrated. Equally, playfulness can be a powerful tool to enhance creativity. Introducing whimsical or offbeat ideas can lighten the atmosphere, making space for innovative

thinking, though timing and context are critical to ensuring these ideas are embraced rather than resisted.

Lastly, it is essential to acknowledge and address power imbalances during creative collaborations. Directive responses can unintentionally suppress contributions from others, particularly those with less authority or experience. Striving for an inclusive, receptive dynamic enhances creativity and fosters a stronger sense of collaboration, enabling everyone to contribute freely and meaningfully.

Figure 18: Starlight, Starbright Watercolour



“Starlight, Starbright” from the Fractals NTRO captures a moment of frisson where light meets energy, inviting a sense of vibrancy and dynamism. It offers a much-needed respite from academic discourse, encouraging you to reconnect with your body and feelings. Created by a participant.

6.8. Other Ways of Knowing

Building on earlier insights from the NIDA workshops, which united the theory and practice of deferring judgement in creative environments, this section explores alternative ways of knowing through various arts-based methods and phenomenological approaches. These new explorations continue to unite the theory of deferring judgement with practice, highlighting its role as an embodied, holistic, and reflexive process that facilitates creativity and deeper understanding. The vignettes in this section focus on how different creative practices, such as collaging, zine-making, sensory explorations, and phenomenological engagements, contribute to a more expansive understanding of deferring judgement.

6.8.1. *Art as an Embodied Inquiry*

I took these early learnings from my earlier mentioned Zoom sessions with Elaine and Heather and applied them through the arts-based practices of collaging and creating a zine, which is detailed in Appendix C. These creative practices allowed me to surface intuitive, tacit, and subconscious insights that were not immediately accessible through traditional analytical methods. Further, collaging and zine-making offered a necessary respite from the often didactic and rigid process of PhD analysis, providing a more fluent and organic way to engage with ideas that transcend language.

This exploration also enabled me to confront and gradually overcome my fears about not being skilled in visual arts, shifting my perspective to see this practice as a form of embodied intelligence—a way of knowing and understanding that integrates the body, mind, and emotions in a holistic process of inquiry and expression.

The sessions with Elaine and Heather were pivotal in illustrating the dynamic nature of the J-Curve model and its practical implications for deferring judgement in real-time interactions. These early learnings revealed the complexity and fluidity of the deferring judgement process, highlighting the need for openness, curiosity, and compassion. However, the exploration did not stop there. Building on these foundational insights, I began to expand my practice further, integrating them into various creative activities, from arts-based workshops to collaborative performances.

I recognised a need to more deeply examine the roots of my own creative journey. This examination not only contextualises the development of my creative philosophy but also highlights the broader societal narratives and personal

experiences that have shaped my approach to creativity and deferring judgement. In the following sections, I will explore how these principles influenced my broader creative practice and contributed to the development of the Fractals project.

Arts-based practices provide a unique pathway to access intuitive, tacit, and subconscious insights that are not easily captured through traditional analytical methods. These methods offered a more fluid and adaptable approach to engaging with complex ideas, allowing for exploration beyond the limits of language. Through these practices, I was able to tap into deeper layers of understanding, which enriched the overall inquiry process.

Engaging with visual arts, despite my initial fears of lacking artistic skill, transformed those fears into an appreciation for embodied intelligence. This recognition revealed that these practices integrate body, mind, and emotions, providing a holistic and immersive way to explore and express complex ideas. Rather than being limited to intellectual analysis, this approach allowed for a more complete and connected process of inquiry.

The real-time sessions with Elaine and Heather were particularly valuable in applying these learnings, as they demonstrated the practical effectiveness of the J-Curve model. These experiences highlighted the importance of openness, curiosity, and compassion in the act of deferring judgement, reinforcing the transformative power of these principles in collaborative settings.

As the practice evolved, it expanded into new creative activities, including arts-based workshops and collaborative performances. This expansion reflected the dynamic and continuously evolving nature of the practice, illustrating how creative methods can grow and adapt, leading to even richer explorations of ideas.

6.8.2. Expanding Creativity: Embodiment, Subjectivity and Academic Transformation

As I have found, acknowledging and integrating phenomenology into practice research allows people to engage with challenges in an embodied way, fostering a more profound understanding of their experiences. This approach taps into subjective knowledge—often sidelined in academic discourse due to its resistance to tidy quantification. However, by embracing subjectivity, people can uncover valuable

insights that offer alternative perspectives overlooked by conventional reductionist methods. These insights open new avenues for meaningful exploration.

Recognising the phenomenological aspects of deferring judgement in my creative practice has led me to appreciate the full spectrum of my talents, rather than focusing on perceived deficits. It has helped me understand that creativity is not confined to having a specific, recognised artistic talent but instead encompasses a diverse range of skills and approaches. My experience underscores the ongoing struggle that creative researchers face in asserting the value of their work within the academy, where conventional measures can often limit broader, more inclusive understandings of creativity.

However, these experiences also highlight the need for a broader appreciation of practice research and the inherent value of creative methodologies. Not every researcher is fortunate enough to find the support I had provided by my supervisors; therefore, it is crucial that practice researchers continue to challenge academic norms to foster a more inclusive understanding of knowledge production, especially for the next generation.

Integrating autoethnographic phenomenology into practice research opens up a deeply embodied way of engaging with challenges. This approach honours subjective knowledge—often marginalised in academic discourse—by recognising its value in uncovering alternative perspectives and innovative solutions. Conventional, reductionist methods may overlook these insights, but embodied engagement allows for a more holistic understanding of complex issues.

Deferring judgement fosters a broader definition of creativity, moving beyond the confines of traditionally accepted outputs. It encourages recognising diverse skills and approaches, showing that creativity is not limited to specific, recognised forms. This shift challenges the narrow definitions of creativity and talent, valuing a broader spectrum of creative expression.

Moreover, by questioning established academic assumptions, there is an opportunity to reshape how knowledge is produced and understood. This creates space for a more inclusive and expansive academic environment where diverse forms of knowledge are recognised and integrated into the broader conversation.

6.8.3. Becoming Through Practice: Where Uncertainty and Arts-Based Inquiry Meet

During my research journey, I discovered that practice-led research does not necessarily require creating a separate peer-reviewed performance piece or exhibition to exemplify the practice (Candy, 2006). This distinction became apparent during the early stages of developing my NTROs, as I grappled with questions about the level of artistic merit required and whether I possessed the skills to meet doctoral-level standard. While practice-based research entails peer reviewed outputs—practice-led research offers a different pathway for exploration, one less tied to conventional academic standards and more open to diverse forms of inquiry.

This inclusivity is particularly valuable, as it allows for a broader range of voices and experiences to contribute to the research landscape. Arts-based methods, in this context, become tools for engagement and understanding that are accessible to all, regardless of people's formal training or perceived talent. Such an approach emphasises the value of diverse perspectives, enriching the research through multiple forms of knowledge and expression. It recognises that the power of practice lies not in conforming to traditional standards of excellence but in the capacity to explore, innovate, and communicate in ways that are meaningful to the practitioner and relevant to the inquiry at hand.

By embracing practice-led research, I began integrating arts-based methods into my practice, not as a professional artist but as a hobbyist, which led to invaluable insights in deferring judgement. Engaging in creative pursuits—regardless of the quality of the outputs—became a catalyst for learning and transformation. This experience taught me that creativity could be more widely embraced and recognised if more people adopted a practice-led approach to life, not just research. By exploring creative pursuits with self-reflection and rigour, people can uncover new insights and prioritise the process and learnings gained over the production of 'acceptable' artefacts or defined outcomes.

Engaging in practice-led research requires resilience and perseverance. Navigating its inherent challenges can be daunting, often requiring maturity, experience, or guidance from a mentor. In my case, these experiences enabled me to defer judgement on the quest for certainty and navigate the challenges with greater flexibility. The process was not without struggle; ambiguity, confusion, and doubt are

integral to creative practices. Yet, rather than becoming deterrents, these elements became opportunities for growth and resilience.

For instance, early in my research, I found myself questioning the value of my artistic experiments, wondering if they met the standards of what is considered worthy of an academic inquiry. However, by deferring judgement—by allowing the creative process to unfold without a predetermined endpoint—I began to see that the value lay not in the final product but in the act of creation itself. This shift allowed me to embrace uncertainty, and, over time, I realised that these so-called ‘lesser’ artistic efforts were, in fact, generating some of my most profound insights.

Through this journey, I learned that the power of arts-based methods in practice-led research lies not in perfecting the art but in the process of making itself—of allowing the material, the body, and the mind to engage in a dialogue that transcends the need for immediate judgement. This approach enabled me to access knowledge that might otherwise have remained obscured, further reinforcing the importance of creative methods in producing new understandings.

As more people come to appreciate the value of practice-led approaches, there is potential for a wider cultural shift toward a more expansive understanding of creativity and knowledge production—one that honours the uncertainties and ambiguities that are an inevitable part of any innovative endeavour. This shift can transform not only academic research but also everyday experiences, enabling a broader engagement with creativity and the recognition that creative practice is available to everyone, regardless of background, discipline, skill or perceived talent.

Practice-led research embraces inclusivity by allowing for a wide range of creative approaches and voices, moving beyond conventional artistic standards. This inclusivity enriches the research landscape by welcoming diverse perspectives that might otherwise be excluded. The value of arts-based methods in this type of research lies not in producing a polished final product but in the creative process itself. Emphasising experimentation and exploration over the end result fosters deeper insights and transformative learning.

Engaging in practice-led research also involves navigating uncertainty, doubt, and confusion. Rather than hindering progress, these challenges serve as opportunities for growth and creative discovery, building resilience throughout the process.

Furthermore, creativity is made accessible to all through practice-led approaches, showing that formal artistic training or perceived talent are not prerequisites for engaging meaningfully with creativity and fostering personal growth.

Deferring judgement in this context is more than just a tool—a necessary state of being supporting openness, inclusivity, and transformation. This mindset allows for richer engagement with creative processes and the generation of new understandings. Ultimately, these practice-led approaches can inspire a broader cultural shift, recognising the value of creativity and knowledge production that honours uncertainty and ambiguity, both in academic research and everyday life.

6.8.4. Honouring Intuition

Articulating embodied, tacit knowledge in practice-led research presents a unique challenge, particularly in navigating the distinction between *know-how* (practical skills and expertise) and *know-that* (theoretical knowledge), or the gap between theory and practice (Marinkovic, 2021). This challenge is further complicated by the nature of knowledge itself, which is inherently action-based and serves as a bridge between the knower and the known (Polanyi, 2009).

Polanyi (2009), echoing Law (2004), critiques positivist assumptions about the structure of knowledge, arguing that objectivity in scientific research is a misleading ideal. In practice research, valid knowledge often does not reveal itself explicitly; rather, it emerges through a process of deferring judgement, allowing for the discovery of new relationships and connections to broader cultural issues (Haseman, 2006). This emergence is supported by a systems-thinking approach (G. Bateson, 1987; N. Bateson, 2017; Bohm, 1998; Montuori, 2013), which encourages seeing patterns and connections across different domains of experience.

This convergence of creativity, systems thinking, autoethnography, and the embodied aspects of phenomenology aligns with the concept of *praxical knowledge*—a framework that integrates practice, critical reflection, and theory to contribute to a broader knowledge domain (Barrett & Bolt, 2014). As I have matured in my practice, I have found that embracing a holistic approach to knowledge creation has been crucial in navigating these complexities. It has enabled me to comfortably engage with embodied knowledge and bridge the gap between theory and practice.

However, practice researchers often feel compelled to document and present their work in ways that diverge from the essence of their practice to achieve academic acceptance. Non-traditional approaches can be misunderstood by stakeholders, and while adapting to more conventional frameworks might extend the reach of their research, it can also provoke a profound sense of frustration. This tension reflects the delicate balance between gaining academic recognition and remaining true to a person's research philosophy.

In practice-led research, articulating embodied, tacit knowledge bridges the practical skills of "know-how" with theoretical understanding, or "know-that." This process challenges conventional distinctions between theory and practice, revealing deeper connections through experiential engagement. Practice-led research critiques the positivist assumption of objectivity, highlighting that valid knowledge can be action-based and context-dependent, emerging organically through the process of deferring judgement. This approach values the emergent nature of knowledge by allowing new relationships and connections to surface.

A systems-thinking approach helps to see patterns and connections across various domains, fostering a more holistic understanding of knowledge creation that aligns with creative, embodied, and reflective practices. This broadens the scope of inquiry and contributes to a richer understanding of the creative process. However, practice-led researchers often face the tension between adhering to conventional academic standards and remaining true to the authenticity of their research. Balancing these pressures requires a commitment to authenticity while finding ways to communicate effectively within academic contexts.

Additionally, recognising intuition and embodied experience as valid forms of knowledge is crucial. Honouring these forms of knowing supports a holistic approach that balances both subjective and objective dimensions of understanding, offering more profound insights into the research process. This perspective calls for greater acceptance of intuitive and embodied knowledge in academic practice, enriching the potential for creative discovery.

6.8.5. *Value of Tacit Knowledge*

Entering my work into the academic arena often required justifying it before I fully understood it myself—an experience not uncommon in practice-led research. The pressure to describe or analyse prematurely, before the insights have fully revealed themselves, is a challenge many researchers face. This tension became particularly evident during my first analysis of the Zoom recordings, where I felt compelled to adopt a more analytical approach, focusing solely on what was explicitly observed or said, even as deeper, more embodied and intuitive learnings were emerging from the material.

For instance, in my Zoom recordings, I was drawn to subtle dynamics such as body language, pauses, and tone of voice—elements that were sensed rather than always observed and that resisted easy categorisation or quantification. However, the academic context often demanded that I translate these impressions into more structured observations, like counting how many times someone smiled, which seemed to strip away the richness of these embodied insights. This left me caught between honouring the intuitive dimensions of my experience and adhering to more conventional, prescriptive academic approaches.

This tension reflects a broader challenge faced by many in practice-led research: the need to document and understand findings in ways that satisfy academic norms, which often prioritise clarity, structure, and objectivity over the fluid, emergent nature of creative practice. However, deferring judgement allowed me to resist the immediate pressure to conform and instead embrace the validity of feeling as a form of analysis. It created a space where more nuanced understandings could emerge, valuing intuitive and embodied modes of knowing alongside traditional academic methods.

Recognising that feeling is a valid form of analysis when judgement is deferred has significant implications for practice-led researchers. It challenges the notion that only certain types of knowledge—those that can be neatly categorised or articulated—are valuable within the academic sphere. Instead, it suggests that academia should make more room for diverse forms of understanding that allow new insights to emerge from places that traditional methodologies may overlook.

By deferring judgement, I learned to trust the organic emergence of insights, even when they did not immediately align with conventional academic frameworks. This approach enabled me to honour the embodied, intuitive aspects of my practice, reaffirming the importance of feeling in generating profound and expansive knowledge.

In practice-led research, tacit, embodied, and intuitive knowledge often emerges from the creative process, offering deep, nuanced insights that traditional academic approaches may overlook. While difficult to categorise or quantify, this form of knowledge holds significant value in revealing dimensions of experience and understanding that are not easily accessible through more conventional means. However, researchers in practice-led fields often face the challenge of navigating the tension between conforming to academic norms, which tend to prioritise structured, clear, and objective analysis, and honouring intuitive, embodied insights. Deferring judgement creates space for these more subjective forms of knowledge to coexist with traditional methods, fostering a richer, more holistic approach to inquiry.

Moreover, recognising feeling as a valid form of analysis challenges the dominance of strictly analytical frameworks in academic contexts. By embracing diverse forms of knowing, researchers can gain more profound, more comprehensive insights into their subjects. The practice of deferring judgement also allows researchers to resist the pressure to draw premature conclusions, encouraging a process in which insights emerge organically. This respect for the fluid, emergent nature of creative practice supports a more authentic engagement with the material. Ultimately, expanding academic acceptance of tacit and embodied knowledge encourages a broader understanding of what constitutes valid knowledge, paving the way for more diverse, innovative, and inclusive forms of research.

6.8.6. Role of Phenomenology

Building on these ‘what constitutes valid knowledge’ considerations, I have found that phenomenological concepts provide valuable tools for navigating the complexities of this work. Interestingly, I only retrospectively tied these concepts to it after it was suggested by my supervisors. As I deferred judgement on the direction of my research, it became clearer how phenomenological ideas were always present,

providing a context and container for judgement while also igniting the curiosity that, ultimately, altered my worldview and deepened my understanding of context and compassion.

One example was creating a digital memory palace on WhatsApp with a group of acquaintances—people who knew each other but not well—who were preparing to spend a challenging week together on a remote, rustic island in Sweden. This diverse group, comprising a Norwegian, German, and two Australians—including myself, an American-born Australian—faced not only gaps in knowledge of each other, but also cultural and language barriers. To bridge these divides and build a sense of community before our time on the island, I used WhatsApp, a mobile app, as a platform for creating a *digital memory palace*, inspired by the ancient Greek technique of placing symbols in an imaginary building to aid recall (Fassbender & Heiden, 2006).

Over six months, we participated in weekly challenges that I designed on WhatsApp, exploring aspects of our backgrounds, such as childhood memories, family history, and cultural influences. As we shared stories and personal quirks like childhood nicknames, the memory palace became a warm repository of friendship, helping us to prepare for the unfamiliar and potentially challenging experience ahead. We used videos, artwork, collages, and storytelling to bring our experiences to life, transforming the digital space into an embodied encounter that facilitated deep emotional bonds.

In retrospect, I realised how this process aligned with the phenomenological idea of the *lifeworld*, where our shared journey involved delving into memories, emotions, and bodily sensations within their social, political, and historical contexts (Macann, 1993). This practice enriched our collaborative creativity and revealed how deferring judgement allowed these deeper connections to emerge.

In another instance, phenomenology, with its emphasis on embodiment, also retrospectively provided a framework for understanding how sensory experiences shape people's perceptions and interactions (Aarø, 2010). Inspired by my supervisor, Barbara Doran, I became intrigued by the potential of scent to aid in deferring judgement and collaborated with a performer, Jocelyn Fullerton, to create a bespoke fragrance. Testing this with individuals revealed its power to transport people back to

a state of youthful creativity while igniting feelings of hope for the future. This embodied exploration demonstrated how sensory experiences can catalyse creative processes and transform our perceptions, allowing for a more nuanced understanding that defers immediate judgement.

This approach aligns with phenomenological techniques like *bracketing*, or *epoché* (Husserl, 2012), which involves suspending preconceptions and consciously acknowledging one's judgements. By practising this method, I realised that new perspectives emerged, enriching my understanding and creative output.

Further, embracing the concept of *radical alterity*, or recognising the fundamental "otherness" of people and phenomena (Levinas, 1998), also came into sharper focus through deferring judgement. When my creative practice was misunderstood by a previous mentor, I initially felt invalidated. However, seeing this as a form of "othering" prompted me to confront the ethical implications of marginalisation and the silencing of diverse voices, highlighting the need to defer judgement and remain open to diverse perspectives.

Applying these phenomenological insights retrospectively has strengthened my commitment to ethical practice by fostering unexpected connections and new knowledge. Deferring judgement allowed me to see how these concepts were already embedded in my experiences, providing a structure that encouraged curiosity and ultimately deepened my awareness of context, fostering greater compassion. By holding space for difference and adopting an open, reflexive stance, I have cultivated a more inclusive and ethical research approach to creative collaborations that honours the uniqueness of all participants and collaborators.

These experiences remind me that engaging in practice research requires not just intellectual rigour but also compassion and ethical sensitivity—towards both others and myself. As creative practitioners, people need to allow space and time to reflect on their practice, confront their vulnerabilities, and ensure they have the support systems needed to navigate the ethical and emotional challenges of this deeply personal work.

Engaging with phenomenology has profoundly influenced how I approach judgement in my research. Initially, I did not consciously apply phenomenological ideas, but they emerged retrospectively, offering a reflective framework that naturally

encourages suspending immediate judgement. This contemplative stance allowed me to better engage with my own experiences and those of others, fostering a deeper understanding of the nuances of judgement and creativity.

A practical application of this concept was the creation of a digital memory palace on WhatsApp, which became a space for individuals to explore their cultural and personal narratives. This platform encouraged patience and understanding, promoting connections by deferring immediate reactions and allowing shared experiences to be enriched through thoughtful reflection. Similarly, my collaboration to create a bespoke fragrance illustrated how sensory experiences can enhance emotional connections and deepen creative exploration. This project transcended typical interactions by engaging the senses and offering new ways to perceive and navigate judgement.

Navigating misunderstandings, particularly with a mentor, pushed me to embrace the concept of radical alterity more fully. These experiences taught me the importance of deferring judgement when faced with diversity and difference, enabling me to appreciate a broader range of perspectives. By adopting radical alterity as an ethical stance, I have learned to approach collaboration with greater openness, ensuring that both my own insights and those of others are considered with the respect they deserve.

These experiences mirror the journey of the J-Curve model. Initially, feeling misunderstood by my mentor represented a descent into judgement, where discomfort and uncertainty prevailed. By applying phenomenological techniques and deferring judgement, I reached the bottom of the curve—suspending preconceptions and opening myself to new perspectives. This process facilitated an ascent toward more profound understanding, compassion, and ethical practice, exemplifying the transformative power of the J-Curve in navigating complex creative collaborations.

6.8.7. Balancing Subjectivity and Objectivity

My research odyssey began with a meticulously structured plan: to chronicle my facilitation of creative sessions on Zoom as the cornerstone of my inquiry. Adhering to Grounded Theory, I was advised to withhold reviewing these recordings until the data collection phase was completed. The rationale was premature viewing could taint

the analysis with subjectivity. This approach, approved at my initial stage-gate meeting, was intended to provide a robust qualitative framework for dissecting the recordings, with my supervisors' guidance.

However, I intuitively, even abductively, sensed a dissonance with this prescribed methodology. In hindsight, I recognise that Grounded Theory failed to capture the true spirit of my work, imposing a rationalistic, detached empathy that stood apart from my practice rather than embracing it with compassion. The notion of deferring analysis until the conclusion of the research—coldly dissecting recordings and coding them into themes—felt incongruent with my ethos. Yet, I felt trapped by a commitment made at a pivotal meeting, compelled to adhere to a method that did not fit my creative process.

Reflecting on my journey, I now see two prevailing judgements that once constrained me. The first was my perception of rigour. Grounded Theory appealed to me initially because it offered a systematic way to codify qualitative data. I believed it would lend structure to the intangible, ephemeral elements of my work, making them more palatable to an academic audience. But in truth, the 'judge' that I sought to appease was none other than myself. I grappled with discomfort in an academic environment where metaphysical concepts are often dismissed as being 'lesser than' when compared to conventional methods.

My second realisation was an initial misconception about the scientific method. I assumed that Grounded Theory would help negate my subjectivity in favour of objectivity. However, I came to understand that objectivity and subjectivity hold equal weight in fostering creativity. Embracing both can enhance rigour in the creative process. Including the metaphysical, the subjective, and the intersubjective can be transparent about biases so to liberate them, creating a heightened creative rigour.

Deferring judgement in this context became a powerful tool, allowing me to resist the urge to conform to a methodology that felt misaligned with my practice. Instead, it opened up space for reflection, enabling me to see that subjectivity and objectivity are not opposites but complementary forces in the creative process. By honouring both, I found a more balanced approach that respects the nuances of my work and fosters a deeper understanding of creative rigour.

Aligning research methodologies with personal values and practices is crucial for practice-led researchers, especially those employing autoethnography. When there is tension between prescribed methods, such as Grounded Theory, and a researcher's creative and ethical stance, it underscores the importance of selecting approaches that reflect deeper engagement with their values. This alignment ensures that the research methodology truly resonates with the researcher's ethos and practice.

In navigating the balance between intuitive, embodied methods and conventional standards of academic rigour, deferring judgement becomes a critical strategy. Rather than avoiding judgement, it opens space for reflexivity, allowing researchers to consider innovative approaches while still meeting rigorous academic expectations. This reflexive openness can help bridge the divide between unconventional methods and the formal demands of academia.

In creative research, judgement is not a simple opposition between objectivity and subjectivity but a dynamic interaction. By recognising and integrating both and deferring immediate conclusions, researchers can gain a more nuanced understanding that values personal experience and broader research contexts. This challenges the traditional divide between scientific objectivity and subjective insight, highlighting their complementary roles.

Intuition and reflexive awareness are also invaluable tools in practice-led research, especially in autoethnographic work. Trusting these intuitive insights as valid forms of knowledge—arising from deep, often unconscious understanding—is key. Engaging reflexively with judgement allows researchers to critically assess their biases and assumptions, fostering a more compassionate and thoughtful approach to inquiry.

My experience of intuition in Grounded Theory was outcome-oriented, particularly in relation to coding and comparative analysis. The focus was on eventually generating credible theory from data, which initially appealed to my desire for structure. In contrast, intuition in my practice-led research functioned as a process-centred guide. It shaped the unfolding nature of the creative inquiry itself — less about reaching a fixed outcome and more about navigating the emergent nature of practice, sensation, and insight.

This experience closely mirrors the journey of the J-Curve. Initially, the expectations of Grounded Theory, which I perceived to be rigid, represented a descent into discomfort as I grappled with the misalignment between my practice and the methodology. By deferring judgement and allowing myself to reflect on the value of subjectivity and objectivity, I found a new balance, ascending towards a more integrated and holistic understanding of rigour in creative research.

6.9. Key Contributions of the J-Curve Model

This research has advanced the understanding and practical application of the J-Curve model, a framework illustrating the process of deferring judgement. It contributes to creative inquiry by offering theoretical insights and practical tools for navigating judgement, particularly in personal and professional development.

This research has significantly advanced the understanding and application of the J-Curve model, offering a structured framework for individuals to navigate complex emotional landscapes in both creative and professional contexts. The model promotes self-awareness by illustrating the stages of judgement and transformation, ultimately fostering personal and professional growth. Unlike traditional models, it positions deferring judgement as a relational and context-dependent process, emphasising that it is not a uniform approach but rather an iterative one, sensitive to individual experiences and specific situations. This nuanced perspective contributes to a deeper understanding of fields such as creativity, coaching, and facilitation.

Furthermore, integrating arts-based methods, including collage-making, zine-making, and creative workshops, highlights how these practices can unlock subconscious insights and stimulate creativity. These techniques proved to be valuable tools not only in individual creative practice but also in group settings, offering a unique pathway for innovative problem-solving. In this regard, the research underscores the role of arts-based methods as essential in accessing layers of understanding often overlooked by traditional approaches.

Practical insights have also emerged for facilitators, educators, and creativity consultants, offering guidance on how to apply the J-Curve model and the process of deferring judgement in their work. Facilitators can use respectful curiosity, reflective practices, and ongoing ethical dialogue to promote growth, resilience, and positive change by creating environments that foster collaboration and emotional safety. These

recommendations, grounded in real-world applications, provide a roadmap for professionals seeking to create transformative and inclusive creative spaces.

Additionally, this research brings attention to the importance of ethical practice within the fields of coaching and facilitation. The exploration of moments of ethical tension, as exemplified in the case study with Elaine, highlights the need for compassionate approaches to decision-making. By fostering environments that support ethical reflection and empathetic engagement, this research raises professional standards in these areas, promoting a more thoughtful and compassionate way of working.

Challenges and Practical Implications

Applying the J-Curve model revealed several key challenges in creative practice. Emotional resistance emerged as a significant hurdle, particularly evident in workshops and coaching sessions where participants sought quick solutions rather than engaging in the uncomfortable descent phase. To address this, we introduced ice-breaking activities and emphasised the natural role of discomfort in the creative process.

The model's effectiveness varied across different contexts. While it worked well in one-on-one coaching, more extensive group settings required adaptations. This led to the development of scalable exercises tailored to diverse participant needs.

Maintaining the delicate balance between structure and openness proved challenging. Participants required varying levels of guidance, necessitating continuous calibration to find the right approach for each group or individual.

Sustaining engagement throughout the J-Curve process, especially during multiple descents and ascents, demanded careful attention. We implemented strategies such as pacing sessions, incorporating breaks, and allowing for emotional release to keep participants invested in the process.

Integrating compassion into creative practice emerged as a crucial factor in fostering safe, judgment-free environments. This approach shifts the focus from determining who is right to exploring issues more deeply together. Consequently, it encourages collaboration, creativity, and inclusivity, allowing participants to contribute diverse perspectives and explore new insights.

These challenges and adaptations highlight the dynamic nature of applying theoretical models in real-world creative contexts, emphasising the need for flexibility and continuous refinement in practice.

Integrating Compassion into Creative Practice

Compassion plays a crucial role in creating environments where individuals feel safe expressing their thoughts and emotions without fear of judgement. This emotional safety is essential for fully engaging with the process of deferring judgement, allowing participants to navigate their own J-Curves with openness and vulnerability. Facilitators can create collaborative spaces that focus on deeper understanding rather than confrontation or quick solutions by fostering compassion.

Compassion shifts the focus from asking, “Who is right?” to, “How can we support each other in understanding this issue more deeply?” This shift encourages a more collaborative, solution-oriented approach that fosters creative exploration and problem-solving. It becomes the foundation for cultivating a mindset where individuals feel valued, promoting both personal reflection and collective innovation.

Additionally, compassion enables more inclusive and ethical engagement in creative processes. It ensures that diverse perspectives and experiences are recognised as valuable, fostering environments where participants feel respected and empowered to contribute. This inclusivity is vital for generating new insights, as it integrates a range of voices into the creative process.

By embracing compassion as a guiding principle, practitioners can nurture spaces that foster growth, ethical reflection, and collaborative creativity. This ensures that deferring judgement becomes a sustainable, supportive practice that enhances the creative process and leads to more meaningful, ethical outcomes.

6.10. Summary

This chapter provides an in-depth exploration of the development and practical application of the J-Curve model through an autoethnographic lens. By engaging in collaborative sessions with Elaine and Heather, the research illustrates how deferring judgement unfolds in real-world interactions, leading to personal transformation and the emergence of profound

insights. These case studies highlight the iterative nature of the J-Curve model, demonstrating its capacity to foster self-awareness, ethical realignment, and growth.

Integrating arts-based methods, such as collaging, zine-making, and spontaneous creative expressions like the co-created rap song and dance with Heather, underscores these practices' pivotal role in accessing tacit, embodied, and subconscious knowledge. These methods provide alternative pathways for creative exploration and facilitate the embodiment of deferring judgement, allowing for deeper connections and unexpected breakthroughs.

The chapter also explores the challenges of overcoming creative invalidation, both societal and personal, revealing how deferring judgement can be a powerful tool in reclaiming creative agency. The research illustrates the journey from self-doubt to embracing one's creative potential by confronting and reframing limiting beliefs and external judgements.

Insights gained from theatre and performance practices at NIDA are woven throughout the narrative, presenting illuminating vignettes of different facets of deferring judgement learning. These experiences highlight the importance of play, risk-taking, context, and the collaborative nature of creativity, enriching the understanding of how judgements can hinder and catalyse creative processes.

Further, exploring other ways of knowing through phenomenology emphasises the significance of embracing subjectivity and objectivity. By honouring intuition and acknowledging the value of tacit knowledge, the research advocates for a more holistic and inclusive approach to knowledge production. This perspective challenges conventional academic norms, encouraging the integration of embodied, subjective experiences into scholarly discourse.

Compassion emerges as a central theme, integral to creating environments where individuals feel safe to express themselves without fear of judgement. Compassion enhances creativity, inclusivity, and ethical engagement by fostering emotional safety and shifting the focus from determining who is right to collaboratively exploring deeper understanding.

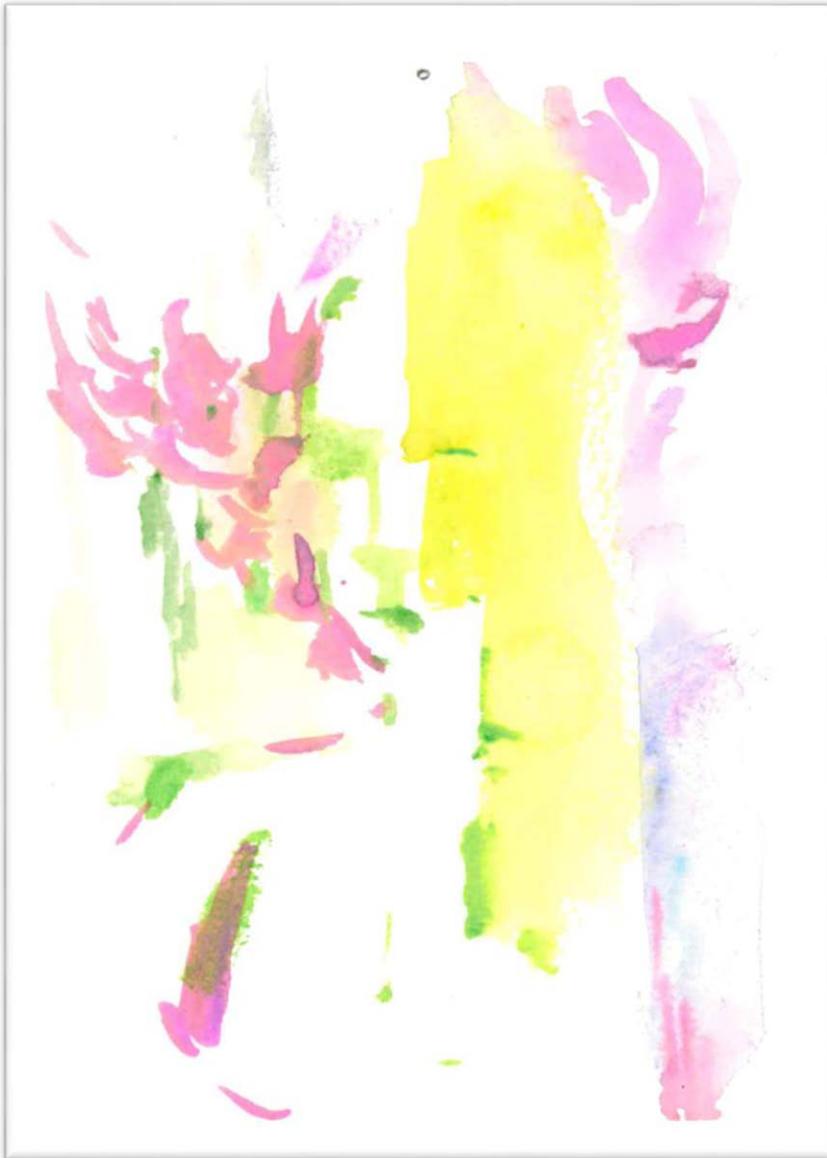
Despite the model's effectiveness, the research acknowledges challenges in applying the J-Curve, such as emotional resistance, adapting to diverse contexts, and maintaining engagement. Strategies to address these challenges include introducing ice-breaking activities, balancing structure with openness, and incorporating breaks for emotional release.

This research advances the J-Curve model as a valuable tool for fostering personal and professional growth, demonstrating its applicability across various contexts. It highlights the transformative power of deferring judgement, supported by arts-based methods and compassionate practice, in enriching creative inquiry and facilitating a cultural shift toward more expansive conceptions of creativity.

The insights gained have directly informed the design of the Fractals NTRO, a multisensory, immersive experience that embodies these core principles. By integrating deferring judgement into its framework, the project encourages participants to engage deeply with their creativity, fostering new perspectives and growth.

As you reflect on this journey, consider where you are in your own J-Curve. What revelations have the descent brought forth? How might embracing deferring judgement open up unforeseen possibilities? Allow yourself to sit with any discomfort, recognising that it is a catalyst for growth and that new perspectives await as you ascend.

Figure 19: Sensuality Watercolour



“Sensuality” from the Fractals NTRO employs soft, flowing colours to evoke a tactile and emotional connection with the viewer. This watercolour captures a moment of sensory delight, where hues and forms blend to invite a deeper engagement with the present experience and the rich textures of the natural world—created by a participant.



Whispering Wounds

And then the day came, when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.

— Anaïs Nin, *Risk*

As the sun dipped below the horizon, the owl returned to the tree, her wings heavy with the weight of her latest venture. The thrill of the hunt had given way to a deep-seated exhaustion, and a gnawing sense of unease overshadowed the satisfaction of a successful catch. She had flown far this time, pushing herself to the limits of her endurance, driven by an insatiable need to escape the confines of her past.

But no matter how far she flew, no matter how many new landscapes she explored, the owl found herself inevitably drawn back to the tree. It was as if an invisible thread tethered her to this place, to the memories and emotions that lay buried within its ancient roots. She resented this bond, this inescapable connection to her past, and yet she knew that she could never truly sever it.

The tree, his branches heavy with the weight of countless seasons, watched as the owl struggled with her inner turmoil. He had seen her venture out time and time again, each journey a testament to her resilience and determination. But he had also seen the toll these excursions took on her, the way they chipped away at her spirit, leaving her raw and exposed.

As the owl settled into the crook of his branches, the tree whispered to her, his voice a gentle murmur in the night, "You cannot outrun your past. It is a part of you, woven into the very fabric of your being. To deny it is to deny yourself, and that is a path that leads only to suffering."

The owl bristled at his words, her feathers ruffling in defiance. She had tasted freedom, had felt the rush of the wind beneath her wings, and she was not ready to surrender that. But even as she fought against the truth of the tree's words, she could feel the weight of her grief pressing down upon her, threatening to crush her beneath its relentless flow.

In the end, the tree's steady presence anchored her, giving her the strength to face the pain she had been running from for so long. As she nestled into his embrace, the owl began to understand that true freedom lay not in escape but in acceptance. She could not change her past, could not erase the scars that marked her soul, but she could learn to live with them, to find beauty and meaning in the very things that had once brought her so much pain.

And so, as the night wore on and the stars danced overhead, the owl and the tree sat in silence, two halves of a single whole, each drawing strength and comfort from the other. They knew the journey ahead would be long and arduous, and many more trials and tribulations would come. But they also knew they would face them together, bound by a bond that transcended time and would endure long after the last leaf had fallen from the tree's branches and the owl had taken her final flight.

Chapter 7

Unveiling Fractals

7.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce the Fractals of Nature (Fractals) NTRO, a multisensory and immersive experience designed as both an experiential manifestation of the principles of deferring judgement and a critical case study for examining the key concepts explored throughout this thesis. Fractals brings to life the theoretical frameworks of the J-Curve, arts-based methods, and the practice of compassion and curiosity, all of which have been foundational to this research.

As you engage with the following chapter, take a moment to consider how your body responds to the descriptions and reflections. How do these feelings influence your ability to remain open and curious? Allow yourself to be fully present, noticing how your body, mind, and emotions interact as you explore the principles of deferring judgement embodied in Fractals. This reflective stance mirrors the experience participants in Fractals encountered as they navigated their own journeys through judgement, curiosity, and creative transformation.

7.2. Conceptual Foundations of Fractals

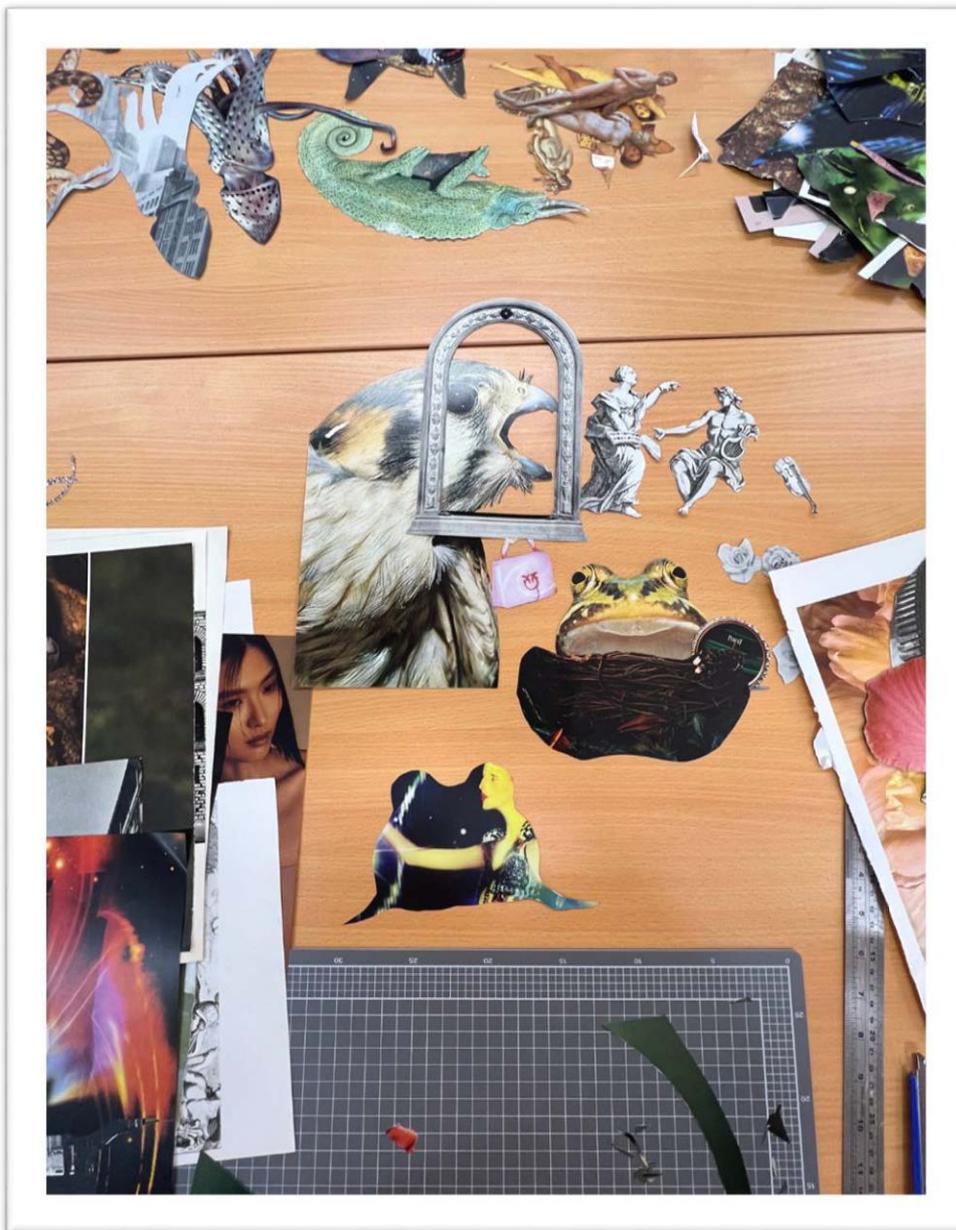
Learnings from a Collage Workshop

My evolving understanding of my creative practice profoundly influenced the development of Fractals. Initially, I envisioned the NTRO as a collage or mask-making piece inspired by earlier workshops with artist Deborah Kelly. By participating in another one of her workshops about collage in March 2023, I realised that even solitary acts of creation are inherently communal, engaging the maker in an ongoing dialogue with the world around them. This insight underscored the relational, co-creative nature of deferring judgement, highlighting how making is a process of metabolising insights.

These experiences shaped my decision to move beyond static forms and create a more participatory, theatre-like structure for Fractals. As seen in Figure 20, the playful juxtaposition of cut-outs captures how new insights emerge through creative dialogue, even

before finalising elements. This process reinforced my understanding of deferring judgement as relational. It led to the final iteration of Fractals as a dynamic, interactive experience, allowing participants to engage directly with the creative process.

Figure 20: Deborah Kelly Collage Workshop



This photo of my work in progress at Deborah Kelly's collage workshop in March 2023 captures a table filled with various cut-out elements in a whimsical, relational dialogue. This workshop influenced my decision to make my NTRO a participatory and communal event. The author took it on her phone.

Learnings from Superorganism Collective

My collaboration with the Superorganism Collective, mentioned earlier, which I joined upon invitation from my supervisor, Barbara Doran, greatly influenced the conceptualisation and execution of Fractals. The Superorganism is a transdisciplinary group blending diverse artistic disciplines and perspectives. Since 2022, my engagement with the Superorganism has shown me how immersive, multisensory experiences can evoke emotional and ethical responses, fostering deeper connections to the more-than-human world.

My experiences with the Superorganism were not always comfortable; I often felt out of my depth. However, over time, these uncomfortable experiences became invaluable in understanding how to make participants feel at ease in Fractals. I learned several key lessons:

- **Finding My Authentic Role:** I realised I needed a specific role to feel authentic. While embodying characters like a worker bee greeting strangers on a tram did not suit me, being a hostess felt natural. This insight guided my approach in Fractals, where I curated the overall performance and acted as hostess while allowing others to manage specific stations.
- **Rethinking Representation:** I discovered that bees could be intimidating to some participants. I learned that people appreciated bees more by experiencing their bounty rather than by seeing or hearing them directly. This led me to use bees as inspiration without prominently featuring them. I opted for natural, earthy colours instead of bright yellows and placed emphasis on honey rather than on the insect that creates it.
- **The Power of Wishing:** The concept of a “wish economy,” which emphasises the sharing of wishes, inspired me to integrate interactive elements where participants could craft and share their own wishes, fostering connection and continuity.
- **Creating a Narrative Environment:** The collective’s approach showed me how shared stories could be expanded upon, enhancing the transformative power of communal experiences.

These insights helped shape Fractals into an experience that allowed participants to navigate the unfamiliar in their own way, with space to create and explore freely. Figure 21 is a collection of images from the various Superorganism events I participated in.

Figure 21: Events with Superorganism Collective



Photos from participating in Superorganism events that inspired Fractals. The top left shows me dressed as a regal beekeeper at Edgeway Green in 2022, where I shared a sensory experience about bees. The other images capture moments from a session where I handed out wishes to strangers on a tram while dressed as a worker bee, embracing spontaneity and connection. Photo credit: Shane Rozario, used with permission.

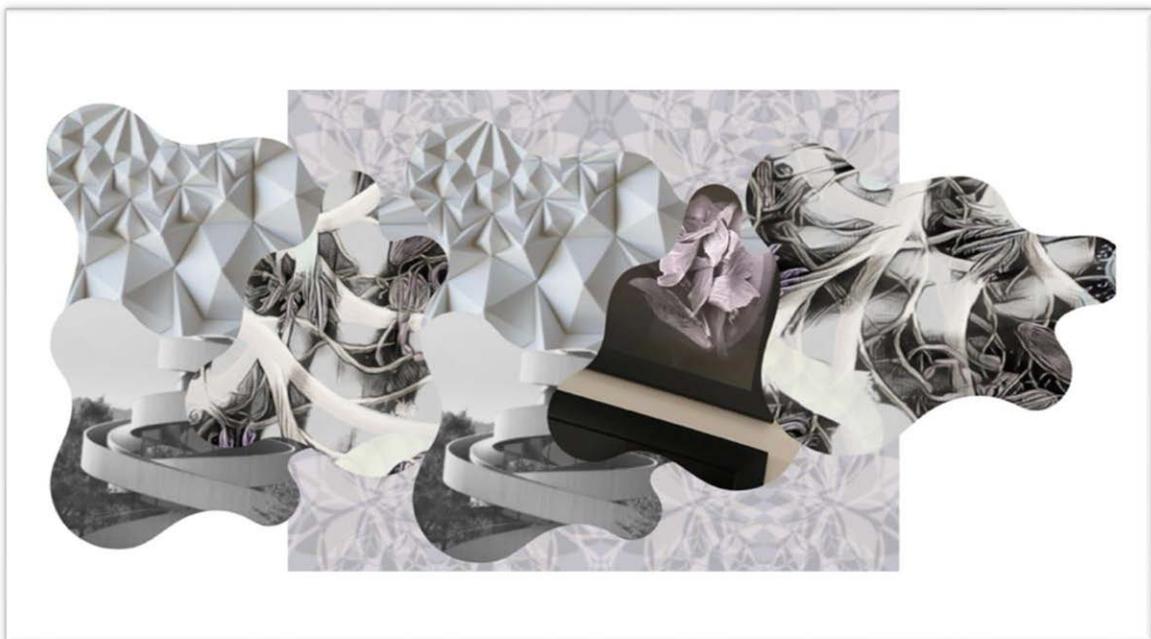
Distilling the Learnings

Based on these experiences, three core aspects of deferring judgement were woven into the design of Fractals:

1. **Communal:** The experience was inherently relational, creating an atmosphere of trust and playfulness where participants could express themselves freely, fostering creative collaboration and expanding possibilities through diverse viewpoints.
2. **Embodied:** Fractals engaged the body through multisensory experiences—scent, touch, and taste—that moved beyond intellectual engagement. This aligned with “cultural phenomenology” recognising that bodies are enmeshed with the cultural meanings of their environment (Weiss & Haber, 1999).

3. **Fluid:** The design allowed for oscillation between personal perspective and openness, akin to trying on different masks. This fluidity enabled participants to release fixed identities and attachments, facilitating compassionate engagement without criticism. These aspects were translated into an embodied way of knowing, reflected in a collage-based NTRO (see Figure 22). This piece visually represents the communal, embodied, and fluid elements central to Fractals, using organic shapes and textures to symbolise the ongoing process of revealing and concealing perspectives.

Figure 22: Fluidly Thinking NTRO



This collage-based NTRO represents the communal, embodied, and fluid nature of deferring judgement in the Fractals project. Organic shapes, layered textures, and contrasting elements symbolise the process of revealing and concealing, encouraging reflection. Created by the author in 2023 with Canva Pro.

From Concept to Experience

By synthesising these insights, I designed Fractals to encourage participants to engage deeply with their senses and reconsider perspectives. The event became a living case study to explore how the Deferring Judgement Framework’s elements—doing, knowing, and being—interact to foster creativity and collaboration.

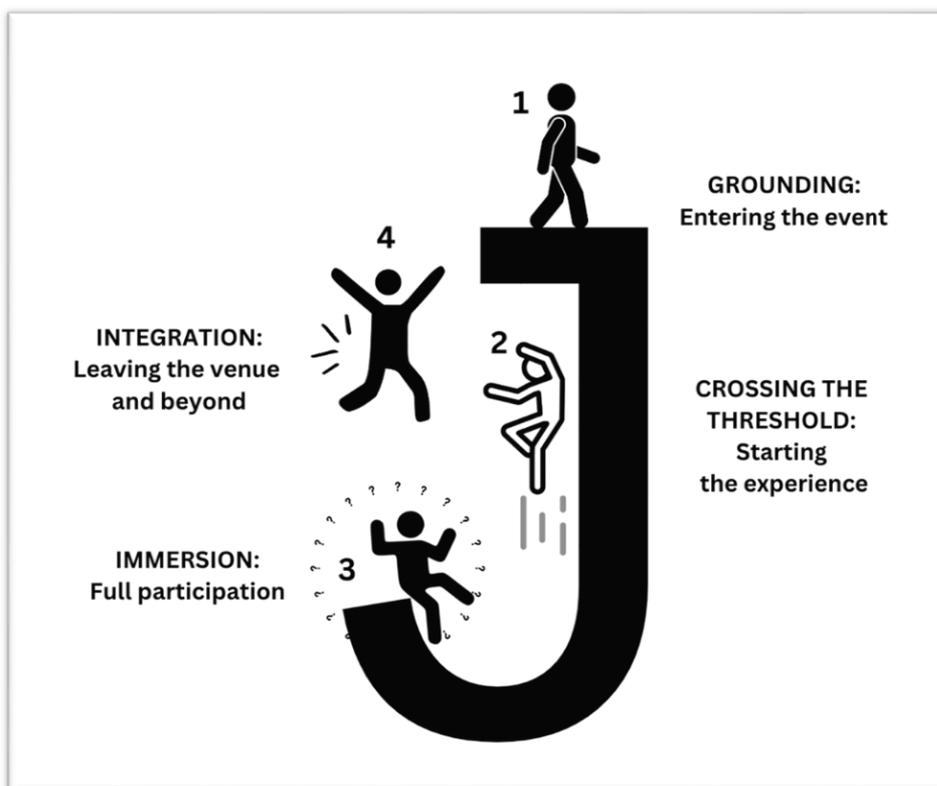
Introducing Fractals

Fractals embodied the learnings from my research and served as a living manifestation of deferring judgement principles. This NTRO, a key part of my PhD, provided a collective, immersive experience to deepen participants' understanding of the concept. Moving beyond conventional academic outputs, it encouraged direct, embodied exploration of the central principles.

J-Curve Principle

In Fractals, the J-Curve principles unfolded through four stages: grounding, crossing the threshold, immersion, and integration, mirroring participants' emotional and physical journey through judgement and uncertainty. Figure 23 visually represents this modified J-Curve and its stages.

Figure 23: Fractals J-Curve



This figure shows the four stages of the J-Curve model in the Fractals event: Grounding, Crossing the Threshold, Immersion, and Integration—each marking phases of participants' journey from confronting assumptions to integrating new insights. Created by the author in 2024 with Canva Pro.

The **grounding phase** marked the entry into the event. As participants arrived, they were invited to set aside their assumptions and expectations, allowing themselves to settle into the experience. This initial stage represented the descent into discomfort, where participants began to confront their judgements about what they anticipated the event to be and were encouraged to embrace the experience as it unfolded.

Next was **crossing the threshold**, a critical moment where participants began actively engaging with the making process. This stage reflects the shift from observation to involvement, where participants moved beyond hesitation, committing to trying something new and letting curiosity guide them. At this point, they started examining their judgements and metabolising them by creating.

The third phase, **immersion**, represented the turning point in the J-Curve, where participants were fully engaged in the multisensory, participatory environment. They were no longer passively observing at this stage but actively involved in the experience. This immersion facilitated significant insights as participants explored new perspectives and embraced ambiguity. This was the point of most significant insight, where new perspectives surfaced. Participants were given space and time to reflect, allowing themselves to open up to new possibilities.

Finally, **integration** represented the ascent out of the J-Curve. As participants left the venue, they carried the seeds of insights and sensory impressions gained from the experience. This integration phase emphasised the synthesis of what they had encountered, inviting them to reflect on how the experience had shifted their perspectives. While some transformations were articulated immediately, the full impact of Fractals was intended to unfold over time through the process of knowledge transfer.

The participants were encouraged to revisit their reflections and insights in the weeks and months following the event, which aligned with the deferred nature of judgement. This distillation process, which mirrors the Academy, would allow participants to transform these ephemeral experiences into more profound, more sustainable understandings that could be applied both personally and professionally.

The true power of Fractals lay in its ability to transcend the moment, inviting participants into a reflective journey that would continue long after the event ended. By structuring Fractals in this four-part progression, I aimed to guide participants through discomfort, exploration, and renewal cycles. Inspired by my NIDA training, this theatrical

framing—viewing the J-Curve and the event as a kind of performance, with acts, actors, audience, and agents—allowed participants to experience the J-Curve firsthand, providing a space where creative and ethical capacities could be explored and expanded.

7.3. Bringing Fractals to Life

Venue and Context

Fractals, an experiential, immersive, and multisensory event, was held on the evening of 21 September 2023 as part of NAS Neo at the National Art School (NAS) in Sydney, Australia. Situated on Gadigal land, NAS is a testament to Sydney's rich cultural heritage, having transformed from a convict gaol into an iconic bastion of artistic exploration and innovation over the past 150 years.

NAS Neo, the school's after-hours seasonal initiative, embodies inclusivity and progressive creativity. By uniting a diverse array of platforms and collaborating with leading creators and change-makers, NAS Neo serves as a vibrant incubator for cutting-edge artistic expression, showcasing provocative and boundary-pushing works across various disciplines.

Fractals' inclusion in the closing night's programme of NAS Neo was both an honour and a strategic alignment with the event's goals. Designed to engage an audience of art students, alums, change-makers, and curious minds seeking experiences that challenge their understanding of the world, Fractals aims to provoke, inspire, and transform participants through collective action, sensory embodiment, and deep reflection. With NAS Neo attracting approximately 2,000 attendees, Fractals hosted around 150 participants in a bespoke curated experience lasting approximately 20 to 30 minutes per person, catalysing a sustained state of deferring judgement.

Process and Framework

The design and execution of Fractals were influenced by the concept of the *Transdisciplinary Studio*, as outlined by Alex Coles (2012). Coles's (2012) work emphasises blending different disciplines and approaches in a shared space where doing, making, and collaborating are central to the creative process. One key inspiration for this model is the studio of Ólafur Elíasson, an Icelandic–Danish artist renowned for his immersive, large-scale installation art. Elíasson's work uses elemental materials like light, water, and air to transform viewers'

experiences, inviting them to engage actively with the environment around them (Eliasson, 2004). His approach to collaborative, shared spaces became a key influence on how *Fractals* was designed as an interactive, sensory-driven experience.

Additionally, I applied Dorst's (2024) forthcoming interpretation of the Coles (2012) *Transdisciplinary Studio* model to the creation of *Fractals*. Dorst's (2024) model focuses on creating environments where participants can transition from passive observers to active creators. This framework aims to dissolve the boundaries between different modes of knowing and doing, allowing participants to move between exploration, making, and reflection freely. The hands-on, process-over-outcome approach that Dorst (2024) advocates aligns entirely with the goals of *Fractals*, encouraging participants to engage deeply and collaboratively in the creative process without predetermined expectations or fixed outcomes.

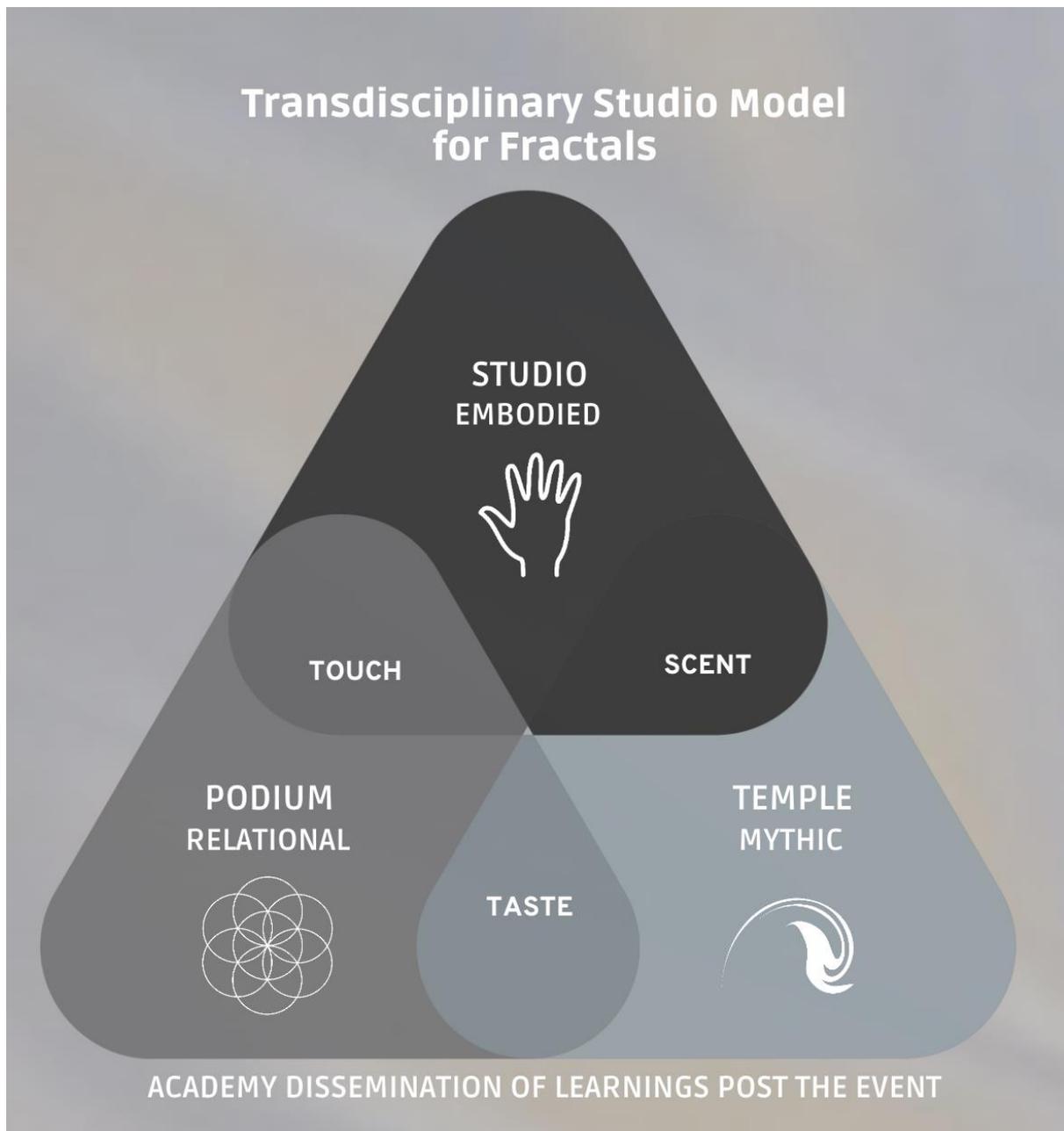
The combination of Coles's (2012) articulation of the *Transdisciplinary Studio*, Eliasson's immersive techniques, and Dorst's (2024) focus on active involvement provided the structural foundation for *Fractals*. This combination resulted in an event that invited participants to fully embody the principles of deferring judgement through an evolving, multisensory environment that transcended conventional academic boundaries.

To bring this vision to life, I collaborated with set designer Bella Rose Saltern, a recent NIDA graduate, who helped actualise the event using creative direction inspired by Eliasson. Together, we structured the event's flow around three creative spaces, as shown in Figure 24:

1. **Studio:** Focuses on making collaboration, experimentation, and prototyping, embodying the hands-on process of making.
2. **Temple:** Emphasises collective values, storytelling, and the spirit of the work, allowing for reflective and mythic exploration of creative concepts.
3. **Podium:** Represents the communal aspects of the experience and the distillation of insights leading to transformation.

Note: the *Academy*, representing knowledge dissemination, was intentionally left out, as this aspect would occur after the event.

Figure 24: Transdisciplinary Studio Model for Fractals



This figure illustrates how the Transdisciplinary Studio Model (Dorst, 2024) informed the design of Fractals, showing the interaction between the Studio, Temple and Podium spaces. Created by the author with Canvas Pro in 2023.

Concept: Fractals of Nature

Fractals invited participants to explore the inner workings of one of nature's most complex societies, the honeybee colony, through a sensory-laden theatrical experience. Participants

entered an inner sanctum to discover the mysteries of nature and engage in a kaleidoscope of alchemical experiences (savour, tactile, and scent) designed to provoke transformation. Fractals celebrated a more-than-human perspective, exploring themes like bees, ecology, and nature through placemaking, pattern finding, ritual-making, and knowledge translation.

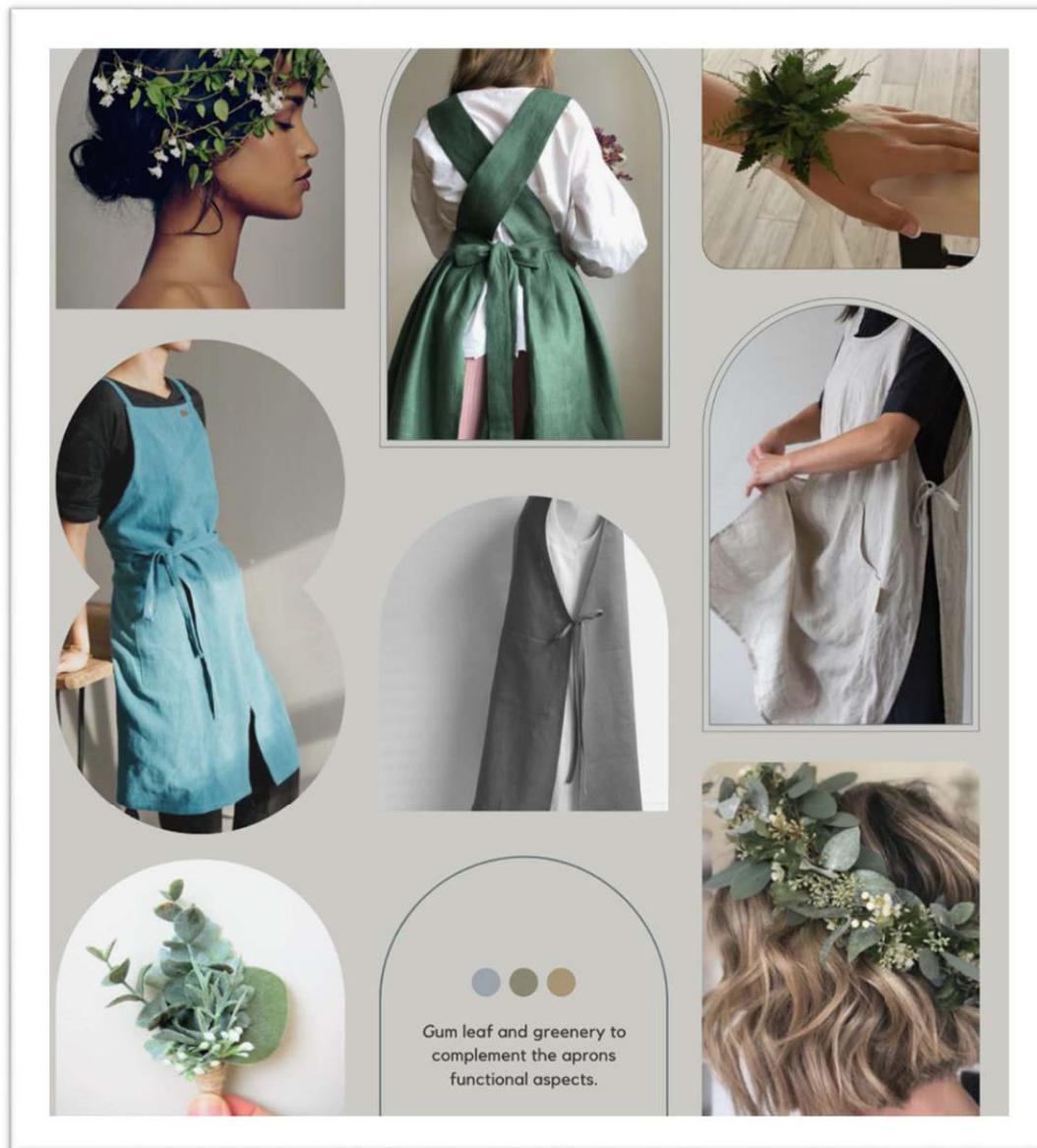
Setting the Scene: The Temple

The staging of Fractals was designed to evoke the mythical aspects of bees, pollination, and nature through the lens of fractals, which are found throughout nature, from galaxies to ecosystems to the human heartbeat. Fractals symbolise the various lenses people can adopt to change their perspective and defer judgement.

Making: The Studio

- **Costumes:** The clothing for Fractals consisted of functional aprons made from natural fabrics like linen in earthy colours, accented with gum-leaf crowns and corsages to create an atmosphere of warmth (see Figure 25).
- **Lighting:** Employed natural transitions from night to day to evoke different moods and feelings, with specific spaces designed for each “act.”
- **Feel:** Created an intimate yet interactive environment, transporting participants from the ordinary into a new world that released human bonds (see Figure 26).

Figure 25: Visual Excerpts of the Brief for Staging



The look and feel were inspired by natural fabrics, like linen, in earthy colours, serving as a neutral backdrop for other activities. To create an atmosphere of warmth, elements like gum-leaf crowns and corsages were incorporated to soften the utilitarian look of the aprons. The author created this with a Canva Pro in 2013, sourcing inspiration from Pinterest boards she curated.

Experience: Studio, Podium and Temple

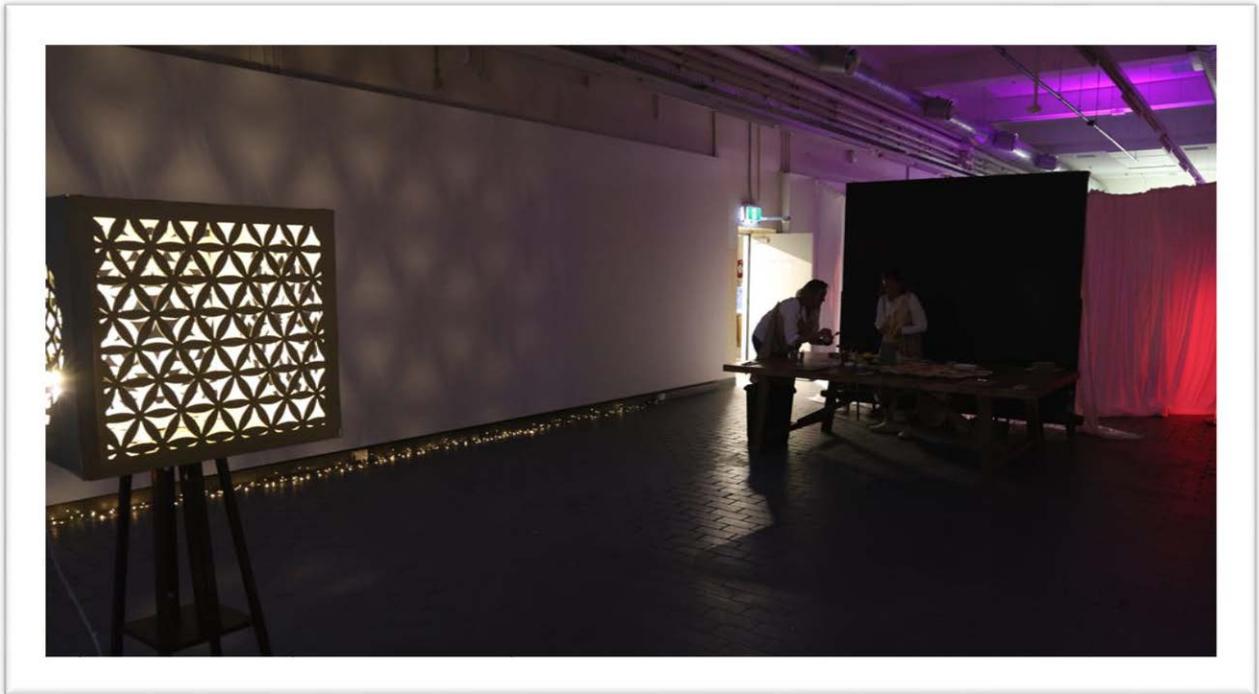
Fractals guided participants through a sensorial, curated journey across three stations—each focusing on one of three senses: scent, touch, and taste. These stations were designed to engage the imagination while challenging the reliance on visual and textual mediums.

- **Studio and Scent Station:** Participants began at the scent station, where they were invited to ground themselves with a custom scent developed for the Fractals experience. The scent was intended to evoke memories and imagination, encouraging participants to record their thoughts on tessellated cards, which would be combined into a collective sculptural artefact.
- **Podium and Touch Station:** At the touch station, participants were invited to continue their sensorial immersion by moulding beeswax tiles while listening to stories about bees. This tactile engagement encouraged participants to craft their own wishes and add them to a living sculpture, fostering a sense of connection and shared intent.
- **Temple and Taste Station:** The final station focused on taste, where participants sampled different types of honey, discerning various notes and aromas. They recorded their sensory impressions on tessellated cards, which were then added to the final sculptural artefact.
- **Temple Closing and Exiting:** The closing of the Temple. As part of the knowledge transfer, participants were invited to share their thoughts and reflections to help understand the transformative impact of the experience. This final stage encouraged participants to articulate the shifts in their perception and imagination, while allowing space for further distillation of insights that would occur beyond the immediate experience.

7.4. Fractals on the Night: Bridging Theory with Practice

Staged in the spacious Raymond Hoff gallery, an ample space tucked away from the pulsating music of NAS Neo, the venue provided a sculptural blank canvas ideal for a transformative set design. The gallery's access to natural light helped transition from indoors to outdoors, from day to night, using carefully crafted lighting effects. Its many entrances and exits helped to create distinct rooms and atmospheres.

Figure 27: Raymond Hoff Gallery in Transition



The tasting room in its early stages, with dappled light hinting at the transformation to come—a blank canvas awaiting the unfolding sensory experience. Photo credit: Jason Kirk, used with permission.

Eliasson’s art seamlessly intertwines light, scale, and immersion to evoke profound emotional responses, and we sought to emulate his ability to transcend traditional boundaries between art and audience. This inspiration led me and the set designer (the “we” in this section) to meticulously craft a transportive and immersive experience that enveloped participants in a tapestry of mystery, warmth, and connection, inviting them to shed their preconceptions and embrace the unknown. By incorporating natural elements and organic materials, we aimed to deepen the transformative potential of the journey, fostering profound connections with oneself, others, and the world at large. By crafting a sense of mystery, warmth, and connection and engaging participants in communal acts of creation and expression, the event fostered an atmosphere conducive to the deferral of judgement and the exploration of new possibilities, allowing participants to connect with themselves, each other, and the world around them in profound ways.

The journey began with me dressed in an organic maker’s apron, signalling the hands-on, creative nature of the event. As participants approached the entrance, a scent bubble of

honey wafted through the air, whetting their appetite, piquing their interest, and hinting at the active and immersive experience that awaited them.

Figure 28: Greeting



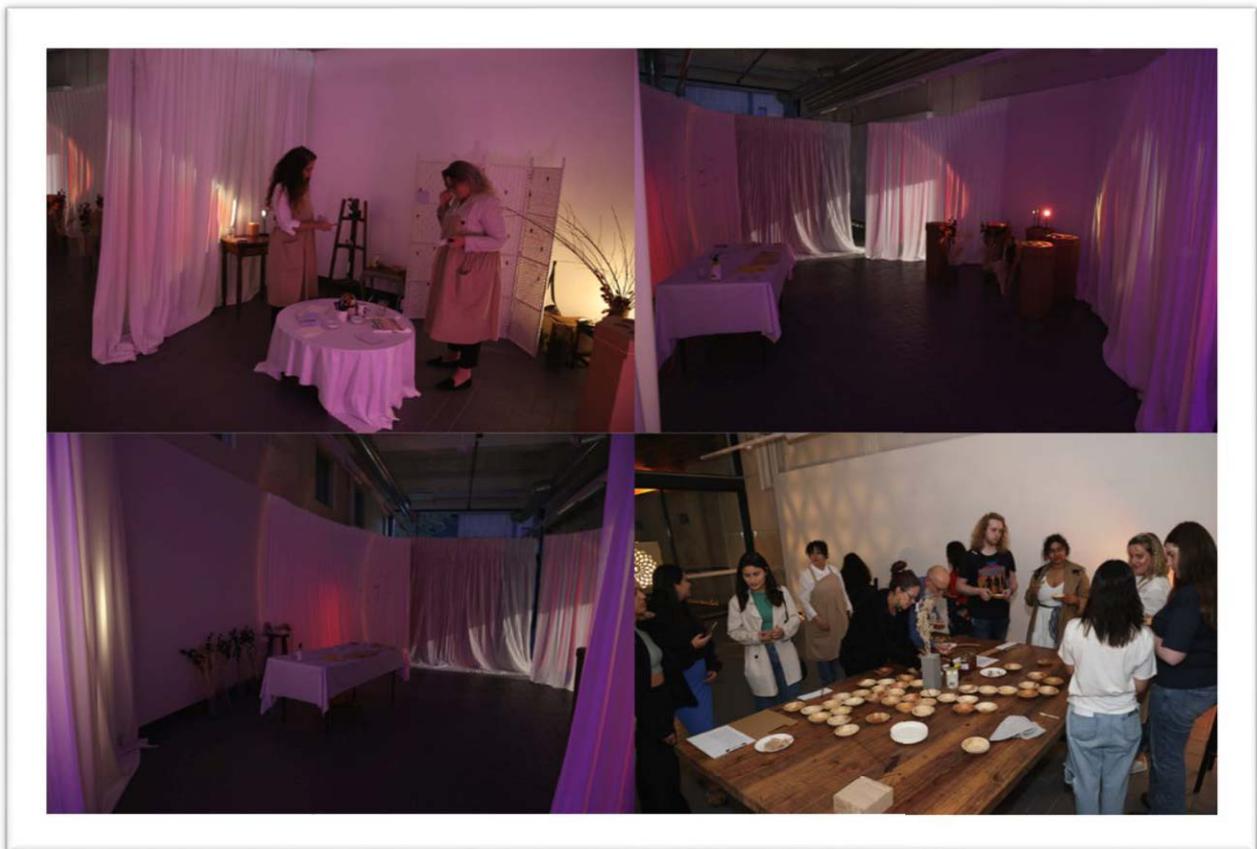
Dressed in earthy tones, I stand ready in my maker's costume, prepared to welcome participants into the immersive world of Fractals, where creativity and transformation await. Photo credit: Jason Kirk, used with permission.

As the gatekeeper to this enigmatic world, I played a crucial role in heightening the suspense and anticipation, carefully holding visitors at bay until the opportune moment to invite them to embark on a journey of transformation through the unknown. With a deliberate pause, I gauged their readiness, asking if they were prepared to step into this realm of mystery and discovery. Only upon their affirmative response were they granted passage, the curtain ceremoniously peeled back to reveal the path ahead, each unveiling adding to the anticipation and sense of wonder.

Once through the curtains, participants embarked on a journey along a path that concealed the next room, heightening the element of surprise and anticipation. The path

wound its way through rooms of varying sizes, each draped majestically to evoke a sense of awe and wonder. Low, dappled lighting emanated from behind the drapes, creating a cocooning atmosphere that enveloped participants in a warm, comforting embrace. This carefully curated lighting and the concealed path contributed to the transportive nature of the experience, guiding participants away from the everyday world and into a realm of sensory exploration.

Figure 29: Rooms' Staging



The rooms from left to right clockwise: The intimate scent room led to the spacious touch room and ended in the taste room showing how each room elicits its own emotional connection. Notice the use of light and varied room sizes to evoke different moods: the intimate, dimly lit scent room leads to the spacious touch room, which allows for expansive movement. The journey ends in the tasting room, where natural light from the window transitions participants back to the ordinary world. Photo credit: Jason Kirk, used with permission.

The first room, designed for the scent and watercolours experience, was an intimate and old-worldly space that invited participants to slow down, connect, and engage with their senses on a deep, personal level. Adorned with plush cushions and low tables, the room created a cosy, inviting atmosphere that encouraged a sense of closeness and shared experience. The soft lighting and warm colours further contributed to the feeling of comfort and safety, allowing participants to let their guard down and open themselves up to new sensory experiences.

As participants moved into the second room, dedicated to touch and wish-making, they were greeted by a larger, more open space filled with flowers and organic materials. The increased light and abundance of natural elements created a sense of entering nature's den, a space that invited exploration and discovery. Storytellers greeted participants here, adding to the sense of enchantment as they spun yarns that transported listeners to another time and place.

As participants entered the final room, bathed in the gentle glow of a moon-like orb and the soft, evening light filtering through the windows, they felt the grounding pull of the ordinary world begin to beckon them back. Yet, amidst this transition, they were greeted by a long communal table adorned with the essence of nature's bounty. The participant's senses were enveloped in a symphony of flavours as three wild honeys awaited exploration. Each honey, with its unique essence and story, invited participants to savour and compose a poem as an ode to bee.

Experience: Sensing and Doing

After meticulously crafting the transformative environment of Fractals through innovative set design, the stage was set for participants to immerse themselves in a series of embodied experiences that would ignite their senses and foster a mindset of deferring judgement. Each intricately designed room served as a gateway into a world of sensory exploration, inviting participants to engage with their surroundings and embrace new possibilities through hands-on activities and shared experiences.

Scent Room: Awakening Openness and Receptivity

Figure 30: Scent Room



From left to right clockwise: Being taken through the scent experience by the perfumer. Painting together while on cushions on the floor. Pinning up of the art. A close up of one of the paintings. Photo credit: Jason Kirk and used with permission.

In the first room, participants were greeted by a bespoke scent meticulously crafted by a perfumer to evoke openness and receptivity. Inspired by the concept of deferring judgement, this olfactory experience aimed to heighten participants' awareness, encouraging them to approach the experience with an open mind. With its earthy base and subtle uplifting notes, the scent acted as a catalyst for the deferral of judgement.

Immersed in the fragrant atmosphere, participants naturally released inhibitions and embraced the present moment with curiosity and wonder. The scent subtly guided participants to explore new possibilities and connections within themselves and their surroundings.

To enhance the sense of shared experience, participants were invited to express themselves through watercolour artwork. While the fluidity of the medium encouraged spontaneity, the scent provided inspiration, fuelling the creative process. Each brushstroke captured the essence of the scent, resulting in a collective artwork that symbolised the beauty of shared experience and the transformative power of deferring judgement. In this fragrant sanctuary, participants discovered the profound beauty that emerges when individuals come together in openness, allowing the scent to guide them on a journey of self-discovery and collective expression.

Touch Room: Engaging with Texture and Story

Figure 31: Touch Room

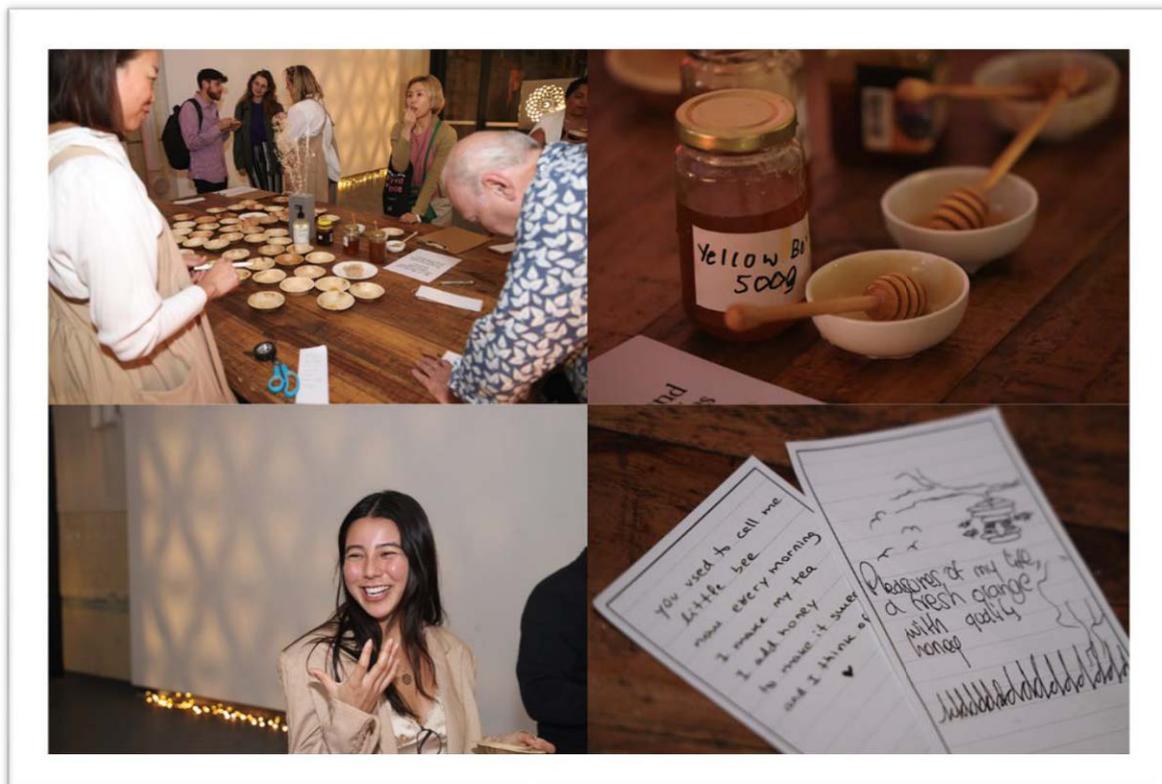


From left to right clockwise: A close up of the beeswax showing its texture. Participants hear the stories. Holding on to the beeswax. The pinning up their wishes for the future. Photo credit: Jason Kirk and used with permission.

Continuing the sensory journey, the second room invited participants to engage in tactile exploration by shaping beeswax tiles while being regaled by an Indigenous folk yarn celebrating the essence of the honeybee. The storytellers' presence added to the sense of enchantment, transporting participants to another time and place. The act of holding the textured beeswax and inhaling its warm, beautiful scent engaged both the tactile and olfactory senses, deepening the immersive nature of the experience. In a gesture of hope and aspiration, participants inscribed their wishes for the future onto organic seeded paper, nestling them within the beeswax folds before tying them to a white draped wall. This transformative act created a dynamic living sculpture that embodied the collective hopes and dreams of the participants, transcending the physical space to resonate with the spiritual essence of the journey.

Taste Room: Savouring Sweetness and Complexity

Figure 32: Taste Room



From left to right clockwise: The sampling of the honey. A close up of the offerings. The joy of savouring the honey. Odes to the honeybee. Photo credit: Jason Kirk and used with permission.

The final room culminated in a harmonious convergence of sensory delights as participants indulged in a flight tasting of three contrasting wild honeys, each meticulously selected to ignite a symphony of flavours on their palates. From the delicate floral notes of one variety to the rich, earthy undertones of another, participants were transported on a journey of taste, savouring the complexity and nuances of each honey's unique character.

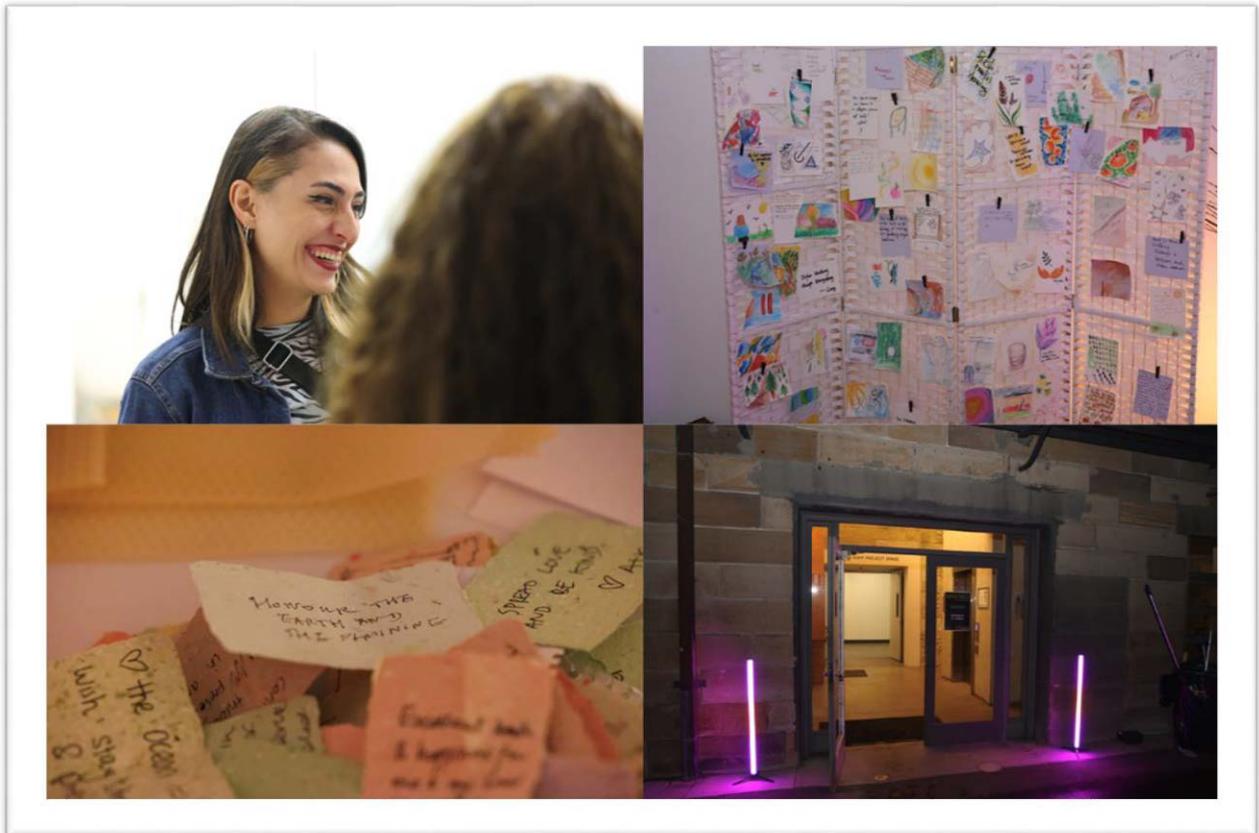
With each spoonful, the sensual joy of tasting honey enveloped participants, grounding them in the present moment and inviting them to immerse themselves in the experience fully. The sweetness of the honey, coupled with its depth and complexity, served as a reminder of the intricate beauty of the natural world and the symbiotic relationship between humans and the honeybee.

Following the tasting, participants were invited to express their visceral experiences through heartfelt odes to the honeybee. Each expression of gratitude became part of a poignant sculptural installation pinned with reverence upon a dedicated board. This communal act of creation and expression reinforced the experience's transformative potential, fostering a profound sense of connection and shared purpose.

Parting is Such Sweet Sorrow

As participants emerged into the chilly, crisp night, they were enveloped by the palpable sense of place, surrounded by the imposing presence of the 150-year-old gaol and the ancient Indigenous land on which it stood. The lingering echoes of history whispered through the shadows, adding an eerie yet compelling layer of mystery to the atmosphere.

Figure 33: Wrap Up



From left to right clockwise: The afterglow. A close up of the paintings. A close up of the abundant wishes. The entrance and exit to the Raymond Hoff gallery space nestled inside the old gaol walls. Photo credit: Jason Kirk and used with permission.

The profound impact of the sensorial journey they had just experienced allowed them to connect with this history and sense of place on a deeper, more meaningful level. As they gazed upon the weathered stone walls and felt the weight of the centuries-old narratives embedded within, they were reminded of the resilience of the human spirit and the enduring power of the land.

In this moment of reverent reflection, participants found closure in their journey of deferring judgement. The sense of place was engaging them with the history and significance of the location connecting to something bigger than themselves and the night. It was a moment of unconscious reverence, grounding them in the present moment and beyond.

Figure 34: Video of the Fractals Event



[Watch here](#)

7.5. Method Behind the Madness: Embodied Creativity

Throughout the Fractals experience, the significance of the hands, scent, and taste in the creative process and their connection to deferring judgement was carefully considered. By engaging participants in embodied, sensorial activities such as moulding beeswax, creating watercolour artworks, and tasting wild honeys, the event sought to activate the complex feedback loops between brain, body, and world, facilitating the suspension of judgement and the emergence of new creative possibilities.

In particular, hands play a crucial role in shaping the flow of thought and expanding the openness of the mind (Clark, 2008). By touching, giving form to materials, and engaging in symbolic gestures, the hands can suspend habitual ways of thinking and perceiving, allowing for the emergence of new possibilities and perspectives. Furthermore, scent uniquely evokes memories from further back in time compared to visual cues, thanks to the direct connection between the olfactory and limbic systems, which process emotions and memories (Cerulo, 2018). By engaging the sense of smell, Fractals sought to tap into this powerful emotional connection and facilitate the suspension of judgement.

Further, the act of tasting is a form of becoming, a process of transformation and metamorphosis that dissolves the boundaries between subject and object, self and other (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). By engaging the sense of taste, Fractals sought to reterritorialise

art into the body, compelling a deep, primordial engagement with the senses and facilitating the deferral of judgement (Dolphijn, 2006).

In this way, Fractals not only created an immersive and transformative environment through its set design and atmosphere but also invited participants to engage in a series of embodied experiences that deepened their connection to the senses and fostered a state of deferring judgement. By indulging in the realm of sensing and doing, participants were able to explore new possibilities, connect with themselves and others in meaningful ways, and tap into the transformative power of creativity and shared experience.

Learnings on the Delivery of the Fractals

The event seemed to suspend time. I thought we would have taken through more people, but because they were so immersed in the activities, particularly the watercolour painting and the wild honey tastings, they just wanted to stay. And in the spirit of deferring judgement, I did not rush them and let the evening unfold. This immersion in the lifeworld of Fractals allowed participants to bracket their everyday concerns and engage fully in the sensory experiences.

A palpable magic to the evening seemed to infect everyone present. My initial apprehension and stress from the afternoon, where our ambitious plans seemed overwhelming and tensions with the set designer simmered, were starkly contrasted by the serene, floaty feeling that enveloped me as the night unfolded. As the event progressed, it became apparent that the intricate details we fretted over mattered far less than the transformative surprise and atmosphere we collectively created. In a moment of surrender, I let go of my judgements and tensions, choosing instead to open doors and express gratitude to my set designer for their remarkable work. It was a poignant realisation that the true magic lay not in the set design but in our ability to embrace the present moment and collaborate harmoniously. As a symbolic gesture of closure to the tensions, we discreetly concealed her tools behind a curtain, signifying our collective commitment to being fully present and immersed in the now. That she was still putting the finishing touches as the guests arrived only underscored the dedication and passion that went into crafting this immersive experience.

As the hostess, I had to trust my six team members to deliver the experiences, different from how I briefed them or how we agreed, and let them have the flexibility to

move with it on the spot. It was a moving way of collaborating with the trusted realisation of deferring judgement on what I thought the event should be and letting it speak to us.

It was scary initially because I felt so much was riding on it from a research delivery. However, I knew from my experiences facilitating so many deferring judgement sessions that I have to go first and suspend my criticisms or needs and be there and appreciate the moment for what it was and let go of the disappointments that it was not perfect; it was the right environment for the right thing that was happening right now.

For instance, during the event, the scent room became overwhelmed as people were not moving on and instead lingering, chatting and revelling in the experience. Rather than reacting with frustration or trying to assert control, I embraced spontaneity and led them to start at the tasting experience and work backwards. This serendipitous detour afforded me more time with them. Assuming the role of a real estate agent, I guided them through the space as if on a tour. To my delight, they played along, and by the time we arrived at the tasting room, a new atmosphere of playful reverence and connection had connected us—from strangers to co-conspirators. It is a meta-deferring judgement where the focus shifts from me and my needs to holding space for the experience. This shift in focus demonstrates the embodied nature of deferring judgement, as it requires a conscious letting go of personal concerns and an attunement to the needs of the collective experience.

Describing the dynamic energy and connection between myself and the six individuals facilitating the experiences—two in each room—is challenging. Conversation was scarce amid the flurry of managing the crowd, yet an unmistakable connection was there like an invisible thread.

The presenters adeptly guided visitors through the journey of deferring judgement, creating an atmosphere brimming with warmth, laughter, and acceptance. Participants felt no pressure; instead, they were warmly invited to engage in whichever activity resonated with them. Whether painting, writing heartfelt messages, or simply immersing themselves in the creative ambience, every act of participation held significance—a celebration of communal creativity.

Small gestures, like the photographer's offer to stay for the entire event (despite being paid by the hour) and assist with clean-up, spoke volumes about the camaraderie and shared purpose that defined the Fractals deferring judgement experience. These acts transcended

mere roles and responsibilities, embodying the spirit of community forged within our immersive journey.

Transformative Journey of the Participants

The overall effect of Fractals on participants was transformative, beginning with nervous anticipation and culminating in a profound sense of groundedness and self-reflection. Personally welcoming and guiding participants into the space was crucial, allowing them to let go of preconceptions and embrace the possibility of transformation. This invitation kickstarted the deferring judgement process, encouraging them to experience themselves anew with wonder and curiosity.

As participants journeyed through the diverse rooms of Fractals, they underwent an emotional and psychological odyssey, with each creation serving as a testament to their transformative journey. In the scent and watercolours chamber, reminiscent scents and vibrant hues evoked childhood memories and connections to nature, fostering a sense of belonging and nostalgia.

The accompanying images captured the communal essence of their creative endeavours, revealing vulnerability and authenticity in self-expression. True creative exploration embraced judgement as a form of vulnerability, allowing for authentic transformation.

While static photographs attempted to encapsulate these experiences, they only scratched the surface of the lifeworlds traversed by participants. The artefacts they produced unveiled a tapestry of memories and a deep sense of unity with nature and the cosmos, articulating a yearning for liberation and self-expression. Through Fractals, participants rediscovered forgotten facets of themselves, embracing the journey towards self-discovery and creative freedom with open hearts and minds.

As participants entered the more open and expansive room of touch, where they listened to stories while writing wishes for the future, they were ready to emerge from their cocoon of perfume and art and dare to dream of a better world. With so much dystopia, it may seem indulgent to dream of a more utopian world, but the private act of encasing those wishes in the beeswax warmed by their hands lets their imaginations soar free. The wishes spoke to the power of recognising marginalised voices like Indigenous, feminine or more-than-human and celebrated their wisdom, fecundity and interconnections. The act of wishing

catalysed respect and reverence for radical alterity, those who are not us and also us—separate, yet intimately connected. Not to be underestimated is the power of a yarn, an Indigenous Australian inspired way of circular storytelling that can almost be chant-like in its effect; the touch of the organic paper and the lingering smell of organic wax on their hands readied them for the final experience.

The final experience is where the soaring hopes and dreams of the future found a lower, more grounded resonance in the world of taste and poetry. The visceral, indulgent, and slightly flirtatious act of being invited to gorge on three wild honeys helped people come fully back into their bodies to start their exit from the extraordinary to the ordinary world. Their odes were joyful, uninhibited, spontaneous expressions of love for the physicality of the world and evocatively captured the respect for nature’s ability to transform and restore. The communal act of tasting made this act of deferring judgement the perfect note to end their journey. Not surprisingly, people stayed after the event and continued the conversation in the large communal kitchen and lounge area in front of the gallery, making it a perfect way to end the evening of creativity, community, and possibility.

Fractals is a powerful example of how immersive, sensory experiences can facilitate the deferral of judgement to catalyse transformations individually and collectively. By creating a carefully crafted journey that engaged all the senses and invited participants to play, express themselves, and connect with others in new and meaningful ways, the event fostered a sense of openness, curiosity, and possibility essential to cultivating creativity and innovation. The artefacts created by participants serve as a powerful testament to the transformative potential of deferring judgement when people let go of their preconceptions to open up to the beauty and mystery of the creative process.

7.6. Fractals as a Creative Journey

Fractals was a culmination of my creative journey, a manifestation of my most profound insights and understandings about the power of deferring judgement and the potential for transformative, embodied experiences. It was not just an event, NTRO or research but a work of art, a performative expression of my vision and values, and a courageous invitation to others to engage with the possibilities of creative collaboration and personal growth.

I struggled to accept that it was a work of art, as calling it an NTRO was much less vulnerable. The label of “art” comes with a level of judgement and scrutiny that can be scary

and deeply uncomfortable, like being naked in a room of strangers and having nowhere to hide. But that is also why we do it: putting ourselves out there and exposing our ideas so they can create change that touches and moves others. But that means risking judgement, which can be confused with your worth when it is deeply personal. This creative process is the oscillating dance of deferring judgement, moving between judgement and using it to free yourself of it, a continuous cycle of fear and freedom that is never finished, nor would you want it to be.

Part of my fear was that I was not good enough to be an artist, and putting *Fractals* out there was a considerable risk, meaning I could have failed. I am crying as I write this, a realisation I did not expect. While I can point to a range of experiences and influences that helped guide the vision and give me the courage to take the risk, I must thank my supervisor, Barbara, who pushed me out of my comfort zone by involving me in her artwork and happenings. The involvement with the Superorganism Collective performances, in which she invited me to become a member, helped me feel my way into this work. They gave me the courage to do it on a scale I had never dreamed of before starting my PhD.

The tears keep rushing back when I speak to the desire to see if I could do it, to be an artist, even if no one else saw *Fractals* as an artwork. I kept positioning it as an event for research, but it was really an expression of me—my dreams, visions and vulnerabilities at play. The mask of “research” and all the other experiences kept nudging me to go beyond my self-perception as a creativity trainer and coach to see who I really am. While I do not know who that is, it does not matter. What matters is that my creative belief, capacity, and risk-taking have expanded, even as I remain vulnerable, doubting, and questioning. Nothing is resolved, and everything is—the process of deferring judgement, which is the creative process itself.

7.7. Summary

Reflecting on the journey that led to *Fractals* and the experiences of those who participated, I am reminded of the immense potential within each of us to create spaces for transformation, connection, and possibility. This project reaffirms the power of trusting our instincts, embracing the vulnerability of taking creative risks and expressing our values through acts of making and collaboration. *Fractals* is not merely an artistic endeavour or an academic project; it stands as a living testament to the generative capacity of deferring judgement.

More than an intellectual exercise, deferring judgement is a mode of being — a practice that invites us to approach the world and ourselves with openness, curiosity, and a willingness to dwell in uncertainty. It calls for authenticity and courage, recognising that true creativity emerges when we allow space for the unknown and lean into the tensions that arise between fear and possibility.

As you conclude this chapter, take a moment to notice your own responses. What shifts do you feel when you let go of judgement and open yourself to curiosity? How might this awareness shape your own creative practices, relationships, or ways of navigating the world? Can you trust your body's wisdom to hold the balance between vulnerability and freedom and, in doing so, discover new ways of creating and being?



Separate, Yet One

Trees are poems that the earth writes upon the sky.

—Kahlil Gibran, *Sand and Foam*

As the sun dipped below the horizon, the owl returned to her nest in the ancient oak tree, her feathers ruffled and her mind racing with thoughts of her latest adventure. She had flown far and wide, exploring new territories and encountering countless creatures, each more fascinating than the last. With a sense of pride, she settled into the crook of the tree's branches, feeling a sense of accomplishment and independence.

The old oak tree, his leaves rustling gently in the evening breeze, observed the owl with a mix of amusement and concern. He had watched her grow from a tiny hatchling to a magnificent bird of prey, her wings spanning an impressive breadth as she took to the skies each night. Yet, for all her wisdom and hunting prowess, the tree sensed a deep-seated restlessness within the owl, a yearning for something more than the confines of her forest home.

As the owl began recounting her latest exploits, the tree listened patiently, his ancient roots stretching deep into the earth, connecting him to the vast network of life surrounding them. He could feel the pulse of the forest, the ebb and flow of energy that linked every creature, every plant, and every stone in a delicate dance of interdependence.

The owl, however, seemed oblivious to this intricate web of connections. She spoke of her adventures as if they were hers alone, a testament to her strength and

cunning. She boasted of her ability to navigate the dark forest, to outwit her prey, and to soar above the treetops, untethered and free.

The tree sighed, his branches creaking with the weight of centuries. He knew that the owl's sense of separateness was an illusion, a product of her limited perspective. For all her keen eyesight and sharp talons, she was blind to the truth of her own nature, to the understanding that she was inextricably linked to the world around her.

As the night wore on, the tree tried to convey this message to the owl to help her see the beauty and complexity of their interconnected world. He spoke of the way the sun's energy flowed through the leaves of the forest, nourishing the insects that the owl hunted. He described the intricate relationships between the creatures of the forest and how each played a vital role in maintaining the ecosystem's delicate balance.

But the owl, lost in her own thoughts and ambitions, seemed not to hear the tree's words. She continued to regale him with tales of her solitary adventures, never once acknowledging the ways in which her life was intertwined with the lives of countless others.

As the first light of dawn began to peek through the leaves, the owl's eyelids grew heavy, and she drifted off to sleep, secure in her perch among the tree's branches. The old oak, his heart heavy with the weight of his wisdom, continued to stand watch over the forest, a silent guardian of the interconnected world that the owl had yet to comprehend fully.

He knew that the owl's journey of self-discovery was far from over and that she would need to learn many more lessons before she could truly appreciate the depth and beauty of the world around her. But for now, he would continue to provide her shelter and support, a steadfast companion in the face of her restless wanderings.

As the sun rose higher in the sky, the tree's leaves rustled in the morning breeze, a gentle reminder of the ceaseless dance of life that connected them all. And though the owl slumbered on, oblivious to the world beyond her dreams, the tree held fast to the hope that one day, she would awaken to the truth of her own interconnectedness and find peace in the knowledge that she was never truly alone.

Chapter 8

Deferring Judgement Framework

8.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the Deferring Judgement Framework, charting its development as a dynamic, living framework and explaining how it functions within collaborative creative processes. This chapter explores three key lenses—doing, feeling, and being—each playing a crucial role in fostering vulnerability, connection, and transformation through collaboration. Additionally, it examines the foundational importance of respect and compassion, emphasising how these elements create ethical spaces for change, with aesthetics acting as a powerful pathway to compassion.

Before engaging with this chapter, reflect on the following: How might deferring judgement evolve as an ongoing, lived practice rather than a static tool for creativity? What tensions emerge when balancing judgement and creativity, and how can you approach these tensions with openness and curiosity?

8.2. Emergence of the Deferring Judgement Framework

Reflecting on the personal impact of my research into deferring judgement, both before and after the Fractals NTRO, I sought a lens that could encapsulate these learnings—one that was not a static, step-by-step procedure. This creative struggle led to the development of the Deferring Judgement Framework, which captures the essence of transformative moments and provides a structured approach for navigating the complexities of deferring judgement in collaborative creative contexts.

Three pivotal experiences laid the foundation for the framework's emergence, each contributing to a deeper understanding of the intersections between creativity, vulnerability, responsibility, and ethical obligations.

I will first outline the framework I developed and describe the experiences that informed its emergence. The framework combines three interrelated pathways for entering a state of deferring judgement:

1. **Doing:** Focuses on making, creating, and acting within the deferral process.
2. **Feeling as a way of knowing:** Engages the sensing and intuiting aspects that surface other forms of knowing.
3. **Being:** Represents a relational and ethical state, acknowledging the shared responsibility for creation that transcends the self.

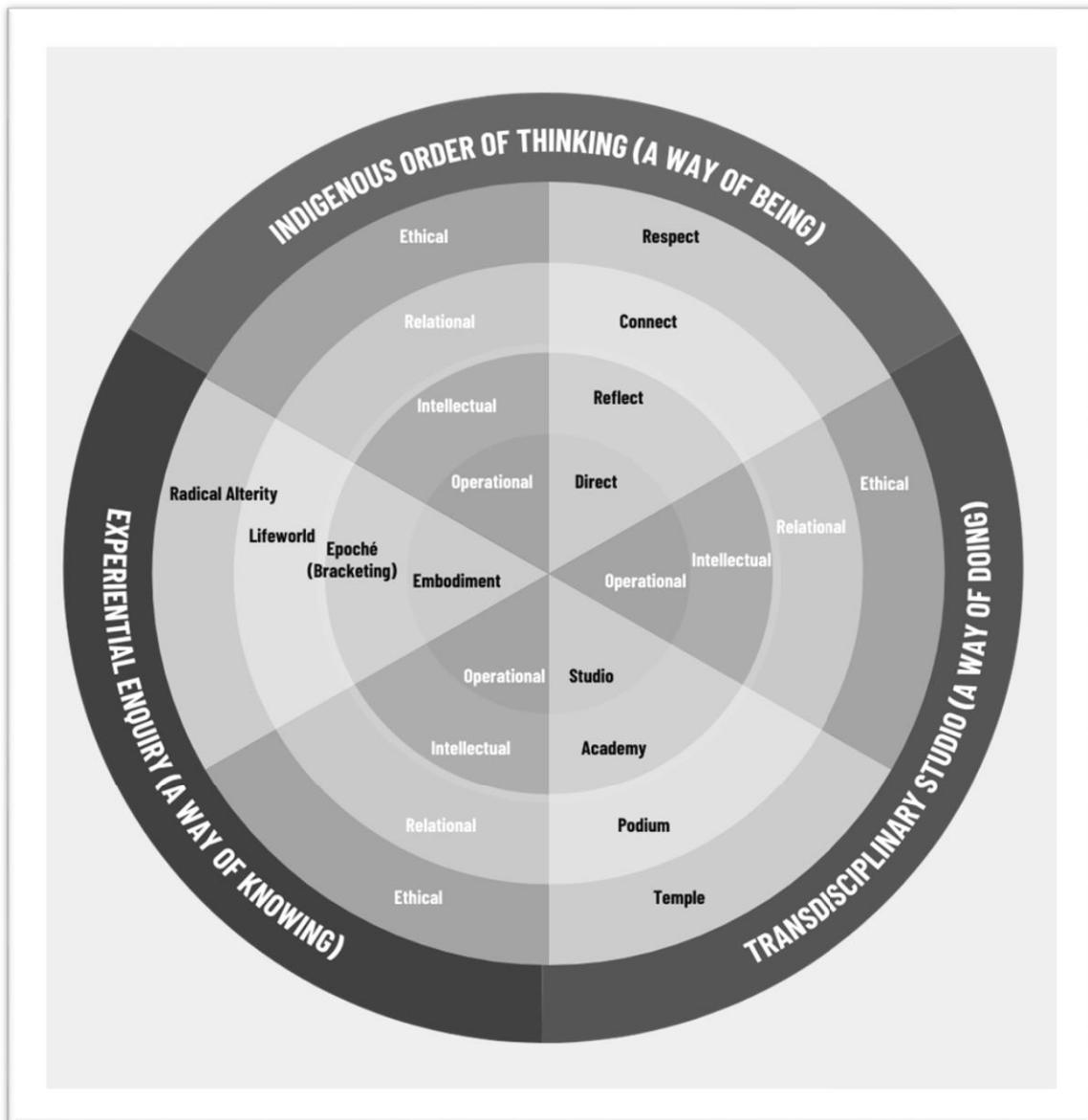
The doing dimension, which encompasses making, thinking, and sharing, draws on the Transdisciplinary Studio (Dorst, 2024), which informed my brief for Fractals.

The second pathway, feeling as a way of knowing, came into focus after Fractals through my exposure to phenomenology. This informed the development of the Experiential Inquiry lens, which connects the embodied and intuitive aspects of deferring judgement.

However, in the final stages of writing my thesis, a late-night realisation led me to the missing element: an ethical and relational lens drawn from the Australian Indigenous Order of Thinking (Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020). This framework provided an essential relational way of knowing that is profoundly ethical and grounded in Indigenous thinking. It starts with Respect, moves to Connect (recognising interconnectedness), then to Reflect (empathetic understanding), and finally to Direct (acting on knowledge with responsible awareness).

While each of these lenses offers a unique perspective, they all operate across four metaphorical dimensions: operational, intellectual, relational, and ethical (see Figure 35).

Figure 35: Deferring Judgement Framework (Original)



The Deferring Judgement Framework: Aligning Doing, Knowing, Feeling. Guided by the Indigenous Order of Thinking (being) (Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020), Experiential Inquiry (knowing), and the Transdisciplinary Studio model (doing) (Dorst, 2024) across four dimensions: Ethical, Relational, Intellectual, and Operational. The author recreated it using a Canvas Pro license in 2024.

Exploring and Expanding on the Three Lenses of Deferring Judgement

The elements of the Transdisciplinary Studio Model (Dorst, 2024) that serve as metaphorical lenses on the act of creation, which emphasise the making aspects of deferring judgement, are:

- **Studio:** The metaphorical and physical spaces where creative work occurs, such as a workshop, lab, Zoom call, or in the mind. It represents the transformative power of making connections through acting on creativity while deferring judgement of its outputs.
- **Podium:** The act of dialoguing that is the alchemisation of creativity. When collaboration occurs, connections are made, and ideas are manifested and transformed.
- **Academy:** The act of sharing knowledge in a way that can be used for other's benefit. Transcribing what is learned from the act of creation catalyses a deeper understanding.
- **Temple:** The metaphorical and physical spaces that create the wonder and awe inherent in expressing creativity and shared with deferring judgement.

The first a-ha moment that catalysed the Deferring Judgement Framework occurred during an intimate conversation with my supervisor, Barbara, as we walked and talked under the magnificent gum trees on the hallowed grounds of Sydney University. This sacred space, which I consider our “temple,” was the backdrop for many of our most important discussions. As we explored the challenge of incorporating the personal into my scholarly writing and the vulnerability inherent in the creative process, I realised that the concept of the Transdisciplinary Studio (Dorst, 2024) could provide a structure to navigate the vulnerability of autoethnography and create more universally applicable learnings about deferring judgement.

After the Fractals NTRO, the gestation period six months later gave rise to the Experiential Inquiry framework, which emphasises the feeling and knowing aspects of deferring judgement.

- **Radical Alterity:** Cultivating a deep respect for and openness to difference, otherness, and the unknown. Accepting multiple, equally valid

truths enables people to see the “other” in themselves, which is essential in deferring judgement.

- **Lifeworld:** Acknowledging the ethical obligations to understand people’s lived reality as complex, interconnected, and contextually situated. This shifting lens helps people see beyond their point of view and discern more possibilities.
- **Bracketing (Epoché):** Engaging in a conscious process of suspending judgement and bracketing judgements to embrace openness, curiosity, and wonder.
- **Embodiment:** Recognising the centrality of the body in shaping our experiences, perceptions, and understanding of the world and releasing and holding judgements that can catalyse creativity and possibilities.

The last element to emerge was the Indigenous Order of Thinking (Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020), which emphasises the relational and ethical aspects of deferring judgement:

- **Respect:** Begins with a profound acknowledgement of the limitations of one’s knowledge and a humility that recognises the sacredness of what is unknown and unknowable. Deferring judgement in this context involves understanding that knowledge is not owned but shared, and respecting the autonomy of those who hold it.
- **Connect:** Underscores that all things are interconnected. Creativity is catalysed by recognising the intricate web of relations. By withholding judgement and recognising the intricate web of relations, creativity is catalysed as individuals move through spaces with respect and humility. This relationality fosters an environment where new ideas and possibilities can emerge, grounded in a deeper appreciation of interconnectedness.
- **Reflect:** Invites dialogue, tension, and negotiation between different viewpoints. This dynamic process fosters co-creation and greater understanding. This practice of reflection aligns with the concept of “yarning” in Indigenous traditions, where storytelling is a communal process that allows multiple truths and perspectives to coexist, generating deeper understanding and respect (Yunkaporta, 2019).
- **Direct:** The final element, Direct, is about ethical action in response to knowledge gained. It involves recognising a responsibility to act on knowledge ethically,

ensuring the outcomes of creative and intellectual endeavours are negotiated by all and aligned with broader ethical considerations. This means that action is always taken with an awareness of its impact on all relations—human and more-than-human—and with a commitment to nurturing and sustaining these connections.

This missing piece emerged unexpectedly during a late-night moment of clarity. What I can recall is waking up around 3am and feeling compelled to revisit the Indigenous Order of Thinking, which had been a part of my earlier stages but had not yet found its place in the framework. This realisation illuminated the metaphorical dimensions of ethical, relational, intellectual, and operational issues that had previously escaped me.

Living Framework

The Deferring Judgement Framework is not merely an intellectual construct but a living, breathing entity that emerged from lived experience. It represents an evolving process, informed by the vulnerability and embodiment central to the creative process. This framework allows us to navigate the complexities of deferring judgement within collaborative creative contexts, offering more universally applicable insights.

8.3. Re-evaluating the Lenses Through Research Engagement

As I reflected on the original development of the Deferring Judgement Framework, further engagement with my research prompted me to reconsider several foundational elements. The section above, which I originally wrote before completing my research, emerged as an intuitive response to the metabolisation of my learnings. However, upon deeper reflection and critical engagement with the research, I realised that crucial elements needed to be added to my description. After delving deeper into the research and writing about it, I confirmed the framework's presence (much to my relief) and recognised key aspects I had initially overlooked.

What intrigues me most is that the Deferring Judgement Framework emerged from my intuition before I conducted a formal, judgemental-evaluative process of working through the research. This realisation prompted me to question how such insights could surface before a thorough evaluative process. Upon reflection, I believe the answer lies in the power of deferring judgement itself.

By allowing my intuition to guide me initially, I unknowingly tapped into what the Batesons (father, Gregory and his daughter, Nora) refer to as the “patterns that connect” and “warm data” (G. Bateson, 1987; N. Bateson, 2017). This more empathetic understanding, driven by intuitive processes, is not inherently better or worse than a more rational or analytical approach. However, I have found that in my practice, when I lead with the compassionate and reverent, intuitive side—a meta-deferring judgement—it often results in a more profound understanding than if I begin with a purely intellectual analysis. This realisation underscores my wisdom and respect for the Indigenous Order of Thinking (Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020).

I vividly recall my first encounter with Indigenous scholar Tyson Yunkaporta’s (2019) book *Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World*, a year before starting my PhD. I was struck by the observation that Western epistemic approaches to problem-solving often move in the wrong order, starting with Direct and ending with Respect. Now, I can see how profoundly true this insight has been as it incubated, gestated, and metabolised throughout my research journey.

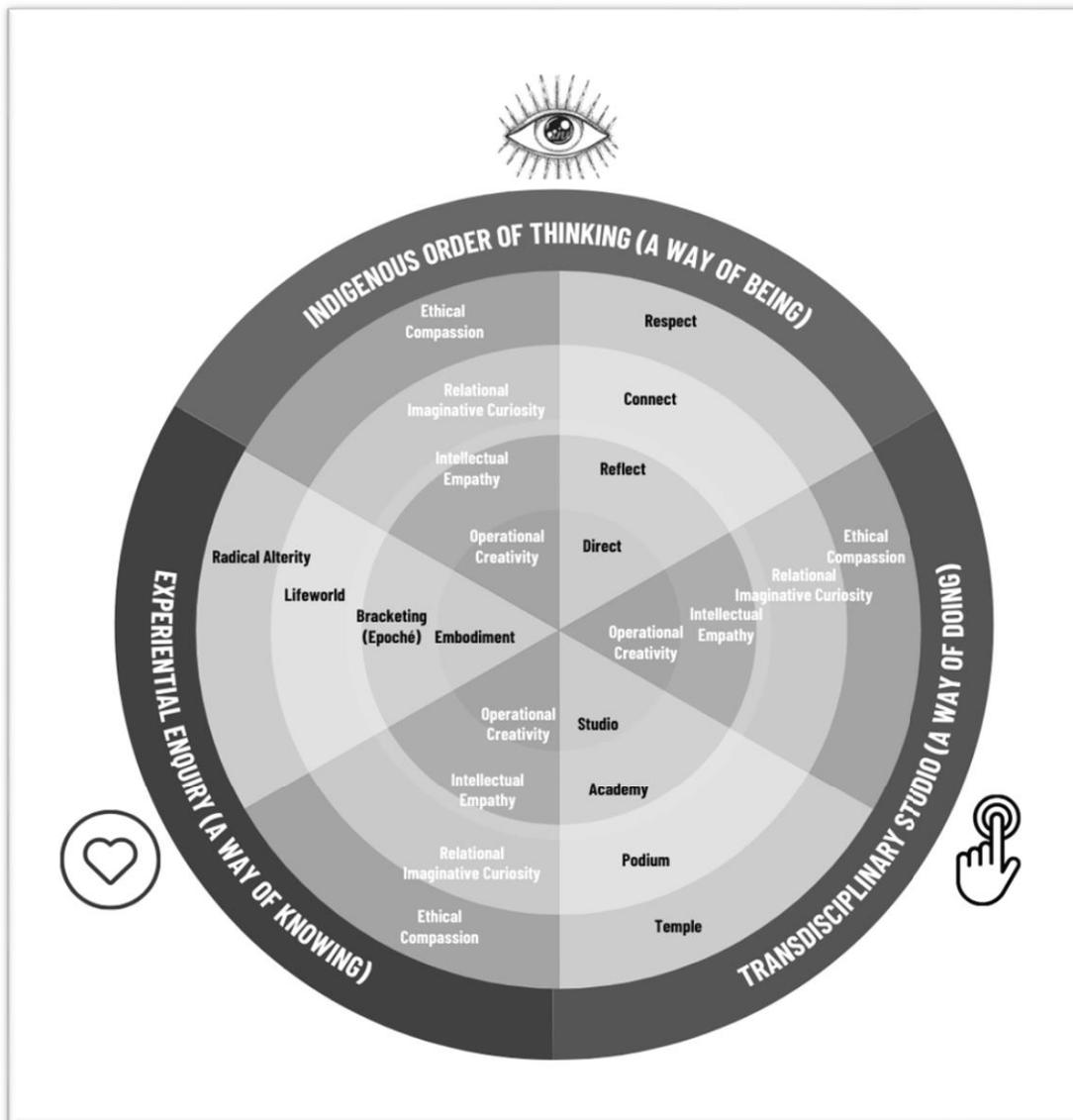
After completing the second part of my research analysis, I reviewed the Deferring Judgement Framework again and could suddenly see what bothered me about my earlier description. It became evident in reflection, though it had escaped conscious resolution for nearly two weeks.

I originally presented the elements in the wrong order! Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth (2020) clearly emphasise that the process begins with Respect, and yet I started the earlier models (not shown) emphasising the making element first. Second, I had presented the elements as separate entities without properly establishing their interrelatedness. Third, as I observed throughout my research, judgement would stymie the power of creation whenever I entered a more intellectual mode without following the process in the order that begins with Respect. The result was a facsimile that, while almost good enough, lacked emotional resonance.

Furthermore, upon revisiting my research, I discovered that what I had written at Stage Two added an even deeper layer to my understanding. I had defined deferring judgement as: “extending beyond the juncture where the present and future intersect. It invokes five potent emotions: creativity, curiosity, empathy, imagination, and compassion.”

This realisation led me to conclude that I needed to rewrite my initial description. In my eagerness to complete the task, I had bypassed the proper order in the interest of speed, diminishing both the work and myself by curtailing the necessary gestation period. It was then that I realised that the metaphor of the body was the most fitting lens to bring this idea to life (see Figure 36).

Figure 36: Deferring Judgement Framework (Revised)



The revised Deferring Judgement Framework has the emotions accompanying each phase and includes humanistic elements of spirit (eye), hands and heart to emphasise other ways of knowing. The author created it using a Canvas Pro license.

Imagine the body as a complex, interconnected system, with each part of the whole representing a different aspect of the creative process. At the heart of this system lies respect, the vital organ that pumps life-giving blood to all other parts of the body. Without a healthy, strong heart, the entire system is compromised, and growth becomes difficult, if not impossible. Respect represents the spirit and the whole body, not just as a physical entity but as a connection and relationship to the world, influencing and being influenced by it. It is a separate yet connected system where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The body moves through the world with reverence and vulnerability, often feeling naked and exposed. As it ages, transformation brings forth wisdom and knowledge.

The heart is the next vital component, serving as the body's lifeblood. At times, the heart sees itself as the most crucial aspect, supporting the best of the body. However, its introspective nature sometimes causes it to overlook the skin, the body's largest organ and the conduit to the outside world. Together, the heart and skin support the brain, which perceives itself as the kingmaker, making sense of the meaning of all the information it receives.

The brain's fondness for hierarchy and analytical abstraction is necessary for keeping the body safe. However, it will often override the heart and spirit in favour of the hands and doing, valuing its creative products as more remarkable than the act of creation itself. The hands possess everything; they occupy the most real estate in the brain, their touch warms the heart, and their making feeds the spirit. At their best, the hands are reverent makers of creation.

This metaphor aims to illustrate the interconnectedness between the many aspects and their creative tension, which is the most generative aspect of deferring judgement. By nurturing each part of the system and allowing for the free flow of energy and wisdom, doubt and judgement, people can cultivate a more inclusive, transformative, and ethically grounded approach to collaboration and innovation.

How the Deferring Judgement Framework Works

In this first pass of the framework, I want to use the artefacts from the Fractals event to demonstrate step-by-step how the Deferring Judgement Framework works. I will explicitly call out each section of the three lenses: the Indigenous Order of Thinking (a way of being), the Experiential Inquiry (a way of knowing), and the Transdisciplinary Studio (a way of

doing) (Dorst, 2024). Then, I will explore these aspects further through the overlapping metaphorical lenses of Ethical Compassion, Relational Imaginative Curiosity, Intellectual Empathy, and Operational Creativity to demonstrate how the framework is applied. This process will be more organic and fluid, rather than explicitly calling out each section, as the Deferring Judgement Framework is meant to be a reflective synthesis guide, not a procedural method or analysis tool. However, this first demonstration will call out each aspect to showcase how the framework works.

8.4. The Deferring Judgement Framework and Fractals

The journey of Fractals began with a sensory immersion guided by a meticulously curated scent and an array of watercolours. This scent, intricately designed to prompt a deferral of judgement, unfurled in two distinct phases: an earthy base fostering a sense of grounding, followed by citrus notes that kindled feelings of optimism and hope. In the first room's intimate setting, enhanced by floor cushions for a grounded experience, participants were prompted to translate their sensory encounter into evocative watercolour expressions (see Figure 37, displayed across multiple pages).

Figure 37: Fractals Watercolours



The scents bring
me home to
a deeper sense
of self!
wow!

X



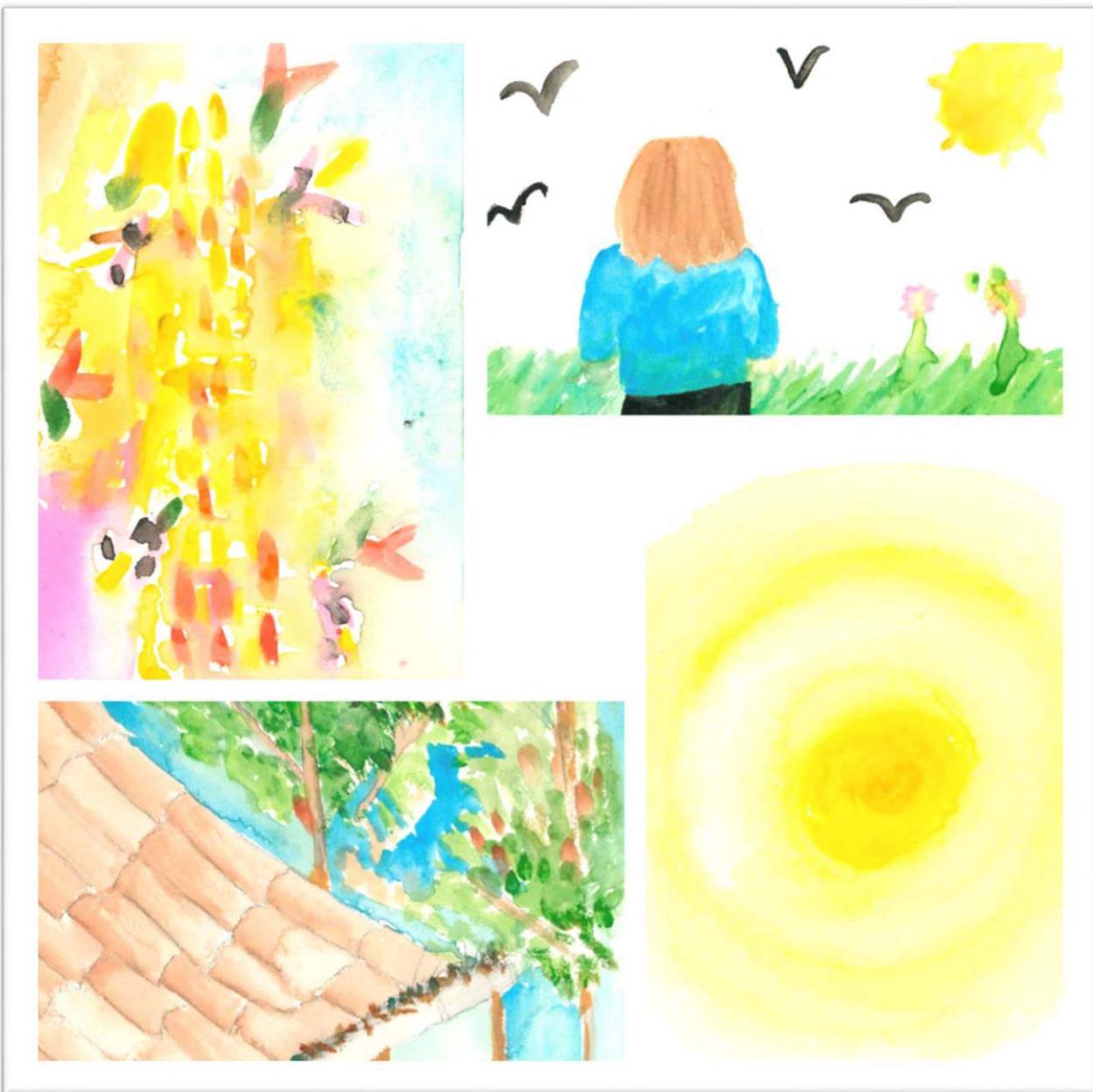
The smells of the Aussie
bush, relaxing weekend
away with friends,

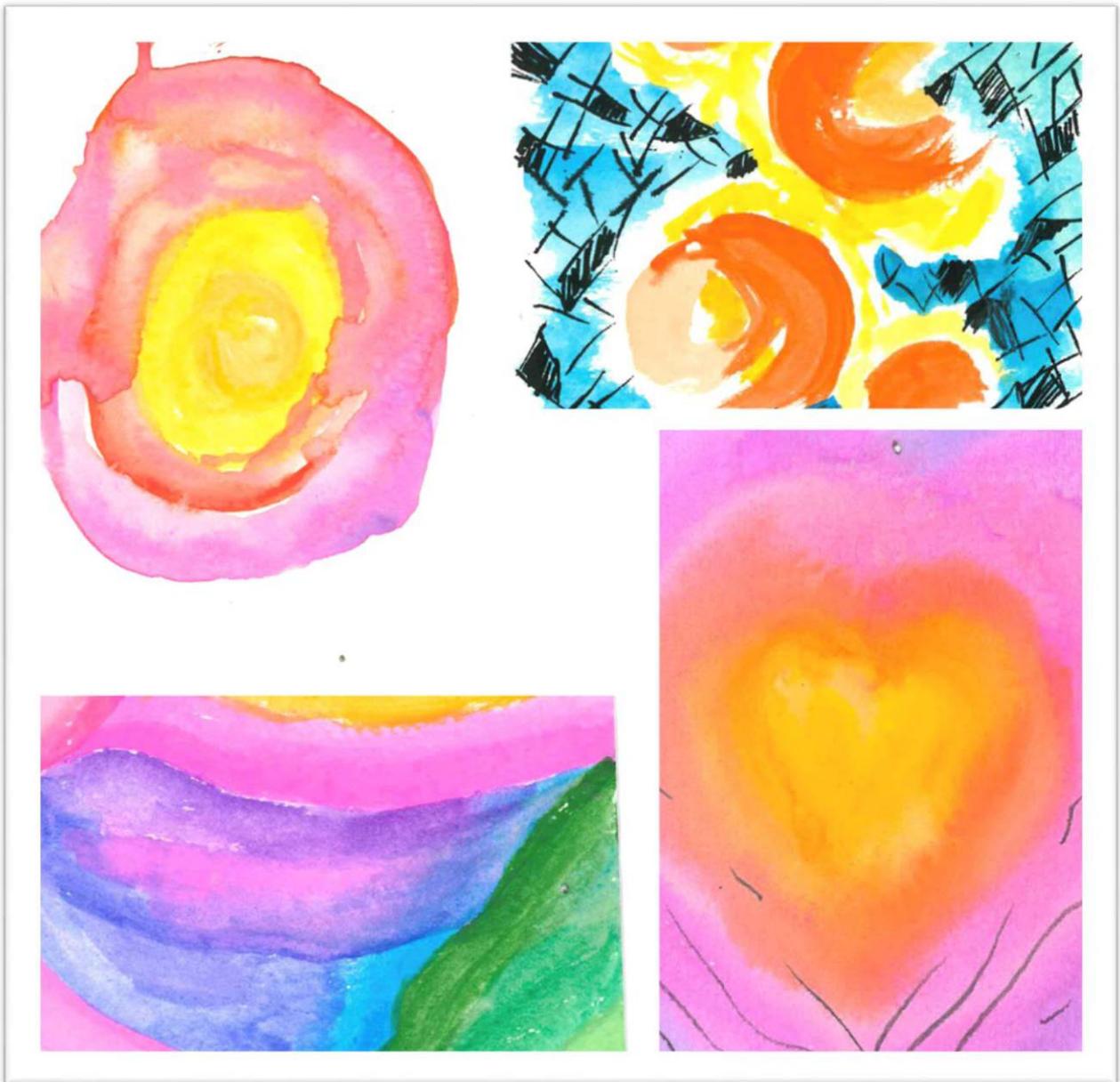
Freshness of the morning
as the fogs lift off the
valley floor

Better than a warm hug
of a frosty winter morn









This curated selection of watercolours from the Fractals event encapsulates cherished memories of a grandma's orange trees, the comforting embrace of a mother's touch, and the profound sense of self evoked by the captivating scent. From tranquil scenes of relaxation and renewal to vibrant hues symbolising growth and vitality, these paintings invite viewers to immerse themselves in moments of warmth, nostalgia, and rejuvenation.

The scent and watercolours from the Fractals event effectively correspond to the outer ring of the Deferring Judgement Framework, which encompasses Ethical Compassion, Respect, Radical Alterity, and the Temple.

The curated selection of watercolours encapsulates cherished memories of grandma's orange trees, the comforting embrace of a mother's touch, and the profound sense of self evoked by the captivating scent. These paintings invite viewers to immerse themselves in moments of warmth, nostalgia, and rejuvenation, reflecting the aspects of the scent and the inward journey of reconnecting to the self at a time when they felt maternal love and acceptance.

The watercolours depict a sense of integration, warmth, connectedness, love, and acceptance. They feature scenes of nature, vibrant colours evoking the sun's warmth and joy, and, in one instance, a figure with their back to the viewer, looking off into the distance at a beautiful scene. The absence of people or the portrayal of a person with their back turned suggests a focus on the self and integration of the individual with the environment.

Temple: A Safe Place to be Vulnerable

In the framework context, the Temple is not merely a sacred place of repose but an active, safe space where one feels vulnerable enough to be one's true self, protected and secure. The watercolours reflect this notion of the Temple by evoking a sense of self-love and acceptance through the depiction of maternal love and Mother Nature.

With its two-part design, the scent evokes a grounding, earthy aroma that transports participants back to their childhood, a time of unconditional love and acceptance. This connection to the past and the sense of being loved and valued aligns with the concept of Respect within the framework. As participants continue to experience the scent, it evolves into a citrus-like note reminiscent of sunlight, warmth, and hope, further reinforcing the positive, nurturing environment essential for self-discovery and growth.

The watercolours and the scent work together to create an atmosphere of Radical Alterity, where participants can embrace their unique selves without fear of judgement or the need to conform to external expectations. This acceptance of the self, fostered by the evocation of maternal love and the connection to nature, is a crucial aspect of Ethical Compassion, as it lays the foundation for extending that same compassion and understanding to others.

Through this preliminary demonstration, it is evident how the scent and watercolours from the Fractals event align with the outer ring of the Deferring Judgement Framework,

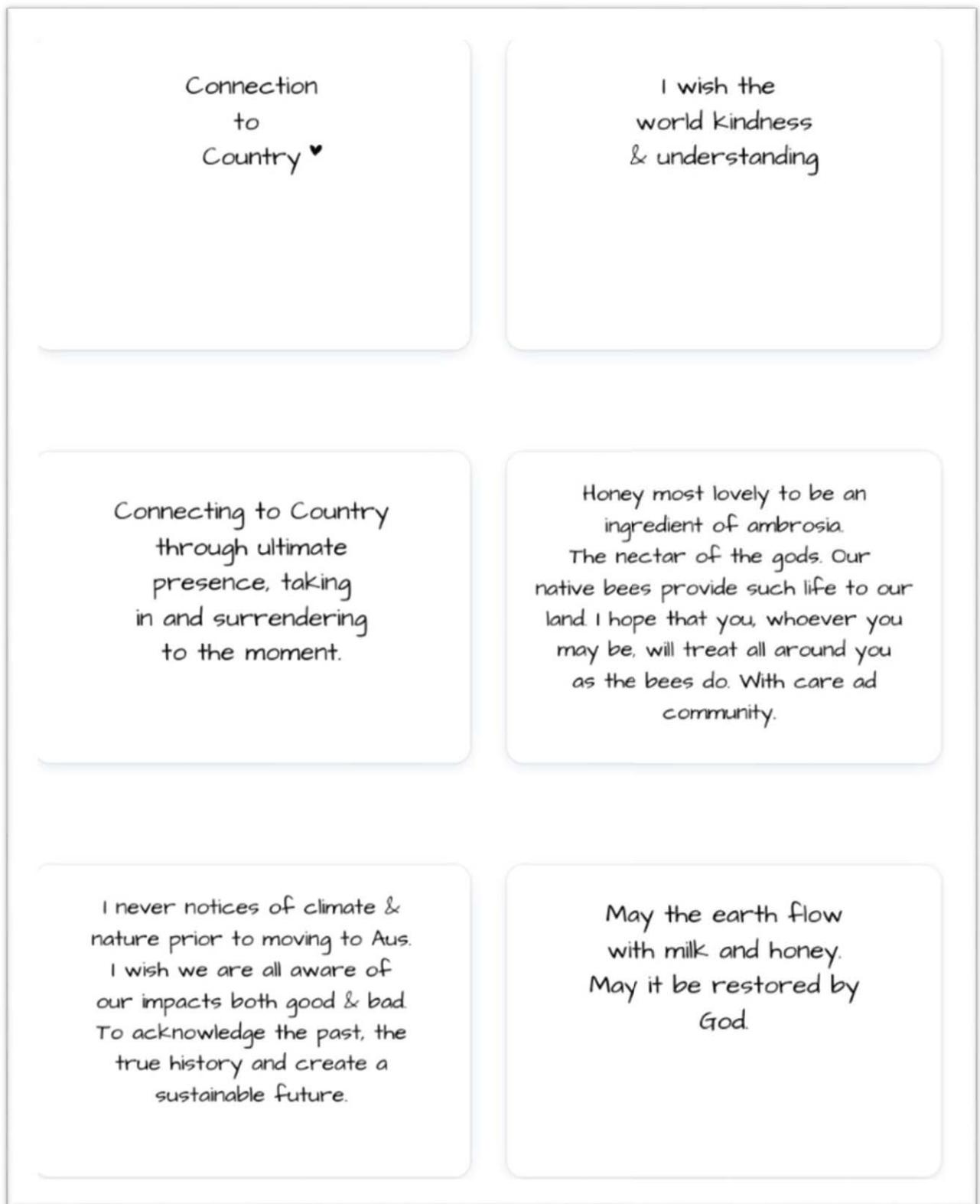
creating a safe, nurturing space for self-discovery, acceptance, and the cultivation of Ethical Compassion.

As participants moved to the second room for the touch phase, they were invited to hold beeswax and write their hopes and wishes for the future. This shift in the Fractals journey corresponds to the second ring of the Deferring Judgement Framework, which includes Connect, Lifeworld, the Podium, and Relational Imaginative Curiosity.

Power of Being in Relational Balance

The wishes created here reflect a deepening awareness of the interconnectedness between the self, others, and the environment. Participants express a longing for connection to their country, the present moment, and the world around them (see Figure 38, displayed across multiple pages).

Figure 38: Fractals Wishes



Find peace in
nature. Find a
tree and sit
underneath it
and breathe

I miss home. The sense
remind me of my country,
Cambodia. Sweet, Soury
Love, Passion & Compassion.
I will see you soon.

The circularity of
earth, nature and humans
all melting into a healing
heaven known as honey

I wish for
many more
years of
honey's
sweetness
on earth

I wish that
our Earth can
become more
sustainable for
many future generations
to live in.
Protect our world

le growth
sun
air
water

We owe
so much to
you humble
bee. I will
try harder
to protect you
I promise

That forest return
in cities like my
hometown in India.
Indian forests are
so spiritually sacred to
me.

my wish is
that we respect
nature and each
other as Yarran
did.

I love to float
in the ocean.
My ears submerged
beneath the water.
I Hope others find
this Joy in their
own way

you are enough
you deserve all the
good things in this
world

I wish
I could
see the
reconnection
of humanity
with the
nature
of these
times of
environmental
challenges

I wish people
will stop being
so cruel to
everything.

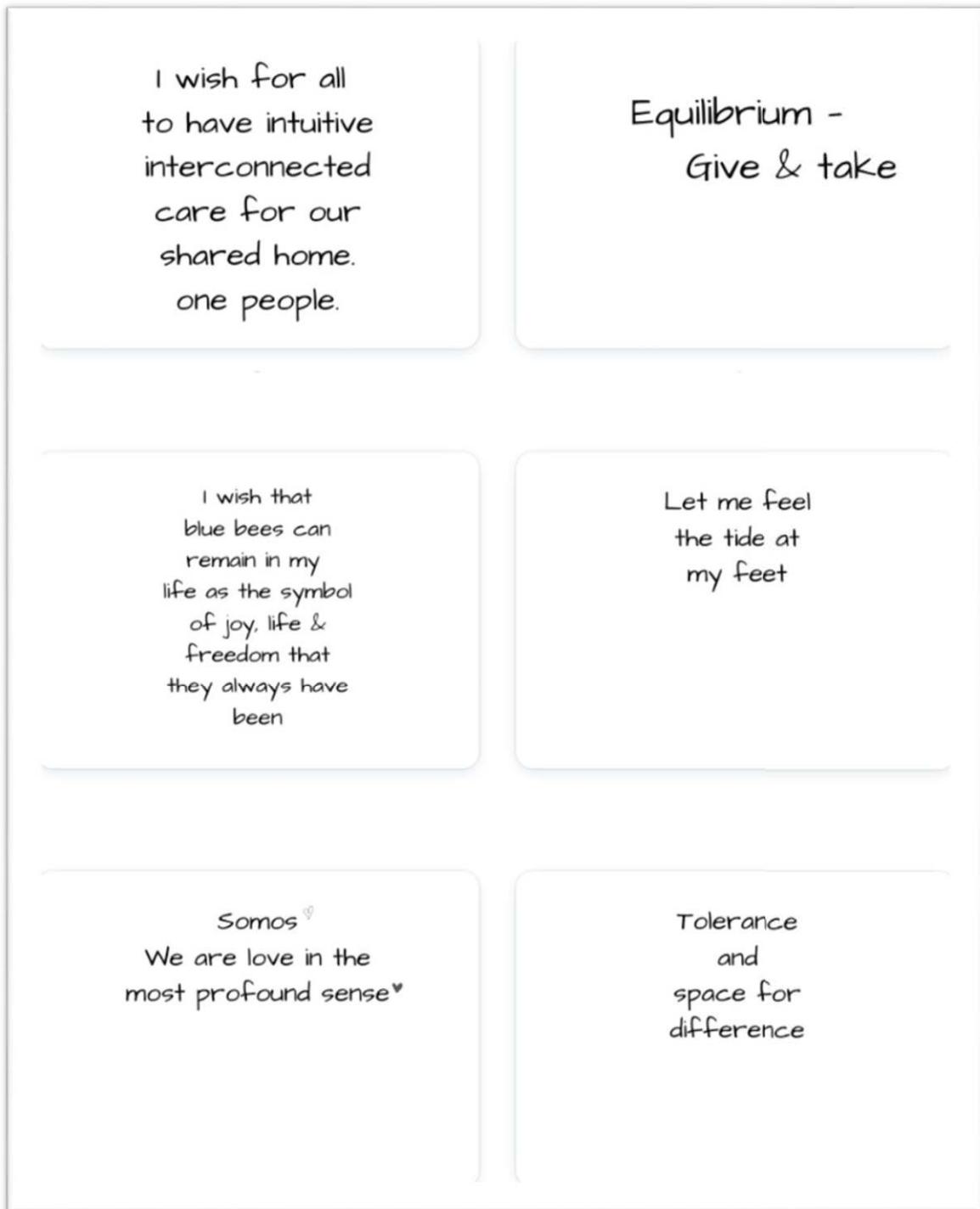
I like to smell
the warm notes
air in the spring
I like to feel the
cold water at the
beach. The sand
in my toes
and the salty
air

may the colour
of honey lead
us to our own
eternity - over
the hills & far away

I hope you find something
to laugh about
and someone to laugh with

So, my wish for you is to
Pay attention to the details of
life. Honey is not just a
sugary treat -- Just as food is
not just food. There are deeper
understandings to everything.
Be gentle, Be open and be aware.
There are little creatures like
Bees who are looking out for
you. My wish to you is to live
openly.

I will notice
the nectar
of flowers &
be thankful
for the
existence - for
me and for
the earth.



This selection of wishes from the Fractals events captures the themes of connection, responsibility, and accountability for co-creating a better world. Since the wishes were hard to read, I have re-created them using a Canvas Pro license keeping their tone and writing as close to the original as possible.

The wishes reflect a significant shift from the introspective focus of the first phase to a more relational and outward-looking perspective. Participants express deep longing for connection—to their country, the present moment, and the world around them. They wish for kindness, understanding, love, and care to be extended to all, mirroring the nurturing role of bees as pollinators and caretakers of the ecosystem.

Connecting is a Memory-Laden Experience

These heartfelt desires for connection and compassion align closely with the concept of Connect within the framework. The wishes demonstrate a growing awareness of the interconnectedness between the self, others, and the environment as participants situate their experiences within a larger context of shared hopes and responsibilities.

Moreover, the wishes reflect the participants' engagement with their Lifeworld, as they acknowledge the complex, interconnected, and contextually situated nature of their lived realities. By expressing their hopes and dreams in relation to their countries, their loved ones, and the broader world, participants demonstrate a heightened understanding of the ethical obligations they have to others and the planet as a whole.

The act of writing and sharing these wishes also aligns with the Podium aspect of the framework, as it creates a symbolic platform for participants to voice their aspirations and contribute to a collective dialogue about the future. The wishes serve as a means of stepping into a space of shared imagination and planting the seeds for future action and transformation.

Finally, the wishes exemplify the concept of Relational Imaginative Curiosity, as they showcase the participants' genuine interest in understanding others and exploring possibilities for positive change. The openness to embracing the present moment, the willingness to surrender to the experience, and the aspirations for a world filled with love, kindness, and restoration all reflect a curiosity that extends beyond the self, seeking to forge meaningful connections with others and the world at large.

In the third phase of the Fractals journey, participants entered a room bathed in moonlight, where they were invited to taste honey and write odes to the honeybee. These odes serve as the primary artefacts for this phase, revealing a profound shift in perspective and a deep appreciation for the interconnectedness of all life. The odes align closely with the

concepts of Reflect, Bracketing (Epoché), Academy, and Intellectual Empathy within the Deferring Judgement Framework (see Figure 39, displayed across multiple pages).

Figure 39: Fractals Odes



when the bees sneeze
 I fall to my
 knees
 In the breeze
 I seize
 the sweetness of
 the bees.

**YUM,
 TO BEE HELD
 BY HONEY.**

**THE FIRST TASTE
 WAS AS STRONG
 AS IT WAS
 GENTLE.
 A MOMENT TO
 BE WITH A
 GIFT FROM
 NATURE...**

**YUM YUM
 YUM.**

Thanks, bees.
 So clever &
 talented. for
 many reasons,
 but mostly
 HONEY.
 The best
 version of
 sugart in all
 nature.
 A life without
 honey is awful,
 a life without
 bees is
 unthinkable.

To the blessed bee
 how special you
 are
 to me
 and the flowers,
 and the plants,
 and the seeds,
 May you thrive
 and live many
 lives
 and be
 remembered
 for how you
 forever
 thrived.



Bees,

You're vibrant
 You're bold
 You're creators
 You're happiness
 You're energy
 You're childhood
 You're memories
 You're comfort
 You're you



BEEES
 ARE
 A
 REMINDER
 THAT
 OUR
 MOST IMPORTANT
 ARTWORK
 WILL
 ALWAYS
 BELONG
 TO
 NATURE



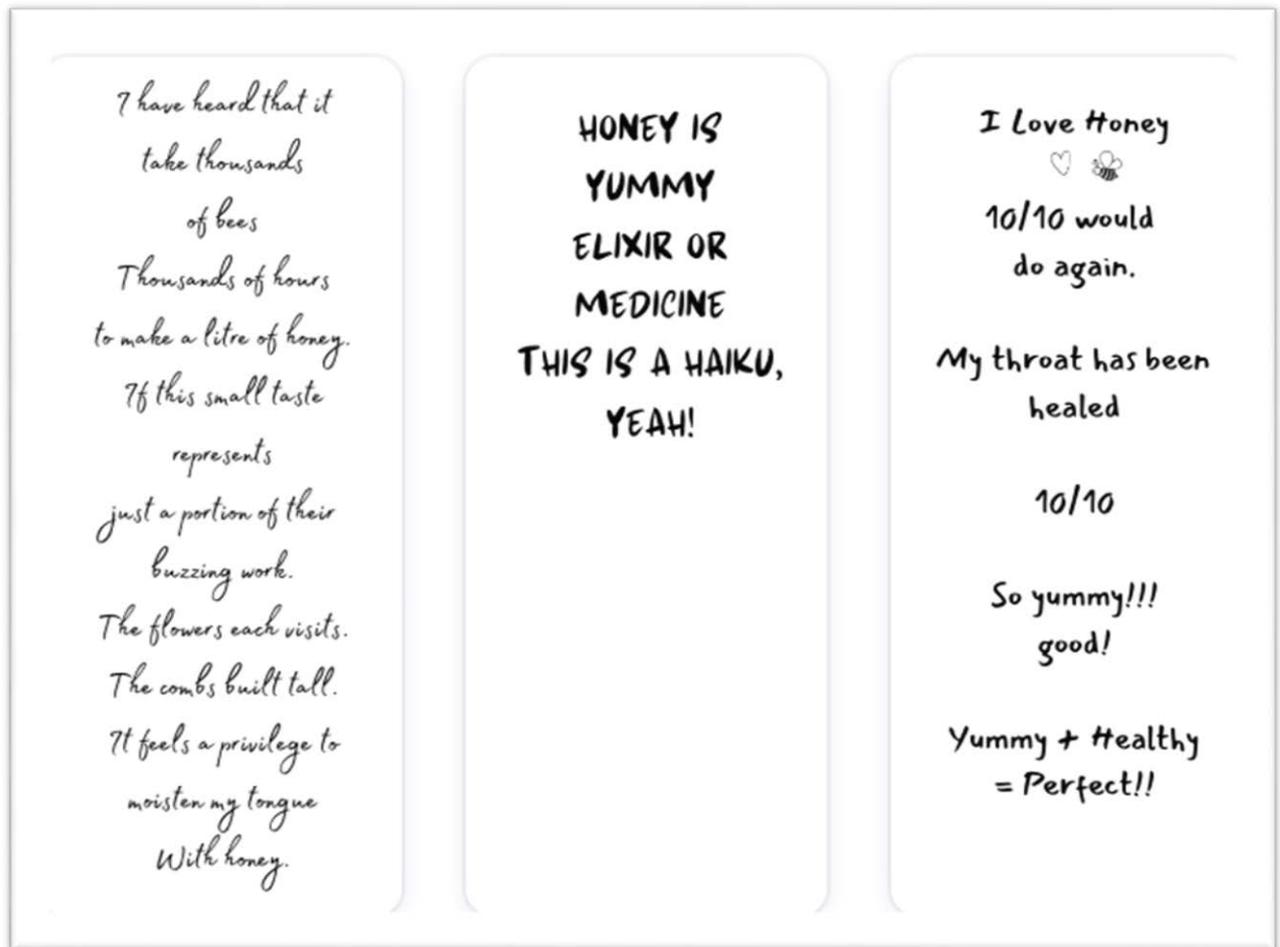
Healing -- vibing
Powerful in a
tribe and
powerful alone
flavour spread



Bees are
beautiful



An ode
to simplicity
childhood
sticky fingers
oozing
comfort
sweet
pleasure
love ♡



This selection of odes to the honeybee generated from the tasting part of the Fractals event captures the themes of gratitude, appreciation, and joy. Since the odes were hard to read, I have re-created them using a Canvas Pro license keeping their tone and writing as close to the original as possible.

The act of tasting honey and reflecting on the honeybee's vital role in the ecosystem encouraged participants to engage in Epoché, or bracketing, as they consciously suspend their preconceptions and judgements to embrace a sense of openness, curiosity, and wonder. This bracketing process allowed them to approach the experience with fresh eyes and fully immerse themselves in the moment, as evidenced by the odes that remarks, "You're childhood, You're memories, You're comfort, You're you."

Compassion Creates an Appreciation of the "Other"

The odes reflect a deep connection and appreciation for the honeybee's tireless work and essential contribution to the world. Participants acknowledge the thousands of hours and the

collective effort required to produce even a tiny amount of honey, recognising the privilege of tasting the fruits of the bees' labour. This recognition aligns with the concept of Reflect within the framework, as participants pause to consider their place within the more extensive web of life and the profound interconnectedness of all beings.

Moreover, the odes demonstrate a keen awareness of the honeybee's significance beyond its role as a producer of honey. Participants recognise the bee's importance to flowers, plants, and seeds and express a desire for the bee to thrive and be cherished for its vital role in the ecosystem. This understanding of the bee's broader impact and the participants' ability to see the world from the bee's perspective aligns with the concept of Intellectual Empathy within the framework.

Intellectual Empathy involves a genuine attempt to understand and appreciate the world from another's point of view, even if that other is a non-human entity. The odes showcase this empathy as participants imagine the bee's experiences, its relationships with other elements of nature, and its enduring legacy. By stepping into the bee's world and acknowledging its intrinsic value, participants demonstrate a capacity for empathy that transcends the human realm and embraces the more-than-human world.

Finally, the odes represent a form of knowledge creation and sharing that aligns with the Academy aspect of the framework. By articulating their insights, reflections, and appreciations through the medium of poetry, participants contribute to a collective understanding of the honeybee's significance and the interconnectedness of all life. The odes serve as a means of capturing and disseminating this knowledge, inviting others to share in the wonder and reverence for the bee and its place in the larger ecosystem.

The final phase of the Fractals journey, which aligns with the concepts of Direct, Studio, and Embodiment within the Deferring Judgement Framework, is evident in the participants' actions and reflections after the event. Many participants express a sense of groundedness and a desire to linger in the space, gravitating towards the kitchen and lounge areas adjacent to the Fractals room. Even the photographer's decision to stay behind and assist with the clean-up process reflects a deeper engagement with the experience and a sense of responsibility towards the collective.

These actions and sentiments align with Operational Creativity within the framework as participants move into their bodies with greater intention and awareness of their place and impact on the world. The sense of groundedness and the desire to remain in the space

suggests a heightened attunement to the present moment and a willingness to engage with the immediate environment in a more meaningful way.

Moreover, the photographer's act of staying behind to help with the clean-up process reflects a shift from a focus on individual experience to a sense of shared responsibility and collective care. This shift aligns with the Studio aspect of the framework, as it recognises the collaborative nature of the creative process and the importance of contributing to the larger whole.

Compassion Becoming "Us-Two"

As I reflect on the entirety of the Fractals' journey through the lens of the Deferring Judgement Framework, I can see a clear progression from focusing on the self to a broader understanding of one's place in the world and the value of the more-than-human. The journey begins with an inward exploration of the self and reconnection with memories of maternal love and acceptance, as evidenced by the watercolours and the scent in the first phase. This introspective phase aligns with the concept of "me" and the recognition of one's own uniqueness and inherent worth.

As the journey progresses, the focus shifts towards a sense of connection and responsibility towards others and the environment, as reflected in the wishes created during the touch phase. This shift represents a movement from "me" to "we" as participants situate their experiences within a larger context of shared hopes and concerns.

Finally, the odes to the honeybee in the third phase and the actions taken after the event represent a further evolution towards the Australian Indigenous concept of "us-two" (Yunkaporta, 2019). This concept goes beyond a simple recognition of the other and emphasises a deep sense of interconnectedness, collaboration, and weaving together diverse perspectives. The odes and the subsequent actions reflect this sense of "us-two," as participants demonstrate a profound appreciation for the honeybee's role in the ecosystem and a willingness to engage with the world in a more collaborative and responsive way.

The Deferring Judgement Framework provides a valuable perspective for understanding and expressing the transformative journey offered by the Fractals experience. Connecting the event's elements with the framework's various lenses and aspects makes a progression from Ethical Compassion to Relational Imaginative Curiosity, Intellectual Empathy, and Operational Creativity observable. Additionally, the framework encompasses

all aspects of the Indigenous Order of Thinking, Experiential Inquiry, and Transdisciplinary Studio. This alignment highlights the more profound significance of the Fractals event as a driver for personal and collective change. It encourages participants to shift their focus from themselves to a broader awareness of their role in the world and their duty towards the natural environment.

It is essential to recognise that this is just the beginning of a deeper, more organic exploration of the Fractals event and my practice through the lens of the Deferring Judgement Framework. In the following sections, I will delve further into the artefacts, drawing connections to personal practice and relevant research to uncover new layers of meaning and insight. The framework will guide this process of reflective synthesis, but it will also remain open to the emergent possibilities and connections that arise along the way.

Key Takeaways

The Fractals artefacts powerfully demonstrate how the Deferring Judgement Framework can be used to facilitate transformative creative collaborations and personal growth. The watercolours evoke feelings of warmth, integration, connectedness, love, and self-acceptance, aligning with the Temple's purpose of creating a safe, vulnerable space. The scent's earthy and citrus notes transport participants to childhood memories of unconditional love, fostering respect and providing a nurturing environment for self-discovery. Together, the watercolours and scent cultivate an atmosphere of Radical Alterity, allowing participants to embrace their uniqueness without fear of judgement or needing to conform.

This sets the stage for Ethical Compassion by encouraging self-acceptance and love, which extends outward as compassion for others. The wishes express a profound shift in relating to others and the environment, exemplifying Connection, engagement with the Lifeworld, and Relational Imaginative Curiosity. Sharing these wishes on the Podium gives voice to aspirations and plants seeds for future transformation. The odes to the honeybee reveal deep Reflection, the bracketing of judgements (Epoché), and the sharing of insights (Academy) about interconnectedness. Imagining the bee's world showcases Intellectual Empathy that transcends the human domain.

Post-event activities, such as lingering and the clean-up process, reflect Operational Creativity, an embodied awareness of one's role and impact. This Operational Creativity

aligns with the Studio aspect, recognising the collaborative and collective nature of the creative process.

Implications for the Deferring Judgement Framework

It provides a structured yet flexible guide for reflective synthesis on transformative creative journeys. By offering a holistic, multi-layered perspective that integrates Indigenous wisdom, experiential learning, and transdisciplinary practices, it illuminates the progression from self-focus to a “we” consciousness and ultimately to an “us-two” ethos of collaboration and interconnectedness.

“Us-two” is an Australian Indigenous concept emphasising relationships and interconnectedness (Yunkaporta, 2019). The term underscores the idea that identities and existences are defined through relationships with others rather than being independent and isolated. In this context, “us-two” highlights the interdependent and relational nature of being, stressing that individuals are inherently connected to others and their environment.

This approach highlights the transformative potential of cultivating ethical compassion, respect, curiosity, empathy, and embodied awareness. It demonstrates how creativity can catalyse personal growth and foster an expanded worldview that encompasses the self, others, and the more-than-human world. Prioritizing the creation of nurturing spaces that allow vulnerability and non-judgmental self-expression is seen as a crucial first step.

Furthermore, it reveals the value of symbolic acts like art-making and wish-sharing for connecting to deeper truths. It underscores the importance of intellectual engagement, reflection, and knowledge-sharing in sustaining transformations. The framework suggests an expanded role for facilitators in holding space, modelling ethical behaviour, and guiding meaning-making processes. By doing so, it opens possibilities for transdisciplinary research and the development of new pedagogical models that integrate the framework’s principles.

Honouring the Foundational Role of Respect

The outer ring of the Deferring Judgement Framework, encompassing Respect, Ethical Compassion, Radical Alterity, and the Temple, serves as the bedrock upon which the entire transformative journey rests. Without establishing a solid foundation of self-respect, openness to different truths, and the creation of nurturing spaces for vulnerability, the subsequent stages of connection, reflection, and embodied action become fragile and

unsustainable. Therefore, it is crucial to deeply examine and honour the multidimensional aspects of Respect, drawing from both Western and Indigenous Australian wisdom traditions.

In this section, I delve into the foundational importance of Respect through the lens of the Fractals experience and beyond. By exploring Respect from varying vantage points, including personal narratives, scholarly insights, and the powerful storytelling of Indigenous artist Archie Roach, this section embraces the ethos of “us-two” a relational understanding that weaves together diverse knowledge systems. This pluralistic approach not only enriches the comprehension of Respect but also models the very essence of Radical Alterity and Ethical Compassion that the framework seeks to cultivate.

Respect and the Other

The Fractals experiential event, particularly the use of scent and the creation of watercolour paintings, is a powerful exploration of the concepts of Respect, Ethical Compassion, Radical Alterity, and Temple. By engaging participants’ senses and inviting them to express themselves through art, Fractals creates an environment that fosters presence, connection, and non-judgement.

The sense of smell plays a crucial role in this process. As one of the oldest senses in human evolution, smell has a direct and potent effect on emotions and memory due to its connection with the brain’s temporal lobe (Magsamen & Ross, 2023). The carefully designed scent used in Fractals, with its two-part component of earthy and citrus notes, evokes memories and emotions associated with childhood, nurturing, and unconditional love. This olfactory experience helps participants to access a state of openness and vulnerability, essential for engaging with the deeper aspects of the self and others.

The act of creating watercolour paintings in response to the scent further enhances this process. As participants engage in the aesthetic experience of making art, they enter a meditative state in which the parts of the brain responsible for judgement and self-criticism are quieted (Magsamen & Ross, 2023). This art-making allows them to access a more generous, perspective-taking point of view, fostering Ethical Compassion and Radical Alterity.

Aesthetics are a Pathway to Compassion

Creating watercolour paintings in response to scent deepens the experience of deferring judgement by fostering a meditative state. During this creative process, participants quiet the

brain regions responsible for judgement and self-criticism, enabling a more open, perspective-taking point of view. This state facilitates Ethical Compassion and Radical Alterity—participants’ ability to embrace otherness and connect with their personal experiences and broader human emotions.

This process aligns with aesthetic theories that highlight how sensory engagement, emotional rewards, and meaning-making interact to shape people’s aesthetic experiences (Magsamen & Ross, 2023). Engaging with the sensory and emotional aspects of art-making, participants could move beyond self-judgement, tapping into deeper feelings of empathy and respect for themselves and others. This inner work of cultivating self-respect becomes a foundation for relational creativity and ethical engagement in broader contexts.

8.5. Respect’s Deeper Origins

This realisation coincided with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese’s call for increased funding to reduce domestic violence in Australia, pledging nearly \$1 billion to support women in domestic violence situations where they are emotionally (deepfake pornography) and physically disrespected (Chrysanthos, 2024).

Serendipitously, an op-ed article by journalist and academic Waleed Aly in the Sydney Morning Herald was sent to me. This fortuitous connection underscored the importance of remaining open and connected, as it allowed me to recognise the value of seemingly unrelated insights and experiences.

The article expressed Aly’s (2024) scepticism of the Prime Minister’s initiatives, as he was worried that the underlying belief was that men’s disrespect towards women causes violence. However, he felt, based on James Gilligan’s work, that it was men feeling disrespected that caused violence. Gilligan’s (2003) findings on violence, shame, and the importance of empathy align with the consequences of a lack of self-respect. His work with hardened, violent criminals demonstrates how continuous disrespect, especially in early childhood, usually leads to violence.

In stark contrast, I can see how the watercolours’ evocation of childhood and nostalgia underscores this connection of respect for self. In comparison, Gilligan’s (2003) research reveals how a lack of it leads to a violent, emotionally dead self, with individuals often engaging in self-harm as a desperate attempt to feel something.

In Gilligan's (2003) extensive exploration of prisons and mental hospitals spanning over three decades, he unearthed a recurring theme behind the violence: the quest for respect. Each incarcerated individual echoed a common refrain when asked about their violent actions—"He dis'ed me"—a phrase so ingrained in their lexicon that it became a shorthand for perceived disrespect.

One particularly poignant encounter Gilligan (2003) relates encapsulates this profound craving for respect and the destructive lengths people will go to ensure it. A prisoner was locked in a relentless battle with authority figures; each punishment met with escalating violence. Gilligan relates the following:

When I saw this prisoner I asked him, "What do you want so badly that you are willing to give up everything else in order to get it?" It seemed to me that this was exactly what he was doing. In response, this man, who was usually so inarticulate that it was difficult to get a clear answer to any question, astonished me by standing up tall, looking me in the eye, and replying with perfect clarity and a kind of simple eloquence: "Pride. Dignity. Self-esteem." And then, speaking more in his usual manner, he added "And I'll kill every motherfucker in that cell block if I have to in order to get it." He went on to describe how the officers were, he felt, attempting to strip away his last shred of dignity and self-esteem by disrespecting him, and said, "I still have my pride and I won't let them take that away from me. If you ain't got pride, you got nothin'." He made it clear to me that he would die before he would humble himself to the officers by submitting to their demands.

Life was less critical than safeguarding his essence at any cost, refusing to relinquish the very core of his being. Gilligan's (2003) narrative poignantly illustrates the critical importance of respect, which, when not granted as a child, can lead to disastrous violent behaviours that crush the lifeblood out of a human being.

Reflecting on seminal moments in my practice, I can identify instances where the presence or absence of Respect led to different outcomes, further supported by the Deferring Judgement Framework and Gilligan's (2003) work to facilitate the emergence of insights. When I feel vulnerable about my expertise or worth, I tend to lecture and demonstrate knowledge, failing to listen and, instead, start to correct others. This behaviour stems from a lack of integration despite my belief that I am sharing my wisdom. It is my mask to protect

my vulnerability, and when it is not activated in the Temple, while the results are not as bad as Gilligan's (2003), they are also not great.

A recent example of an interaction with a close friend who is senior in age and depth of experience, whose respect I crave, illustrates this point. Seeking to impress them by demonstrating my knowledge, I inadvertently caused them to disengage from the conversation, which I failed to notice until they were forced to cut me off abruptly. Initially perceiving this as disrespect, I was ready to lash out, echoing the cycles of violence described in Gilligan's (2003) work, albeit on a smaller scale. I was about to slide down the back of the letter in the J-Curve model.

However, I stopped my rapid descent by deferring judgement and cultivating curiosity about their needs. I consciously created a space for them to express their feelings of being disrespected by my behaviour. When I stopped judging and became curious about their perspective, they revealed that my constant referencing of evidence and studies made them feel invalidated, turning the conversation into a symposium rather than a genuine exchange. This realisation stung, exposing my insecurities and inconsiderate behaviour, placing my need to demonstrate knowledge above being ethically compassionate. Unsurprisingly, they did not adopt my views, as my judgements caused them to retreat and feel diminished.

This vulnerability, enabled by the strength of our relationship, allowed for genuine respect, and my heartfelt apology helped to repair the situation, underscoring the importance of deferring judgement as an ongoing practice, even in long-standing relationships. It cannot be taken for granted, nor can I assume I am in a place of Respect. I need to keep checking in.

However, I am more comfortable and less likely to fall into this trap when facilitating. During a Lego session, a participant openly criticised the activity as stupid and a waste of time. I thanked them for their honesty, recognising the courage to express their opinion in front of others, including their boss. Further, arguing or shaming them would have been ineffective; the only leverage was to respect their right to think my work was "dumb." The person who hired me later expressed respect for my ability to handle the situation gracefully.

On further reflection, the Fractals watercolours demonstrate a sense of self nearly devoid of a mask, reminiscent of childhood days when people often felt freer to express themselves without the need to conform.

Respect and Compassion Catalyse Change

These reflections suggest that activating Respect does not require a theatrical Temple but rather a space that allows vulnerability to shine through comfortably. They also highlight the pain caused by othering and disrespect, even in strong relationships. However, when Respect is activated at scale, as at Fractals, it can catalyse profound shifts in people and an ethical alignment with the world, facilitated by the connection with the scent that bypasses the critical mind and connects to a more primal nature.

This reflection brings to mind the song “Bring the Children Home” by Archie Roach, an Indigenous Australian musician and activist. The lyrics express the pain of profound, unimaginable disrespect of the forcible removal of Indigenous children from their family homes to hasten integration into white society, as their culture was deemed inferior. Roach’s song exemplifies the transformative power of respect and compassion, which activated the respect necessary for the establishment of the Royal Commission into the Stolen Generations. A few powerful verses capture this sentiment, including the last poignant line of the song:

Took us away
 Snatched from our mother’s breast
 Said, “This is for the best,” took them away
 Told us what to do and say
 Taught us all the white man’s ways
 Then they split us up again
 And gave us gifts to ease the pain
 Sent us off to foster homes
 As we grew up, we felt alone
 ‘Cause we were acting white
 Yet feeling black
 One sweet day all the children came back
 The children came back
 Back where their hearts grow strong
 Back where they all belong
 The children came back
 Back where they understand

Back to their mother's land
 The children came back
 Back to their mother
 Back to their father
 Back to their sister
 Back to their brother
 Back to their people
 Back to their land
 All the children came back
 Yes I came back

Roach's approach to reconciliation parallels South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which focuses on restorative justice and truth-telling rather than retribution. It is a form of deferring judgement by setting aside blame and starting from a place of deep respect. Even in the face of grave injustices, deferring judgement and respect can create the conditions for ethical compassion to emerge and radiate outward.

This compassion, distinct from empathy, compels people to act even when they may not fully understand another's experience. It is a powerful antidote to the "othering" perpetuating cycles of violence and division. On a larger scale, Gilligan (2003) cites how the absence of respect can have devastating consequences, as evidenced by the retribution actions from the allies following World War I that ultimately led to World War II.

Having a Creative Practice Can Promote Transformation

Significantly, in Roach's journey, his practice of playing the guitar served as a Temple, facilitating his road back to self-respect and transformation. While Roach's struggles and history of alcohol abuse can be seen as a form of self-violence resulting from a lack of Respect, his discovery of music and the guitar arguably served as a Temple to help restore his sense of self-respect. The vulnerable expression of his experiences through music allowed him to process and feel, much like the watercolours in the Fractals event.

By cultivating self-respect and vulnerability, people can deepen their relationships with others and the environment, catalysing an ethical alignment that transcends the need for

lectures on diversity and inclusion. The power of compassion and shared responsibility can lead to meaningful action and transformation, even in the face of profound pain and injustice.

8.6. Case Study in Compassion

While the Deferring Judgement frame and Fractals illuminate the transformative power of cultivating Respect, Radical Alterity, and nurturing Temple spaces, mainstream design practices like Design Thinking, which prioritise empathy over respect, are increasingly criticised for perpetuating neoliberal policies that harm marginalised communities (Williams, 2019). Critics argue that the emphasis on empathy in Design Thinking can sometimes lead to superficial solutions that do not address the root causes of systemic issues. Instead, these approaches can unintentionally reinforce existing power dynamics and perpetuate inequalities by focusing on market-driven solutions rather than genuine social change. This case study highlights the consequences of inducing empathy without first fostering respect, showing how such an approach can be detrimental.

Design Thinking, a popular problem-solving methodology popularised by firms like IDEO, has come under scrutiny for its potential to reinforce neoliberal ideologies that privatise collective issues and overlook systemic factors like racism. At its core, Design Thinking emphasises empathising with users as a starting point for generating innovative solutions. However, critics argue that empathy alone, without a grounding in respect for the lived expertise of marginalised communities and an awareness of larger power structures, can lead to superficial interventions that fail to address root causes.

This critique finds a poignant example in “Moneythink”, a Chicago-based non-profit that aims to teach financial literacy to low-income teens, predominantly from communities of colour (Williams, 2019). In 2014, Moneythink partnered with IDEO.org, the non-profit arm of IDEO, to design a mobile app called “Moneythink Mobile” using Design Thinking principles.

IDEO.org’s process began with ethnographic research to understand teens’ financial behaviours and decision-making processes. However, the insights derived from this empathetic observation were decontextualised from the systemic racism and generational disinvestment that shape financial precarity in marginalised communities. Findings like, teens’ financial behaviour is rooted in unique factors such as sporadic income, varying degrees of financial dependency, and an informal creativity in financial choices, ignored the

racialised wealth divide and the precipitous rise in college costs that disproportionately burden Black and Latinx families.

Based on these insights, the Moneythink Mobile app aimed to accurately capture a teen's financial decision-making and then provide a roadmap to healthy savings habits. It employed gamification tactics like point rewards for completing financial challenges under the assumption that teens' "unhealthy" money management was the crux of the problem.

Critics argue that this techno-solutionist approach, driven by Design Thinking's empathetic but decontextualised framing, privatised a profoundly political and systemic issue. By placing the burden of addressing racialised inequities and financial barriers to higher education on the individualised behaviour of low-income teens, Moneythink's Design Thinking process upheld a neoliberal myth of meritocracy devoid of considerations for power and history.

While the Moneythink team undoubtedly had good intentions in supporting financial literacy among low-income teens, their approach exemplified by the Mobile app reveals a profound lack of the foundational principles that the Deferring Judgement Framework upholds. By prioritising an empathetic understanding of user behaviours without first establishing a basis of deep respect and radical alterity, their Design Thinking process fell into the trap of perpetuating the very systemic harms it sought to address.

Respect First, Empathy Second

While well-intentioned, the insights derived from their ethnographic research remained tethered to a worldview that failed to honour the lived expertise and truths of the communities they aimed to serve. Reducing the complex realities of generational disinvestment, systemic racism, and the racialised wealth divide to mere "unique factors" like "sporadic income" and "informal financial choices" is a form of othering—a denial of the profound humanity and contextual richness that shapes marginalised experiences.

In doing so, Moneythink's approach lacked the ethical compassion and embrace of radical alterity that the Deferring Judgement Framework deems essential. Instead of nurturing a Temple-like space where teens could vulnerably express their truths and have their perspectives honoured, the app perpetuated a neoliberal myth of individualised meritocracy devoid of any acknowledgement of the larger forces and histories at play.

The Deferring Judgement Framework invites people to approach such contexts with profound humility and a willingness to engage in the challenging work of deferring their own judgements and assumptions. My recommendation is that when empathy is used to co-create generative solutions that genuinely serve the needs and lived realities of marginalised communities it is activated after the embodied practice of respect, connection, and curiosity.

While Moneythink's failure to uphold these principles is lamentable, it also serves as a powerful reminder of the transformative potential that the Deferring Judgement Framework holds. By committing to its ethos of ethical compassion, radical alterity, and the nurturing of temple spaces, we can chart a path towards creative collaborations that honour the inherent dignity of all beings and pave the way for systemic change.

8.7. Summary

This chapter highlights the role of the Deferring Judgement Framework in facilitating creative collaboration and fostering personal growth. The framework moves beyond traditional approaches to judgement, expanding into a more nuanced, relational, and compassionate understanding of the creative process. Drawing on three key lenses—Indigenous Order of Thinking (Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020), Experiential Inquiry, and the Transdisciplinary Studio Model (Dorst, 2024)—it weaves together the operational, relational, intellectual, and ethical dimensions of creative work.

The Fractals NTRO served as a tangible demonstration of the framework, illustrating how sensory experiences like scent, touch, and creative expression (such as watercolours and odes) encourage deeper emotional and intellectual engagement. By inviting participants to defer judgement, this immersive experience promoted reflective synthesis, deepening participants' awareness of self, others, and the environment. As a result, the framework nurtured Ethical Compassion, Intellectual Empathy, and Relational Imaginative Curiosity, laying the groundwork for transformative personal and collective action.

The Deferring Judgement Framework offers practical tools for scholars, practitioners, and facilitators, presenting a fresh perspective for approaching the complexities of collaboration. It highlights the importance of creating nurturing, non-judgemental spaces, emphasising the transformative potential of ethical respect, curiosity, and embodied awareness. Furthermore, the framework opens new pathways for future research and pedagogical development by embracing diverse, transdisciplinary perspectives.

As you conclude this chapter, reflect on how the Deferring Judgement Framework could inform your approach to creative collaboration and ethical engagement. How might you incorporate its principles into your practice to cultivate more inclusive, nurturing environments? Consider the possibilities that could emerge from deferring judgement in your interactions with others and your personal growth journey.

Chapter 9

Contribution to Knowledge

9.1. Introduction

This chapter weaves together the key insights and contributions of this research, revealing how the practice of deferring judgement fundamentally shapes creative processes. Rather than a simple cognitive technique, deferring judgement emerges as an oscillating, transformative state that engages our emotional, embodied, and relational capacities. Through deep sensory engagement, emotional reflection, and ethical connection, this practice becomes a catalyst for both personal and collective growth, opening new possibilities in collaborative creative endeavours.

Three interconnected models form the foundation of these discoveries. The Deferring Judgement Framework and J-Curve model, both original contributions of this research, work in concert with an evolved Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model that extends Montuori's (2005, 2012) influential work. Each model illuminates distinct yet complementary aspects of creative practice, guiding facilitators, educators, and practitioners through the complex emotional and relational landscapes of creativity. Together, they form a dynamic system that reimagines creativity as an ethical, embodied, and inclusive practice.

In the sections that follow, I will explore these models in depth, examining their theoretical foundations and practical implications. The journey culminates in a cosmic metaphor that brings together scholarly literature through a mythic lens—envisioning these models as elements within a living constellation. Like stars in the night sky, each model shines with its own light while participating in larger patterns of meaning. This constellation metaphor captures both the synthesis of new knowledge and the transformative nature of collaborative creative processes, inviting people to shift from seeing isolated frameworks to recognising an interconnected cosmos of creative understanding.

As you navigate this chapter, consider your own journey through a meta-J-Curve—experiencing firsthand the emotional trajectory of deferring judgement, from initial uncertainty through moments of challenge, and ultimately toward transformation and insight.

9.2. Summary of Research Questions and Findings

The practice of deferring judgement emerged in this research as a transformative tool in collaborative creative endeavours, enabling participants—myself included as both researcher and participant—to move beyond initial assumptions and engage more deeply with possibilities. This practice unfolded as a dynamic, oscillating state across physical, emotional, and imaginative dimensions. The journey typically begins with mixed reactions: physical discomfort, emotional confusion, and vulnerability. Through repeated engagement with deferring judgement, these initial responses expand into curiosity and openness, with sensory engagement catalysing this transformative process towards new creative possibilities.

Sensory elements—touch, scent, and movement—proved instrumental in awakening latent knowledge, drawing upon sensing, intuition, and tacit know-how to foster an experiential form of curiosity and openness. Within this embodied state, participants uncovered insights that felt qualitatively distinct—arising through sensory, emotional, and relational engagement. While not compared directly with cognitive approaches, these experiences pointed to ways of knowing that extended beyond the analytical or conceptual.

The findings indicate that deferring judgement fosters both intrapersonal and interpersonal transformations, extending into an ethical relationality with the broader environment. Participants exhibited respectful awareness, curiosity, and compassion for alternative viewpoints, particularly in settings that encouraged embracing discomfort to surface underlying assumptions.

Three distinct yet interconnected models emerged from this study, each bridging theory and practice while offering unique contributions to understanding and enacting deferring judgement: the original Deferring Judgement Framework, the J-Curve model, and an extended Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model building on Montuori's (2005, 2012) scholarship. These models serve as adaptable tools for facilitators, educators, and practitioners, supporting navigation through emotional, embodied, and imaginative aspects of deferring judgement across diverse collaborative, creative contexts. Together, they reinforce that creativity transcends cognitive boundaries—it manifests as a relational, embodied, and ethically enacted endeavour, catalysed through emotional engagement and open inquiry.

These findings point to a dynamic, interconnected view of creative insights, where each model informs and transforms the others—an interplay that reflects the relational and expansive nature of creativity itself.

9.3. Revisiting the Deferring Judgement Framework

The Deferring Judgement Framework, as established in Chapter 8, represents a fundamental shift in understanding creativity by synthesising diverse knowledge systems—including experiential insights, phenomenological approaches, and Indigenous wisdom. Moving beyond Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) systems model, it recognises the metaphysical, imaginative, and more-than-human as active agents in the creative ecosystem. This radical reframing positions both living and non-living entities as influential forces worthy of equal respect, dissolving traditional hierarchies that have limited creative possibility.

Building on the emotional depth of the J-Curve model and extending past the Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model, this framework embraces creativity as a discovery process (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Glăveanu, 2020b; Maslow, 1962/2013; Montuori, 2005, 2012; Wallas, 1926) rather than merely problem-solving (Guilford, 1967; Puccio et al., 2012; Runco, 1994). It values intuition, insight, and abductive reasoning, creating space for the unexpected and unknown. While it shares common ground with Nicolescu's (2014) transdisciplinary vision, it pushes further to become perhaps the most comprehensive and integrated systems model of creativity yet conceived.

The framework advances beyond traditional process-person-product (Puccio et al., 2012; M. Rhodes, 1961; Runco, 2014) approaches by embedding embodied knowing (Claxton, 2015; De Jaegher, 2021; Dorst, 2024; Husserl, 2012) and being (Dore, 2020; Rigolot, 2020; Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020) as fundamental to creative emergence. This integration of doing and being transcends both individualistic models and social psychology perspectives (Glăveanu, 2020b), recognising creativity as an ecosystem of influence that includes the physical, metaphysical, and imaginal realms (Montuori, 2012; Sheehan, 2011; Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020).

Key Insights and Contributions

The Deferring Judgement Framework provides pathways beyond the status quo by legitimising multiple ways of knowing and becoming. It enables creativity to transcend conventional boundaries, encouraging systemic transformation through the interplay of human, more-than-human, and imaginal forces.

Aligned with Glăveanu's (2020b) concept of possibility studies but pushing further, the framework reframes creativity as an exploration of the not-yet-known. By incorporating

metaphysical dimensions and imaginal realms, it expands the We-paradigm (Glăveanu, 2010) to recognise all entities—physical, metaphysical, living, non-living, and imagined—as active participants in the creative ecosystem.

This expanded scope fundamentally reinterprets models like the 4Ps of creativity (M. Rhodes, 1961), suggesting a dynamic interplay between seen and unseen influences in creative emergence. Through integrating embodied and sensory dimensions, the framework reveals how spaces encouraging sensory engagement and embodied experiences—such as the Fractals NTRO—can bypass conventional constraints, opening doorways to new possibilities.

The framework positions vulnerability and emotional turbulence as gateways to creative insight. Building on the J-Curve model, it recognises that engaging with uncertainty and the unknown catalyses creative emergence. When supported systemically, this openness to the unfamiliar allows intuitive and abductive reasoning to flourish, expanding creative potential beyond the limitations of purely rational approaches.

Deferring Judgement Framework is Relational to the J-Curve Model

While the J-Curve model illuminates individual emotional journeys through creative tension, the Deferring Judgement Framework expands this understanding into a collective, systemic dimension. This expansion transforms personal discomfort into a shared catalyst for creative emergence, where tension becomes a dynamic force within the ecosystem rather than solely an individual experience.

Surfacing the Hidden

The framework's distinctive power lies in revealing knowledge that conventional models often miss. Like the J-Curve's internal reflection, it encourages exploration of assumptions but extends into collective awareness through embodied and relational approaches. This enables recognition of subtle cues—emotional, physical, contextual—that might otherwise trigger judgement, transforming tacit knowledge into a shared creative resource.

From Problem-Solving to Discovery

The framework translates the J-Curve's embrace of discomfort into collective creative dynamics, shifting from problem-solving to discovery. It introduces intentional “pauses” as active, embodied spaces where the unknown becomes valuable rather than threatening.

Drawing on the “temple” concept, these pauses invite contemplation where body and senses help balance tensions rather than eliminate them. This creates space for unexpected insights to emerge through collective engagement with uncertainty.

Vulnerability as Creative Force

While the J-Curve positions vulnerability as a path to personal growth, the Deferring Judgement Framework reimagines it as a creative force within the ecosystem. Through embodied practices and shared spaces, vulnerability becomes a vehicle for collective exploration and insight. This transforms it from an individual challenge into a catalyst for creative emergence, deepening the system’s capacity for innovation.

Judgement as Systemic Mirror

Building on the J-Curve’s reflective practice, the framework reframes judgement as a mirror of systemic dynamics. Personal judgements are seen as reflections of and influences on the broader creative ecosystem. This shifts reflection from an individual practice to a shared exploration where insights reshape the entire system’s creative potential.

Embodied Regulation

The framework extends the J-Curve’s focus on emotional resilience through embodied, sensory experiences that support regulation at both individual and collective levels. Sensory “anchors” ground participants in the physical realm, facilitating emotional regulation without requiring purely internal focus. This creates an atmosphere where individual calm contributes to collective creative capacity.

Beyond Human-Centric Creation

A revolutionary aspect of the framework is its expansion beyond human-centric creativity. Unlike the J-Curve’s focus on personal bias, it embraces contributions from non-human, environmental, and metaphysical realms. This non-othering approach recognises all elements—living, non-living, and imagined—as active participants in creative emergence, expanding the possibilities beyond conventional human-centred approaches.

Integration of Individual and Collective

The framework achieves a unique balance between personal and collective transformation. While honouring individual journeys highlighted by the J-Curve, it positions these within a broader creative ecosystem. This integration fosters understanding of how personal growth and systemic evolution interweave, creating a truly holistic approach to creative emergence.

Practical Application of the Deferring Judgement Framework

The integration of the Deferring Judgement Framework with J-Curve insights offers a nuanced approach to facilitating creative emergence across diverse contexts. This synthesis moves beyond prescriptive techniques to embrace a more organic, responsive way of supporting creativity and collaboration.

Creating Conditions for Creative Emergence

The framework guides facilitators in crafting environments that nurture creative emergence naturally. This involves thoughtful attention to physical spaces that invite movement and sensory engagement while supporting both solitary reflection and collective exploration. Rather than implementing rigid structures, facilitators learn to work with the natural rhythms of creative emergence, incorporating intentional pauses that allow for integration and deeper understanding.

Facilitation as Creative Practice

Facilitation within this framework becomes an art of presence rather than procedure. Facilitators develop capacity to sense and respond to the subtle dynamics of creative emergence, recognising when to offer structure and when to allow organic unfolding. This approach begins with establishing shared understanding about embracing uncertainty and extends through supporting both individual and collective processes of discovery.

The role shifts from directing to cultivating—creating conditions where insights can emerge naturally while acknowledging the influence of both seen and unseen elements in the creative process. This involves developing sensitivity to physical, emotional, and metaphysical aspects of the creative ecosystem, including the often-overlooked contributions of non-human participants.

Supporting Creative Evolution

The practical application of this framework requires deep attention to the interplay between individual and collective experience. Facilitators learn to recognise and work with resistance as valuable information rather than an obstacle, supporting participants in navigating discomfort while maintaining creative engagement. This involves cultivating environments where multiple ways of knowing are honoured and where discovery emerges through embodied exploration and collective meaning-making.

Success in applying the framework lies not in following prescribed steps but in developing capacity to work responsively with the complex dynamics of creative emergence. This requires comfort with uncertainty, skill in supporting both individual and collective processes, and ability to recognise and nurture the subtle indicators of creative potential.

Through this approach, facilitation becomes a practice of fostering conditions where creativity can flourish naturally, supported by awareness of both personal journeys and collective dynamics. The framework provides guidance while maintaining flexibility, allowing facilitators to adapt their approach based on context while honouring the essential elements that support creative emergence.

Limitations and Personal Reflections

Practical Challenges

The framework's holistic approach presents inherent challenges in application. While seemingly abstract, its implementation demands subtle interpretation and contextual adaptation. The emphasis on embodied practices can be particularly challenging in environments not naturally conducive to transformative states. Though my research demonstrates that even minimal sensory engagement—like warming beeswax in one's hands—can catalyse shift, the true art lies in the facilitator's capacity to release expectations and attune deeply to emergent possibilities.

This mastery stems from years of facilitation experience and learning through countless iterations. The core challenge is cultivating environments that nurture both individual and collective wellbeing across diverse circumstances. Success requires simultaneous awareness across three dimensions: self, us-two—that deeper relational space of connection (Yunkaporta, 2019)—and the collective dynamics, without becoming fixated

on any single perspective. This intuitive navigation cannot be transmitted through words alone; it must be discovered through personal experience as each facilitator finds their unique path into a deferring judgement state.

Personal Journey and Integration

The Deferring Judgement Framework embodies my own journey through creative and academic territories. Its development required navigating the very processes of emotional discomfort, openness, and engagement that it advocates. This personal immersion has revealed how deferring judgement demands comfort with uncertainty, deliberately slowing reactive impulses, and resisting the urge for quick resolution.

Instead of rushing to fix or critique, I have learned to allow ideas, emotions, and insights their own organic evolution. This approach has transformed not only my creative process but my entire orientation to knowledge and discovery. The framework has cultivated deeper empathy and respect for the unknown, heightening awareness of how diverse perspectives and experiences shape creative emergence.

At its core, this work represents a fundamental shift from problem-solving to possibility-finding—a transformation mirrored in my research journey through transdisciplinary complexities. The framework serves as both compass and companion, affirming that creativity flourishes precisely in spaces of tension and ambiguity. True breakthroughs emerge not from avoiding these spaces but from embracing them as fertile ground for discovery.

This personal reflection illuminates how the framework, despite its limitations, offers a cohesive approach to fostering creative emergence. Its power lies not in prescriptive solutions but in guiding practitioners toward their own embodied understanding of creative possibility.

9.4. Revisiting the J-Curve Model: Mapping Emotional Transformation

The J-Curve model maps the emotional trajectory experienced when deferring judgement—a journey from initial discomfort, confusion, or doubt toward deeper insight and transformation. This aligns with established emotional and psychological theories in creativity research, particularly those examining psychological safety in creative problem-solving (Davis, 2004; Parnes, 1962/1992; Parnes et al., 1977; Puccio et al., 2012). The

model's distinctive contribution lies in highlighting how moments of emotional resistance and vulnerability catalyse growth and innovation.

The model's strength emerges from its recognition of emotional turbulence as essential to the creative journey. Discomfort, vulnerability, and confusion transform from obstacles into crucial catalysts for growth and innovation. Through this lens, the J-Curve helps people recognise that transformation follows non-linear paths, with emotional tension often preceding creative breakthroughs.

Complementing the Deferring Judgement Framework

While the J-Curve model illuminates individual emotional and cognitive journeys, it provides foundational insights for the broader Deferring Judgement Framework's integration of relational, systemic, and ethical dynamics. By mapping the intra and interpersonal emotional challenges in creative collaborations, the J-Curve creates groundwork that the Deferring Judgement Framework expands into collective, environmental, and ethical contexts.

Both models share a commitment to slowing down—encouraging pause and reflection rather than rushing to conclusions. The J-Curve establishes patterns for personal transformation that the Deferring Judgement Framework contextualises within broader relational, ethical, and systemic dimensions.

Shared Insights: Possibility-Finding

These models unite in recognising emotionally embodied resistance as an opportunity for growth. In the J-Curve, emotional turbulence—frustration, defensiveness—becomes integral to transformation. This aligns with the Deferring Judgement Framework's understanding that such emotions, when surfaced and acknowledged within group or collaborative contexts, create space for profound relational and systemic transformation.

Both guide more-than-human collectives from problem-solving toward possibility-finding, emphasising curiosity and openness. The J-Curve facilitates this shift at intra and interpersonal levels, while the Deferring Judgement Framework extends into collective and systemic dimensions, promoting ethical and inclusive creative engagement.

Practical Applications of the J-Curve Model

These complementary models offer facilitators, educators, and practitioners powerful tools for supporting growth in creative settings. They illuminate paths through emotional challenges while fostering innovation through deeper engagement with relational dynamics. The J-Curve encourages reflection on emotional responses, recognising discomfort as transformative, while the Deferring Judgement Framework extends these insights to group dynamics, ensuring emotional tensions surface and address systemic patterns.

Crucially, facilitation transcends mere model application. When someone stands apart—even as facilitator, educator, or coach—they risk maintaining judgement. True transformation begins within; individuals, including facilitators, must first defer judgement of themselves and their expectations. This personal engagement catalyses collective transformation.

Limitations of the J-Curve

Participants may become trapped in negative emotions, particularly when approaching with problem-solving mindsets focused on external fixes. Emotional stagnation can occur when physical conditions—illness, fatigue—inhibit emotional processing. While sensory-rich environments like the Fractals NTRO can shift participants from emotional inertia through curiosity and sensory delight, they may also overwhelm sensitive individuals. These insights emphasise designing environments supporting emotional and physical well-being for all actors and agents.

Broader Applications

The practical applications of these models extend beyond creative collaboration. The J-Curve model proves particularly effective in guiding emotional processes across diverse settings—education, leadership, and organisational development. It prepares people for the emotional turbulence that often accompanies breakthroughs in workshops, design thinking sessions, and collaborative projects. By offering a framework to navigate discomfort, the model helps build emotional resilience, trust, and openness to new ideas.

In educational settings, the J-Curve reshapes approaches to creativity and problem-solving by encouraging emotional intelligence and ambiguity management. Its integration into leadership and professional development programs addresses increasingly essential

skills. Coaches and therapists benefit from using the model to guide people, including themselves, through emotional discomfort toward personal transformation. In organisational development, the J-Curve supports leaders and teams in managing emotional dynamics during innovation and change, fostering cultures of resilience and adaptability that help organisations embrace new strategies.

Personal Meaning

The J-Curve model reflects my own transformational journey through trauma and disruption. Like the participants in this research, I have experienced emotional turbulence—cycles of hurt, blame, and victimhood—that threatened to spiral into despair. However, the J-Curve offered a way to reframe these emotions as catalysts for growth, fostering resilience and self-compassion. This process has transformed my approach to personal and creative challenges, shifting focus from blame to growth.

By systematising this emotional journey through my research, I have made it accessible for others, turning personal transformation into a valuable tool for navigating emotional turbulence in creative processes. The model embodies not just theoretical understanding but lived experience, demonstrating how personal challenge can become collective resource.

This personal dimension reinforces the model's core insight: that emotional turbulence, when embraced rather than avoided, becomes a powerful catalyst for transformation. The J-Curve offers not just a map but a companion through the complex territory of creative and personal growth.

9.5. Revisiting the Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model

Building on Montuori's scholarship (2005, 2012), the Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model offers a framework for integrating diverse forms of knowledge and bridging different epistemologies. By embracing multiple ways of knowing—philosophical, scientific, artistic, intuitive, and non-Western—the model enables a more nuanced understanding of creativity's multifaceted dimensions. It reframes thinking by weaving together these knowledge systems, opening new pathways for creative exploration.

A central challenge in transdisciplinary work lies in managing tensions between different epistemologies, disciplinary knowledge, and cultural ways of thinking and doing

(Glăveanu, 2020b; Montuori, 2005, 2012; Rigolot, 2020; Scholz & Steiner, 2015a; Steiner, 2014). The Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model addresses this by creating relational spaces where differences coexist and interact, enabling deeper connections and facilitating creative breakthroughs.

Synthesis of Knowledge and Creative Practice

While grounded in Montuori's (2005, 2012) framework, this research advances his ideas through visualisation. The model makes explicit the interconnectedness of transdisciplinary tenets, revealing how diverse forms of knowledge interact to generate creative breakthroughs. This visualisation captures the dynamic, relational, and non-linear nature of transdisciplinary thinking through a hexagonal structure inspired by natural systems like beehives—incorporating more-than-human perspectives into its very form.

From Problem-Solving to Possibility-Finding

The model's focus on possibility-finding rather than traditional problem-solving aligns with Glăveanu's (2020b) concept of possibility studies. This perspective challenges views of creativity as merely producing novel outcomes, reframing it as exploration of what could be. Glăveanu's emphasis on relational creativity—where innovation emerges from interactions between individuals, environments, and broader systems—becomes embedded in the model's structure, fostering breakthroughs at disciplinary intersections.

Theoretical Foundations

Three key theoretical perspectives inform the model. Koestler's (1969/1990) concept of bisociation illuminates how creative breakthroughs emerge from connecting seemingly unrelated ideas. Bohm's (1998) emphasis on building bridges between similar differences shapes the model's approach to sensing connections between diverse ideas. Kuhn's (1962/1996) theory of paradigm shifts underpins the model's embrace of anomalies and unexpected insights that challenge existing assumptions.

Challenges and Future Applications

While successfully bridging diverse epistemologies, the model faces the challenge of maintaining depth while facilitating breadth. However, this breadth proves necessary for opening new pathways to breakthrough thinking, allowing insights from various fields to

converge and create new knowledge. Future applications hold particular promise in educational settings and interdisciplinary collaborations addressing complex global challenges that require non-Western and ethical approaches.

Personal Meaning

The Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model transcends its role as an intellectual framework to become a deeply personal and transformative tool. Shaped by experiences of feeling “othered” for intuitive, embodied approaches to creativity, it found validation through Montuori’s (2005, 2012) work, offering a kind of spiritual homecoming. The hexagonal visualisation symbolises diverse influences, reflecting collaborative and relational creative practice. This model embodies both mythic tales and personal journey, transforming perceived failures into pathways for breakthrough.

9.6. Relationality of the Models

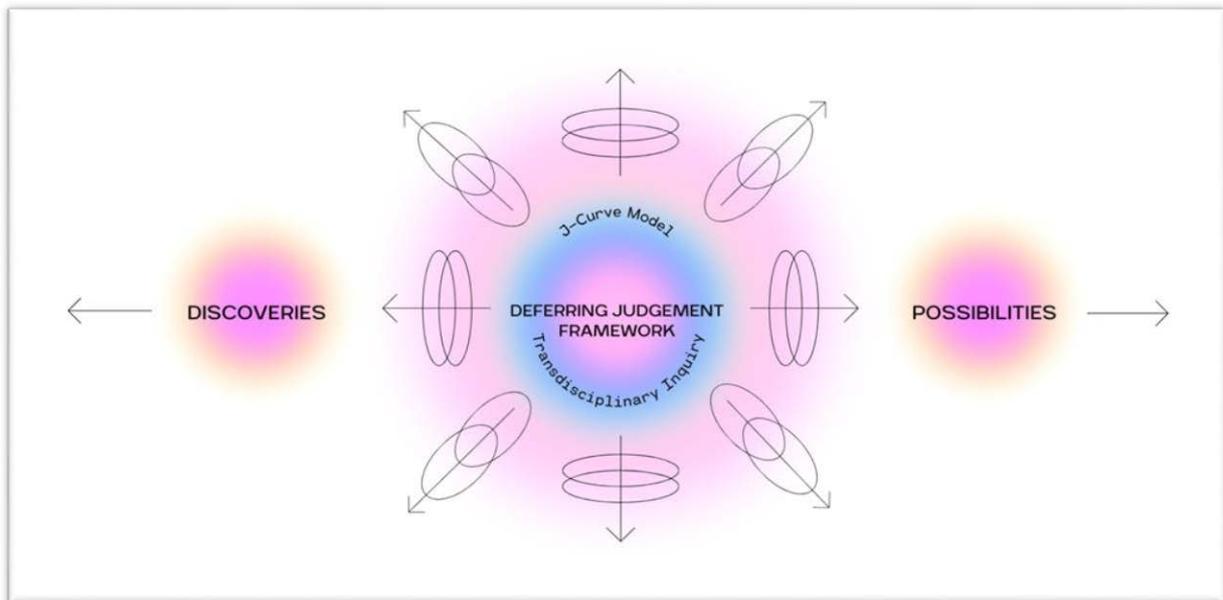
The integration of the Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model, J-Curve Model, and Deferring Judgement Framework creates a synergistic approach that transcends traditional understandings of creativity and collaboration. Each model contributes distinct yet complementary elements to this integrated framework.

The Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model provides the epistemological foundation, weaving together diverse forms of knowledge and bridging different ways of knowing across disciplines. It creates the intellectual and philosophical space where multiple perspectives can coexist and interact, generating new possibilities through their interplay.

The J-Curve Model serves as an emotional compass, mapping the internal landscapes individuals traverse when deferring judgement. By positioning emotional turbulence as essential to creative transformation, it illuminates the personal journey inherent in creative breakthrough.

The Deferring Judgement Framework bridges theory and practice, transforming the expansive vision of transdisciplinary inquiry and the emotional intelligence of the J-Curve into embodied strategies. It promotes openness, inclusivity, and ethical engagement through practical approaches that honour both individual and collective dimensions of creativity. This relationality among the models is captured in Figure 40, which highlights how these frameworks interweave to form a cohesive and dynamic ecosystem.

Figure 40: Integrated Framework Diagram



This diagram illustrates the relational integration of the Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model, J-Curve Model, and Deferring Judgement Framework within a spectrum of Discoveries to Possibilities. Centred on the Deferring Judgement Framework, the visual highlights how these models interconnect to form a cohesive system that supports a continuous journey of exploration and innovation. Created by the author in 2024 using Canva Pro.

In this diagram, the Deferring Judgement Framework anchors the centre, integrating the intellectual depth of the Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model with the emotional resilience mapped by the J-Curve Model. The visual unfolds as a spectrum, with Discoveries on one end and Possibilities on the other, illustrating the continuous journey that creativity embodies. This flow captures the natural progression from exploration and insight toward emergent outcomes, a process guided by relational and ethical principles.

This integrated approach fundamentally redefines creativity as a process embracing complexity, honoring multiple ways of knowing, and addressing ethical implications. It invites facilitators and educators to design experiences engaging all senses, supporting emotional journeys, and fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration. The synthesis offers pathways to collective creativity that prove genuinely inclusive, sustainable, and responsive to global challenges—from social inequality to climate change.

Together, these three models generate a balanced and dynamic process of discovery and possibility. Positioned within the spectrum of Discoveries and Possibilities, the visualisation illustrates creativity not as a series of isolated events but as a continuous, relational engagement with the unknown. The convergence of these models redefines creativity as a complex, interdependent process, embracing multiple ways of knowing, addressing ethical implications, and grounding innovation in respect and curiosity.

This integrated approach invites facilitators, educators, and practitioners to view creativity as an ongoing relational engagement rather than discrete breakthroughs. It encourages the design of experiences that engage all senses, support emotional journeys, and foster cross-disciplinary collaboration. Through this synthesis, the ecosystem of models offers pathways to collective creativity that are inclusive, sustainable, and responsive to global challenges—from social inequality to climate change.

Figure 40 thus serves as both a guide and a metaphor, inviting people to explore creativity as an expansive, interconnected process that bridges disciplines, cultures, and perspectives. It embodies a call to defer judgement, to remain curious, and to cultivate environments where diverse perspectives and possibilities can coexist and evolve.

9.7. Innovation Approach to Research

An unexpected and significant outcome of this research is the emergence of the thesis itself as an NTRO. This transformation proved essential—the thesis could only effectively convey its knowledge by embodying the principles and experience of deferring judgement. Such an approach defied conventional academic structuring, requiring instead an embrace of deferring judgement's essence—trusting the process to unfold organically through intuitive and abductive reasoning. This methodological choice mirrors the research subject itself, demonstrating how deferring judgement leads to innovative and transformative outcomes.

The breakthrough in methodology came through using intuition and abductive reasoning as investigative guides. Rather than following linear, deductive paths, this research embraced dynamic, emergent understandings of creativity. This flexible, intuitive approach allowed deeper insights and unexpected connections to surface—outcomes that conventional methods might have missed.

The process demands significant personal commitment. Deferring judgement asks individuals to loosen their current worldview, step into discomfort and confusion, and remain

open to transformation. This edge-work proves unsettling, and not all may be willing or able to engage at this level. The research underscores the importance of navigating the J-Curve—an emotional journey through uncertainty essential for personal and creative transformation—while providing conditions that make people feel safe through bodily engagement and mutual respect.

The resistance to uncertainty highlights another crucial aspect: the necessity of personal engagement and experiential practice to fully grasp deferring judgement's complexities. A procedural or didactic approach risks losing its transformative potential. Understanding creativity's complexity demands engaging in creative practice—not necessarily artistic, but through movement, storytelling, or other expressive forms that realise creativity's transformative potential.

The NTRO aspect emerged not merely as outcome but as process. The research wove together diverse methods—arts-based practices, transdisciplinary inquiry, and autoethnography—filtered through a phenomenological lens. Incorporating mythic tales, watercolours, and deferring judgement prompts created an immersive, multisensory experience that embodied the research principles. These elements invited readers to participate in deferring judgement themselves.

This approach, grounded in deferring judgement, could not be planned in advance. It required openness to the unknown and trust in the process. While this may unsettle readers seeking didactic clarity, navigating judgement and confusion is not a flaw but a feature of the creative process. This thesis aims to hold space for uncertainty as a generative condition, while remaining navigable enough for those willing to engage. Not all readers will take the same path through it — and that, too, is part of the work.

9.8. Cosmos as Catalyst for Creative Synthesis

The emergence of this thesis as an NTRO reflects the very nature of deferring judgement it seeks to illuminate. To review the literature and synthesise the relationality between the three models—the Deferring Judgement Framework, the J-Curve model, and the Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model—I purposefully move beyond conventional structures, inviting a mythic lens to illuminate the multiplicity of insights and their interconnected nature. This synthesis returns to the origins of this study's literature review, which began by examining diverse

creation myths, positioning these models within a cosmic creation metaphor that reflects the unfolding and relational nature of creative practice.

Through this mythic framing, the insights and models emerge not as static constructs but as evolving, interconnected entities within a dynamic ecosystem. Each model contributes uniquely to an expansive understanding of creativity as an embodied, relational process. By situating the models within a mythic perspective, this approach echoes the creation myths that first inspired this enquiry, illustrating creativity as a journey of continual emergence, resonance, and transformation.

This choice serves two purposes: it provides an immersive framework for understanding how these models interconnect, and it reflects the nature of deferring judgement as an iterative, non-linear process. Rather than presenting each model in isolation, this approach illuminates the relational dynamics and interdependencies that emerge through their synthesis. By embedding deferring judgement within this structure, I invite readers into a reflective journey that mirrors the practice itself—one that values curiosity over closure, relationality over reduction, and process over definitive outcomes.

This reframing was sparked by an embodied breakthrough during the drawing process, where visualising the models revealed unexpected connections. This moment demonstrated the power of NTROs and embodied methods to surface emergent insights, expanding beyond cognitive approaches alone. Engaging with these models through the lens of a cosmic framework highlights how imagination, as Vygotsky (2004) asserts, catalyses creative understanding in ways that conventional methods often constrain.

In the following sections, each model—the Deferring Judgement Framework, the J-Curve model, and the Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model—will be examined in turn. Together, they form a cohesive cosmic framework, advancing a deeper, more inclusive understanding of creativity within collaborative and relational contexts. This approach invites readers to engage with them as living, breathing elements within a larger universe of knowledge. Through this orientation, I hope to provide a space where complexities are embraced, imagination is sparked, and the possibilities of deferring judgement are allowed to unfold naturally.

This cosmic metaphor presents each model as a distinct celestial entity: The Deferring Judgement Framework as a Milky Way of relational respect, the J-Curve model as a planet embodying transformation, and the Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model as a constellation of

interconnected knowledge. Together, they illuminate unique pathways within the expansive universe of creativity, each contributing a specific, dynamic force that deepens our understanding of collaborative creative practice.

New Creation Myth for Creative Collaboration

To encapsulate the relational and complex nature of deferring judgement, I begin where I started—in the middle, that fertile space where everything unfolds and all the hard work is done (Deleuze, 1988/1995). This “middle” is where intersections become a source of growth, reflecting both the transdisciplinary nature of this thesis and the fertile intersections that Montuori (2005, 2012) describes as essential to creativity. Here, I draw on a creation myth to symbolise the genesis of deferring judgement within creative collaboration, igniting new possibilities.

The choice to frame this work as a creation myth reflects the inherent challenge of categorising creativity itself—an endeavour that sits at the intersection of human agency and the divine, and one that resists straightforward classification (Davis, 2004; Pope, 2005). Creativity, as seen through mythic traditions, encompasses both the human impulse to create and a reverence for forces beyond our understanding. Mythology thus offers a bridge beyond purely cognitive understanding, drawing us into symbolic and embodied knowledge that resonates on multiple levels (Zueva, 2021).

The transdisciplinary and phenomenological frameworks presented reveal creativity as a complex, emergent process that moves beyond traditional boundaries (Montuori, 2005, 2013; Scholz & Steiner, 2015a, 2015b). Phenomenology, with its emphasis on lived experience, complements this understanding by focusing on how new ideas emerge from direct engagement with perception and consciousness (Gallagher, 2017; Husserl, 2012). Here, deferring judgement becomes more than a technique (Basadur, 1979; Parnes, 1962/1992; Parnes & Harding, 1962; Puccio et al., 2012); it transforms into a lived experience, opening spaces for imagination and enabling new possibilities to emerge (Connery et al., 2010; Glăveanu, 2018, 2020b; Vygotsky, 2004). This mythic framing captures layers of meaning that empirical analysis alone may miss, highlighting the phenomenological and autoethnographic dimensions of deferring judgement.

This exploration is anchored in the etymological richness of creativity itself, drawing from Latin, Hebrew, Greek, Sanskrit, and Proto-Indo-European roots, all of which share

themes of growth, renewal, and bringing into being (Glăveanu, 2013; Götz, 1981). These diverse linguistic origins reflect creativity as a dynamic, relational, and transformative process. Viewed through this lens, creativity becomes a complex force, encompassing both human and mythic elements and engaging both personal and systemic dimensions. Such a perspective aligns with Indigenous understandings of interconnectedness and respect for what is unknown, emphasising creativity as a relational, ethical act that honours the mysteries of creation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020). By framing creativity within a mythic context, people gain access to layers of meaning often hidden from empirical analysis, capturing the phenomenological and autoethnographic qualities of creative experience.

Transdisciplinarity and phenomenology further enrich this understanding.

Transdisciplinarity, moving across and beyond disciplinary boundaries, creates an integrative framework for studying creativity, inviting insights from diverse domains to coalesce in a holistic understanding (Montuori, 2005, 2013; Scholz & Steiner, 2015a, 2015b). Similarly, phenomenology's focus on lived experience complements creativity's inherent subjectivity, as it reveals how new ideas emerge from the intersection of perception, consciousness, and the material world (Husserl, 2012; Gallagher, 2022). Together, these frameworks—transdisciplinarity and phenomenology—suggest that creativity operates within a “chaosmos” of chaos and order (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994), a dynamic space where diverse perspectives, intentional acts, and experiential chaos converge to shape novel insights and meanings.

Within this context, deferring judgement emerges as not merely a technique but as an experiential and relational practice, enabling imagination to flourish in the “fertile void” between thought and action. By creating this space, deferring judgement allows the process of creation to unfold, embracing relationality, respecting complexity, and honouring the unknown, thereby capturing the holistic, emergent quality of creative practice.

The mythic approach also bridges traditional divides between science and art, human and divine (Guilford, 1950; Pope, 2005; Sawyer, 2011). By framing creativity as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* (Campbell, 1991), there are insights into how deferring judgement creates space for rational analysis alongside intuitive understanding. Art, as myth, mirrors nature's own awareness (Pope, 2005), just as the pause between judgement and action mirrors a fertile void—a creative potential (Parnes et al., 1977; Wallas, 1926). This mythic opening invites an expansive understanding of creativity that honours relationality, respects

the unknown, and integrates the emergent qualities of creative practice (G. Bateson, 1987; N. Bateson, 2017; Candy, 2006; Montuori, 2005; Yunkaporta, 2019; Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020).

By doing so, it embraces the essence of deferring judgement—allowing space for reflection, imagination, and complexity to coexist (Bohm, 1998; Dore, 2020; Koestler, 1969/1990). This openness to relationality is central to the Deferring Judgement Framework, which positions creativity as a practice extending beyond individual cognition to a systemic, interconnected process that includes the environment, unseen forces, and intuitions (Clark, 2008; Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Gallagher, 2022; Polanyi, 2009).

This approach asks us to move beyond human-centric views, considering creativity as a relational practice with the unknown and unknowable. Creativity here is not an isolated act but an act of reverence—a connection with unseen forces influencing creation. This aligns with Australian Indigenous knowledge systems, which view respect and relationality as more than human interactions, fostering a holistic approach that acknowledges and honours the unknown's role in the creative process (Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020).

Thus, deferring judgement becomes an art form—a stance that combines scientific rigour with artistic sensitivity, enabling both relational and transformative dimensions of creativity. This framing invites a shift from creativity as problem-solving (Guilford, 1950; Puccio et al., 2012; Runco, 2014) to creativity as discovery (Getzels, 1975; Pope, 2005). The Deferring Judgement Framework, therefore, is not simply a model but an integrated experience that cultivates ethical, imaginative possibility (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994).

By presenting this creation myth as the foundation of the thesis, I propose that creativity is inherently generative, ethical, and relational—a practice that fosters both individual (Rhodes, 1961) and collective transformation (Glăveanu, 2010; Montuori, 2022), inviting you to embrace rather than resolve the unknown (Bohm, 1998; Koestler, 1969/1990; Ziporyn, 2009). This journey encapsulates the essence of the thesis, blending relationality, respect, and ethical awareness into a cohesive story that mirrors deferring judgement's power to move beyond fixed paradigms (Kuhn, 1962/1996), embodying a more inclusive and expansive creative practice (Glăveanu, 2014; Montuori, 2022; Nicolescu, 2014).

Orbiting the Deferring Judgement Milky Way and its Constellations

This thesis's creation myth positions deferring judgement as a cosmic entity—a galaxy binding a dynamic ecosystem of scholars, practices, and perspectives, intersecting in unpredictable ways to create new worlds (Nicolescu, 2014). Within this cosmic space, Nicolescu's (2014) third level of reality—the mystical—acts as an unseen dimension, amplifying imagination, intuition, and the transcendent possibilities that shape creative collaboration. Here, the Australian Indigenous concept of respect (Sheehan, 2011; Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020) functions like dark matter, a force that sustains the galaxy's connective fabric and infuses it with an ethical mysticism, an energy that allows diverse realities and imaginations to coexist without subsuming each other.

Relational respect, grounded in *us-two* (Yunkaporta, 2019) and an attunement to life, honours the interconnectivity of all entities, catalysing new worlds within this creative galaxy. In this sense, the galaxy itself is an ever-evolving *chaosmos*—a generative tension between form and formlessness, where imagination fuels the possibility of creation and the unknown (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

Nakata (2007) situates this cosmic narrative within a “contested space,” a dynamic zone where different systems of thought, values, and knowledge interact and sometimes collide at the coalface of inquiry. This contested space becomes a site of transformation, where boundaries are both challenged and negotiated, catalysing the intersections that fuel new possibilities (Bohm, 1998; Koestler, 1969/1990; Larocca, 2023). Within this galaxy, stars represent transdisciplinary beacons, each one a shining, pulsating entity of knowledge from distinct epistemologies, resonating with the plurality at the core of deferring judgement. Here, the galaxy orbits around the cosmic tension between divergent perspectives, a perpetual dance that enriches creativity by inviting multiple ways of seeing and knowing into the process (Montuori, 2005; Pope, 2005).

The Deferring Judgement Framework Milky Way

In the cosmic landscape of this thesis, the *Deferring Judgement Framework* forms its own Milky Way—a galaxy binding together diverse energies of flowing through the system with relational respect, each intermingling within the vast field of expansive possibilities. Csikszentmihalyi's flow (1997) suspends time, acting as a connective force in which action and awareness merge effortlessly, enveloping all entities in a dynamic, co-creative

engagement that sustains the energy of this cosmic system. The Deferring Judgement Framework's Milky Way transcends the earthly limitations of Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) status quo-bound model, which constrains creative potential. Freed from these constraints, flow becomes part of a greater constellation, upholding the tension essential to the framework and inviting creation that reaches beyond singular perspectives.

This framework reaches beyond structured form alone; it opens phenomenological spaces attuned to lived experience and the embodied insights (Claxton, 2015; Husserl, 2013) that surface in subtle, often unspoken ways, drawing inspiration from the studio's grounded, interactive environment as described by Dorst (2024). Here, deferring judgement becomes a tangible practice—an embodied, relational approach where perspectives coexist and harmonise without merging, creating fertile ground for discoveries that bridge individual insights with collective understanding.

In the clouds of ever-forming gas and dust, the Deferring Judgement Framework coalesces through three gravitational forces that hold this cosmic system in place—*Being*, *Doing*, and *Knowing*—each radiating distinct energies that sustain the galaxy's generative, interconnected landscape. These forces provide the framework with ethical, relational, intellectual, and operational dimensions, forming focal points where complementary epistemologies and embodied experiences flow together, yet remain distinct.

Being as the Primordial Energy of the Milky Way

In the cosmic myth of the Deferring Judgement Framework, *Being* serves as the primordial force—the foundational pulse within the galaxy that binds together lifeworlds (Husserl, 2012), fostering an atmosphere where interconnectedness is palpable and each perspective is held in its full integrity. Just as the first cosmic particles coalesce to birth stars and planets, *Being* creates a sacred (Dorst, 2024), liminal space (Wagoner & Zittoun, 2021) where different perspectives are invited to intersect and harmonise without collapsing into one another (Bohm, 1980/2005; Overgaard, 2015).

Drawing from Rigolot's (2020) concept of transdisciplinarity as a state that goes beyond integration to become a way of being, *Being* in this framework transcends rigid boundaries of knowledge, instead fostering a cosmic openness that nurtures the emergent potential of each unique encounter. This ethical dimension of *Being*, rooted in phenomenological experience, mirrors the unformed void from which the universe first

emerged—a space of pure potential where encounters spark embodied insights and invite exploration beyond immediate categorisation. Each intersection, each gravitational pull, honours a respect for the “other” (Levinas, 1998; Nakata, 2007; Sheehan, 2011; Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020) as a mystery, an unknown universe in itself.

Being is both the unseen gravity holding the Milky Way together and the cosmic breath that enables each encounter to unfold in its own time, allowing creative potential to emerge through presence and patience. In this dimension, *Being* is both the unseen gravity binding the Milky Way and the cosmic breath that enables each encounter to unfold in its own time. This patient, open space aligns with Rigolot’s (2020) transdisciplinary vision, creating an atmosphere that values presence over product and interconnectedness over conclusion (Glăveanu, 2010). Here, *Being* is an extended consciousness (Damasio, 2000) to hold space for the unspoken, to respect ambiguity, and to engage with the other as an essential part of a co-creative journey.

Through this lens, *Being* becomes the invitation to explore without rush, to dwell in the suspension of judgement where the interconnected fabric of the galaxy itself is continually re-woven. This atmosphere of *Being* sustains the galaxy’s capacity for infinite expansion, honouring each lived experience as a star in its own right within the larger constellation.

Doing as the Kinetic Force in the Milky Way

In the mythic landscape of the Deferring Judgement Framework, *Doing* represents the vibrant, kinetic energy pulsing through the galaxy—a constellation of creative encounters where ideas, practices, and disciplines interact to bring form to the formless. Like the swirling matter within a nebula, *Doing* embodies the operational dimension that drives the universe’s unfolding, embodying both the familiar and the yet-to-be-realised. Within this cosmic studio (Dorst, 2024), each action becomes a catalyst for creation, a coalescing force that invites makers and thinkers alike to engage fully, blurring the boundaries between observer and participant (Nicolescu, 2014).

Informed by the aesthetics of art-making (Claxton, 2015; Knowles & Cole, 2007; Magsamen & Ross, 2023; Ravelli et al., 2014; Schön, 1983), *Doing* thrives within the tension between structure and spontaneity, echoing the principles of Daoism’s balance of opposites (Ziporyn, 2009). Each gesture within this galaxy reflects the rhythm of a lived, embodied

process—where every stroke, movement, or material choice contributes to a fluid, interconnected landscape of understanding (Bruno, 2014; Deger, 2016). This aligns with the phenomenological insights of Merleau-Ponty (1962), positioning the Milky Way as a celestial body, an active co-creator of knowing.

Through this lens, *Doing* becomes the playground of the galaxy—a place where each encounter sparks and shapes new insights, amplifying the framework’s operational dimension and opening pathways to deeper relationality and interdependence (Brown, 2010; Huizinga, 1944/1980; Ziporyn, 2009). Each act of making becomes an act of unfolding potential, ensuring that the galaxy remains in constant motion, an infinite tapestry of interwoven practices and perspectives.

Knowing as the Relational Constellation of the Milky Way

In the mythic landscape of the Deferring Judgement Framework, *Knowing* shines as a constellation that unites the galaxy—embodying a dimension of relational understanding that expands with each encounter. This perspective transcends conventional knowledge-making by embracing imagination (Glăveanu, 2020; Vygotsky, 1967), play (Huizinga, 1944/1980), and abduction as pathways to new insights, where creativity and understanding arise from interconnectedness rather than isolated facts. *Knowing* here embodies a collective consciousness, resonating with Ungunmerr’s (2017) concept of *Dadirri*—a deep, quiet listening that honours the voices of others and the rhythms of nature, positioning knowledge as a continuous unfolding rather than a commodity to be owned.

Drawing from Indigenous principles (Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020; Nakata, 2007), *Knowing* becomes a relational practice rooted in respect for each perspective as a valuable contribution to the whole. Each point of knowledge is held within a larger constellation, contributing to a shared path that honours both diversity and unity. This relational approach challenges traditional constructs of knowledge production often bound to capitalist structures, where knowledge is seen as something to be controlled, measured, or commodified (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). Instead, *Knowing* within this framework favours interdependence and the ethical responsibilities we share with one another and the more-than-human world (Ungunmerr, 2017; Roach, 2021).

Guided by Daoist principles of balance and non-interference (Ziporyn, 2009), *Knowing* unfolds as an intuitive, emergent process, aligned with Kaufman’s (2014) notion of

“messy minds”—creative minds comfortable with ambiguity and contradiction. This cosmic network of *Knowing* invites a fluid interplay between structured learning and spontaneous insight, where participants engage as both learners and creators, honouring the role of imagination and the creative tensions that propel understanding beyond conventional boundaries (Bruner, 1986). Here, *Knowing* is less about resolution and more about dwelling within an open space of discovery, allowing insights to gestate and transform through imaginative, abductive thinking (Peirce, 1903; Glăveanu, 2020).

In this expansive landscape, each act of *Knowing* reflects the framework’s commitment to curiosity, respect, and play. Every interaction becomes a chance to engage deeply, where knowledge is a process, not a product. *Knowing* in this dimension invites practitioners to approach learning as a constellation of relationships rather than an accumulation of static facts, fostering a galaxy where each star’s light contributes to an infinite, interconnected path of understanding. This approach opens the possibility for knowledge as an ever-renewing co-creation—one that honours the depths of quiet listening, the spark of imagination, and the transformative potential of relational insight.

The J-Curve Planet Nested in the Arm of the Deferring Judgement Milky Way

In the galaxy of the Deferring Judgement Framework, the J-Curve model emerges as a distinct planet, embodying the journey of transformation, where each encounter with the unknown brings challenges, growth, and shifts in understanding. Orbiting within this galaxy, the J-Curve reflects the emotional and relational pathway of moving from entrenched perspectives to openness, bridging paradigms with empathy, compassion, and the potential for paradigm shifts (Bohm, 1980/2005; Koestler, 1969/1990; Kuhn, 1962/1996; Singer & Klimecki, 2014).

We are propelled through this galaxy by an oscillating dance of chaosmos (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994)—a productive tension between order and chaos that gives rise to continual novelty and possibility (Whitehead, 1929/1978). This cosmic pulse challenges capitalist, individual-centric paradigms that have historically dominated creativity (Glăveanu, 2020a; Guilford, 1967; M. Rhodes, 1961; Runco & Jaeger, 2012), reminding us that creativity is woven from relational and collective threads. Life on the J-Curve Planet constantly evolves, embodying Kuhn’s (1962/1996) paradigm shifts as we journey through unfamiliar territories,

each orbit around the J-Curve Planet offers encounters with insights and possibilities that can redefine our worldview.

The J-Curve planet reflects the messy, paradoxical pathways of the mind (Kaufman, 2014), where curiosity, wonder, and tolerance for ambiguity are crucial (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; S. B. Kaufman, 2014, 2018; Maslow, 1962/2013; Wallas, 1926). Compassion becomes a bridge connecting us across divides, cultivating a respect that encompasses human and more-than-human realms in a cosmic act of interbeing (Yunkaporta, 2019).

In this journey, imagination (Vygotsky, 1967; Glăveanu, 2020) serves as both fuel and compass, illuminating pathways for growth and enabling us to traverse relational spaces with ethical curiosity. This shared experience of deferring judgement invites us to suspend preconceived ideas, encountering others with openness and prioritising relational understanding over rigid categorisation. Each orbit around the J-Curve offers a chance to participate in a cosmic narrative where personal biases and stories are woven into a larger tapestry, viewed through the lens of autoethnography (Adams & Herrmann, 2020), situating individual experiences within the dynamic, collective dance of the galaxy.

The J-Curve Planet is thus not a static place but a lived experience—an ongoing journey through empathy, compassion, and relational understanding, evolving from resistance to curiosity and connection. In this galaxy, our spaceship propels us forward, driven by imagination, empathy, and the productive tension of chaosmos, with each orbit extending the galaxy's capacity for understanding, weaving new relational constellations in the cosmic dance of possibility and co-creation.

The Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model: Shining Stars of Knowledge

The Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model represents the galaxy's nursery of stars—a space where knowledge emerges in various forms, some ideas in their infancy and others on the verge of imploding, becoming black holes that open gateways to new universes (Kuhn, 1962/1996). This model encapsulates the rich interweaving of knowledge, where stars, each representing an insight or field, are born, live, and, in some cases, die only to catalyse new growth. G. Bateson's (G. Bateson, 1987; Montuori, 2005) concept of “patterns that connect” offers a foundational structure here, pointing to the intricate relationships between these stars, a web of knowledge that fosters understanding beyond individual disciplines.

In this celestial space, Montuori's (2008) framing of transdisciplinarity as an orientation rather than an end goal resonates. It invites us to explore knowledge as a process of connection, always in motion and challenging fixed boundaries. Transdisciplinary inquiry, as Rigolot (2020) highlights, is not just the synthesis of fields but a way of being that integrates divergent perspectives, creating "stars" that shine light on complex, interconnected issues. It is an approach that appreciates knowledge as simultaneously material, symbolic, and mystical (Nicolescu, 2002), each level contributing to the galaxy's creative evolution. Stars that push the limits of their structures eventually implode, embodying Kuhn's (1962/1996) paradigm shifts and sparking rebirth within the galaxy's tapestry of knowledge.

This cosmic dance embodies Whitehead's (1929/1978) "process philosophy," where the galaxy's oscillating tension between chaos and order creates perpetual novelty. This productive tension challenges capitalist and individual-centric paradigms that have traditionally defined creativity (Montuori & Purser, 1995), inviting a shift toward a more relational and collective understanding. The galaxy is alive with stars in formation, reflecting Steiner and Scholz's (2015) work on complexity, where systems constantly adapt, evolve, and integrate diverse viewpoints into new configurations, shaping knowledge itself.

The Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model, then, is not a rigid structure but a constellation that adapts and re-forms, held together by an ethic of care and curiosity. Glăveanu's (2010) work on creativity emphasises this as a dialogical process, where stars connect across divides, fostering a relational openness. Within this cosmic framework, May's (1975) vision of creativity as a struggle with uncertainty and the unknown finds its place, reminding us that knowledge itself is an ongoing, co-creative journey. This galaxy weaves together disciplines, perspectives, and experiences, forming a constellation that guides us through the complexities of knowing and unknowing in the cosmic dance of inquiry.

A Living, Breathing Cosmos of Creation

In this cosmic journey through creativity, each model contributes a unique force that, together, advances a holistic understanding of collaborative creative practice. The Deferring Judgement Milky Way, the J-Curve Planet, and the nursery of Transdisciplinary Stars illustrate a universe in motion—one that honours curiosity, relational respect, and the power of imagination. This thesis positions creativity as an embodied journey, weaving an interconnected fabric of knowledge that bridges the known and the unknown, the structured

and the fluid, and the cognitive with the imaginative. As we orbit this cosmic landscape, we are invited to pause, to defer judgement, and to embrace the relational interplays that reveal new insights and possibilities.

9.9. Future Research Directions

This research opens multiple avenues for further exploration within creativity studies and beyond. The Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model, the J-Curve model, and the Deferring Judgement Framework have revealed intricacies in how creativity operates across individual, collective, and systemic levels. These insights provide fertile ground for deepening our understanding of creativity's nuanced, embodied, and relational nature, and expanding these models' practical applications across diverse contexts.

Embodiment and Sensory Knowledge in Creativity

Future research could further investigate how sensory and embodied experiences influence creative processes. This thesis highlighted the critical role of the body in catalysing deferring judgement, with sensory elements (such as touch, scent, and movement) proving essential in shifting participants into new states of awareness. More empirical studies could explore how various sensory stimuli affect creativity in different disciplines, potentially developing a richer understanding of the connections between bodily states and cognitive flexibility. Cross-disciplinary research integrating neuroscience, psychology, and creative practice could provide a deeper understanding of how these sensory engagements stimulate creative breakthroughs.

Longitudinal Studies of Deferring Judgement

Given that deferring judgement is not a one-off event but a cyclical, iterative process, future research could explore the long-term effects of this practice. Longitudinal studies could track individuals, teams, or organisations over time to observe how the intentional practice of deferring judgement affects their creativity, emotional resilience, and relational dynamics. Such research could explore whether continuous engagement with this framework leads to more sustainable, ethical innovation and enables participants to manage complex challenges more effectively over time.

Systems Approach to Creative Collaboration

The Deferring Judgement Framework invites further exploration into how creative processes can be understood through a systems lens. Future research could investigate how this framework can be applied in different sectors—such as education, business, and community development—where collaboration between diverse stakeholders is crucial. Understanding how deferring judgement operates within complex systems, particularly in high-stakes environments, would provide valuable insights into how collective creativity can be harnessed to address global challenges. Additionally, further inquiry into how non-human and environmental actors are involved in these systems could enrich the ethical dimensions of creative practice.

Integration with Non-Western Perspectives

This research has begun to explore integrating non-Western knowledge systems into creative practices. Future studies could deepen this inquiry by collaborating with Indigenous scholars and practitioners to develop a more nuanced understanding of how these knowledge systems inform creativity and innovation. Further research could investigate how the principles of deferring judgement resonate with Indigenous philosophies of relationality, reciprocity, and ethical stewardship, offering new perspectives on how creativity can be practised in ways that honour and sustain cultural and environmental integrity.

Technology and AI in Deferring Judgement

As artificial intelligence (AI) continues transforming how we collaborate and innovate, it raises critical questions about how AI can support or hinder the practice of deferring judgement. Future research could explore how AI tools can be designed to facilitate openness, curiosity, and emotional engagement in creative processes. Can AI systems assist in fostering the deferral of judgement, or does this remain a uniquely human capability? Understanding how AI intersects with human creativity, particularly in collaborative settings, could lead to new models of human-machine interaction that honour the relational and ethical dimensions highlighted in this research.

Educational Application of the Models

The models developed in this thesis—especially the Transdisciplinary Inquiry Model and the J-Curve—offer valuable tools for educators seeking to foster more holistic, creative learning environments. Future research could explore how these models can be adapted for pedagogical use, particularly in fostering students’ emotional resilience and ethical engagement. Investigating how deferring judgement can be incorporated into educational curricula, particularly in higher education, would provide insights into how students can be better equipped to navigate uncertainty and complexity in their learning journeys. Collaborative studies with educators across various disciplines could help refine these models into practical tools that enhance both teaching and learning experiences.

Practical Tools for Facilitators and Practitioners

While the Deferring Judgement Framework has significant theoretical implications, future research could focus on developing more concrete, practical tools for facilitators, coaches, and creative practitioners. This could involve creating resources, guidelines, or training programs that help practitioners apply the framework in their daily work. Case studies and action research could document how these tools are implemented in real-world settings, offering further refinement and adaptation based on feedback from practitioners and participants alike.

Exploration of Creative Ecosystems

Future research could extend the systems thinking introduced in the Deferring Judgement Framework to explore the concept of creative ecosystems. These ecosystems would include the immediate collaborators and the broader networks of relationships, resources, and environmental factors that influence creativity. Research could examine how creativity flourishes (or struggles) in different ecosystems and how interventions—based on deferring judgement principles—could support more resilient, adaptive, and innovative creative communities.

9.10. Summary

Deleuze’s (1988/1995) concept of “middles” encapsulates the essence of this thesis. Creativity, as I have come to understand it, unfolds in these dynamic, evolving spaces where

different perspectives intersect, connect, and transform. This is where possibilities are imagined, and innovation emerges. My transdisciplinary approach has allowed me to embrace these intersections fully, transcending the confines of any one discipline and instead navigating a rich, interconnected terrain. Montuori's (2005, 2012) framework of transdisciplinary inquiry was the foundation for this work, and it has provided the guiding principles for deferring judgement throughout.

The entire research process was a practice of deferring judgement, an NTRO within an NTRO. It was messy at times, unsettled, and at points disorienting. Pushed to the brink of surrender, I had to step back and let the ideas and experiences incubate, trusting that clarity would emerge. Moreover, it revealed a coherence beneath the apparent chaos—an elegant choreography guiding my steps.

In the liminal spaces, where vulnerability and structure meet, paradoxes are held, and creative transformation takes place, I discovered the true essence of my practice. This process has become a personal metaphor for how I have navigated my life's disruptions and challenges, offering me a way to move through trauma and emerge with greater compassion, resilience, and ethical awareness.

This thesis has been more than a piece of academic work; it has been an act of creative becoming. It embodies my belief that creativity is not just about producing outcomes or solutions but about the continuous interplay of being, knowing, and doing. Through the application of transdisciplinary inquiry, the emotional resilience of the J-Curve, and the ethical, systemic perspective of the Deferring Judgement Framework, I have come to see creativity as a practice that transcends traditional boundaries, unites diverse perspectives, and opens up endless possibilities for personal and collective transformation.

As I move forward, these insights remind me of the importance of embracing complexity, uncertainty, and the unseen. By deferring judgement and remaining open to what emerges, I am confident that my work and understanding of creativity will continue to evolve, offering new pathways for growth and connection in the ever-shifting landscape of knowledge creation.

As we reach the end of this thesis, I invite you to take a moment to pause and reflect on the journey we have taken together. Before drawing any final conclusions, consider deferring your judgement one last time. What new insights or possibilities might emerge if you allow yourself to sit with the tensions, uncertainties, and complexities we have explored?

Rather than seeking immediate closure, I encourage you to stay open, curious, and receptive to what may unfold in the days ahead. What connections, questions, or realisations might surface if you simply give them time and space to breathe?

Figure 41: Creative Universe of Us-Two



In the “creative universe of us-two” (Yunkaporta, 2019), we are woven into a constellation of relationships, honouring the seen and unseen threads that connect us. This cosmos invites us not only to look outward but to feel our place within its boundless, shared space. Royalty free image, NASA.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Collage of NTROs and Visual Memory Palace

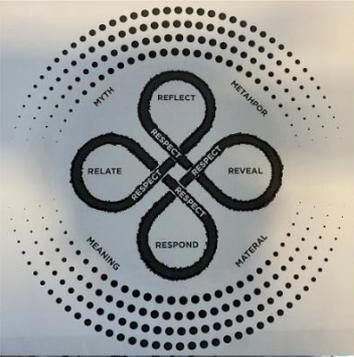
Appendix B: Visualise Your Thesis Entry

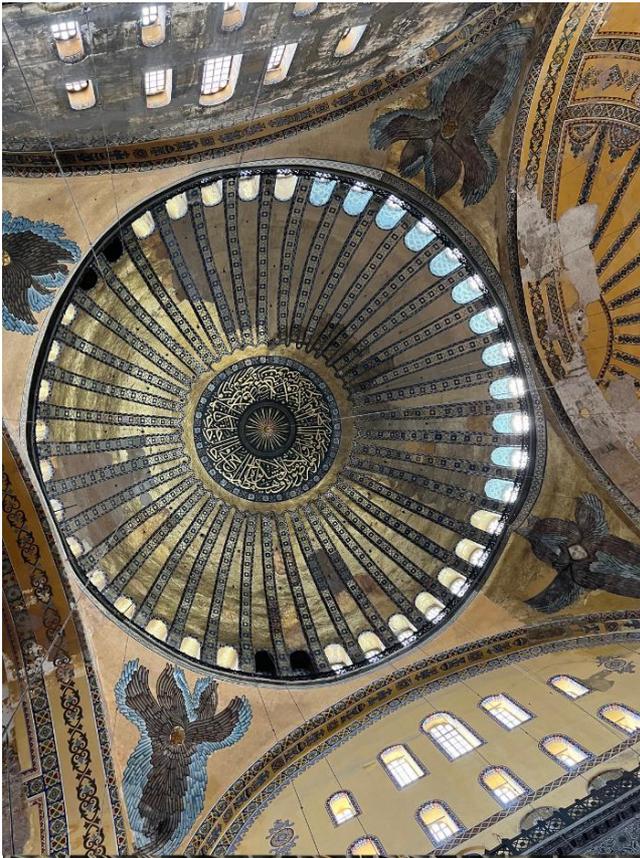
Appendix C: Zoom Call with Elaine

Appendix D: Early Paper on Creative Framework Development

APPENDIX A: Collage of NTROs and Visual Memory Palace

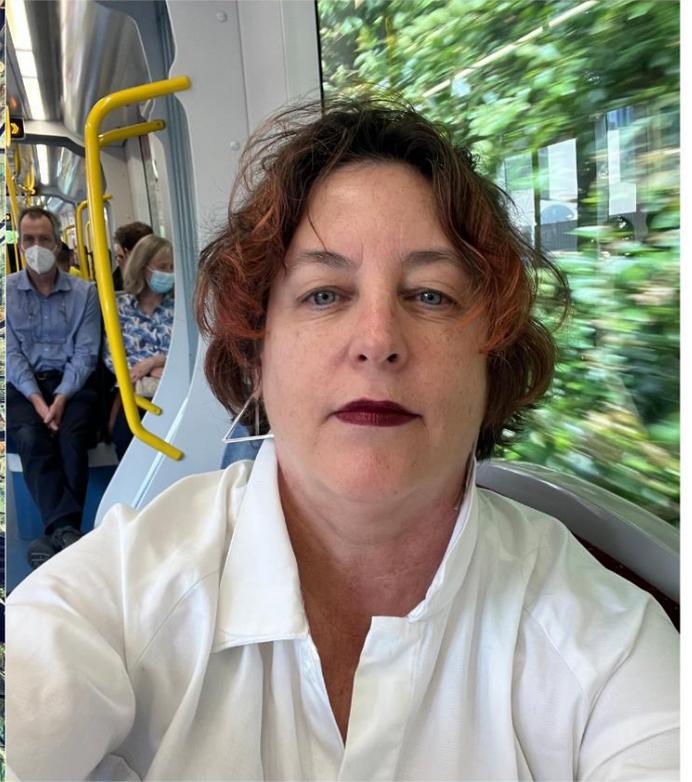
This appendix features a collage I created of my NTROs, showcasing various arts-based methods and photographs from creative sessions, displayed over several pages. This meta NTRO reflects my intuitive experimentation within my practice, capturing the process of gathering inspiration, uncovering insights, and engaging with materials to construct a visual memory palace. This approach deepened my understanding of deferring judgement at a visceral, embodied level, emphasising openness, exploration, and discovery throughout the creative process.

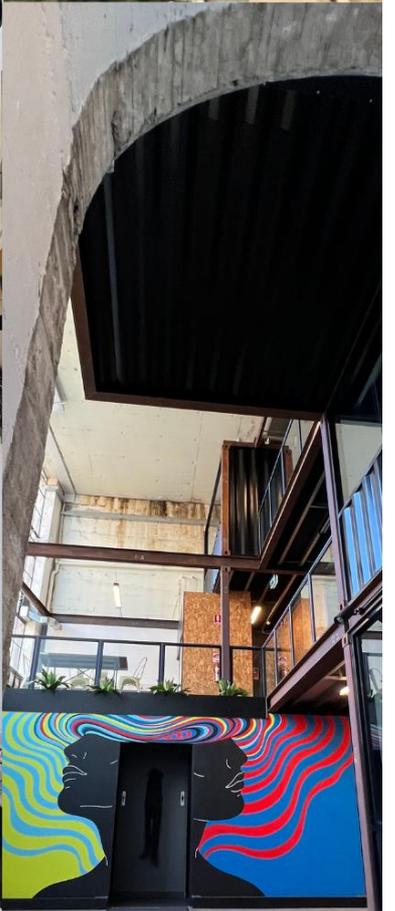












Karin Lindgaard



Time to live...Berlin, Oslo and Sidney is waiting for us 😊 4:45 pm



There is a need that drives me here today. A need to work something through visually. Something I am trying to surface that isn't looking to be expressed in words. It's their precision that makes them unsuitable for this task.

And here's what emerged. I really like it. There is some accidental good fortune with the composition, which taught me that I can afford to be more playful with this exercise. Less about sourcing the perfect image, designing the perfect layout and then trying to think way too deeply about what I am trying to say and just place them and see what they say. I am reminded of the quote I found this week: "What if creativity is less about doing and more about receiving and allowing?" Yumi Sakugawa.

I really love this piece because it makes me question what I think I need to be, do, know to explore this space. I know more than I think I do and this is the first piece I have created that I don't want to fix. It is complete. It gives me confidence to explore what is emerging as a visual practice without it needing to be something that fits into a preordained script and enjoy that space without forcing anything. It is a timely reminder that I approach life without a lot of force and direction and that is good most of the time but not all. Life is a balance.



THE DICHOTOMY OF CREATIVITY

"I" PARADIGM OF CREATIVITY'

Eminent thinker / genius
 Creative agents that operate outside of culture
 Personality more important than context
 Person creates product²
 Person defies the status quo
 Creative content
 Creativity as a concentrated power (person)
 Problem solving
 Singular viewpoint
 Measuring outputs
 The act of creation that is important
 Measurable
 Creativity as an action

"WE" PARADIGM OF CREATIVITY

Society and culture as creative agents
 Creative agents are a product of culture
 Culture and context influence personality
 People produce affordances
 People's questions emerge from the status quo
 Creativity in context
 Creativity as a distributed power (social)
 Possibility generating
 Perspectival
 Curious about the liminal spaces
 The quality of the dialogue that is valued
 Diffused
 Creativity as an agent

Darwin would have been surprised by how evolution is characterised today with an economic lens.³ The way we conceptualise the world determines what captures our imagination and attention. Science is seen as value-free, objective, or even the appropriate source of our values. Truthful, objective and reasoned view of reality. The idea of the self-interested individual in competition for scarce resources is a metaphorical concept with enduring influence. These metaphors are living parts of myths, which form our mental maps. We may have a mythical map in our heads that guides our thinking. It would determine our values, behaviours, and perception of what we think of as reality. For example, though we are not machines, we are ruled by these metaphors.

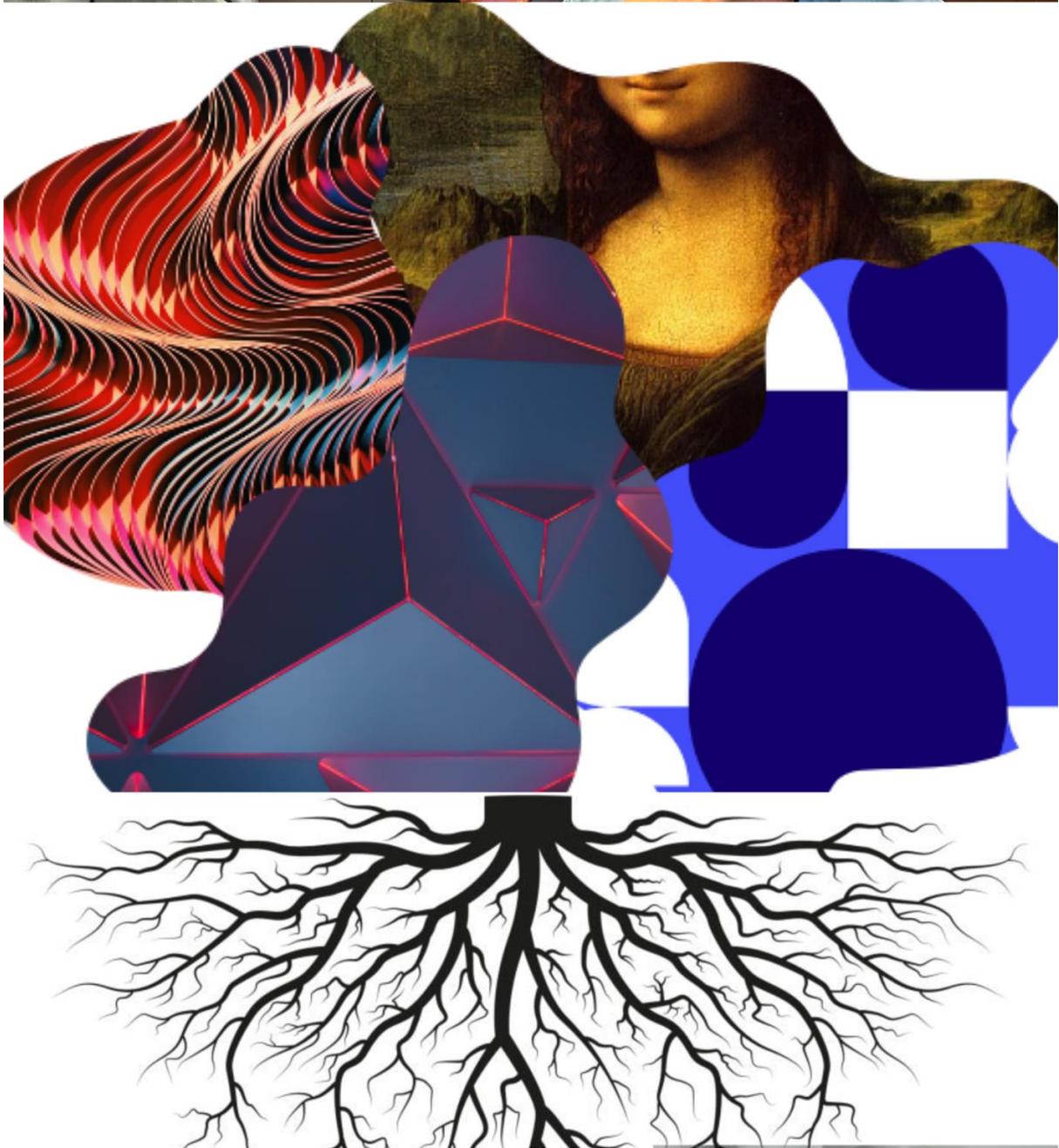
After playing with the *Dichotomy of Creativity* layout, I appreciate that there is a deeper nuance I wanted to communicate. The *I paradigm* conceptualises creativity in terms of control and power. It valorises creativity as a product that we have the know-how to control, shape and meld to our environment. The *I paradigm* research reflects this as it is about the ability to operationalise, commercialise and, therefore, weaponise creativity. It is a force that can be tamed and a tool for subjugation. Creativity is conceived of as being optimistic, generative and humanistic, keeping its darkened underbelly from being discerned. Not that I think there is some hidden agenda.

The myth of progress as epitomised by the survival of the fittest contributes to creativity being seen as a force for dominance and survival. However, Darwin did not mean only the strongest survive—fitness is the ability to adapt to the environment rather than exploit it. The fittest are the most flexible, malleable and creative as they can occupy new niches to enable their children (offspring and/or ideas) to live on.

Creativity conceived as a problem-solution tool ignores others' perspectives. It contributes to our inability to effectively solve our societal issues like climate change, inequities, discrimination, and poverty/wealth gap, to name a few. In my view, the idea that we can use creativity to solve our problems is hubristic. To paraphrase Einstein, the same thinking that created the problem cannot solve it.







LEDELSE / Lederverktøy

Lederverktøy

Flere verktøy finner du på dagensperspektiv.no

Kreativt lederskap: Lekenhet + ferdigheter = Kreativitet



Paulina Larocca mener man som leder bør våge å utsette oftere og stille flere spørsmål dersom man vil utvikle et kreativt lederskap.
FOTO: KNUT PETTER RØNNE

De fleste ledere konkluderer for raskt. Bli flinkere til å utsette. Det vil bidra til mer kreative medarbeidere, mener innovasjonseksperter.

Av Knut Petter Rønne
kpr@dagensperspektiv.no

Paulina Larocca er en amerikanskfødt australier med base i Sydney. I sommer var hun på Norges-besøk, der hun blant annet holdt workshop om kreativt lederskap ved Sentralen i Oslo.

For kreativitet er en mangelvare i dagens arbeidsliv, ifølge Paulina Larocca.

Absolut Vodka

Og hun vet litt om kreativitet. Før hun gjorde australier av seg på heltid har hun i 20 år jobbet med innovasjon hos noen av de største merkevarene i brennevinsbransjen. For både Johnny Walker Whisky og Absolut Vodka har hun stått bak noen av deres mest spinnvillige markedsføringsstunt.

Hun har også utdanning innen innovasjon og kreativ forskning, har skrevet en rekke bøker om emnet og lever i dag godt som rådgiver og foredragsholder.

Kreativitet handler ikke om konsensus og enighet, begynner Larocca. – Det er heller ikke slik at man trenger havutsikt, urtete og ro for å finne fram til sin egen kreativitet. Sorg, sinne og frustrasjon kan også inspirere til kreativitet, sier hun.

Men evnen til lekenhet er avgjørende. Du må våge for å kunne finne kreativitet, mener Paulina Larocca, og presenterer sin egen enkle, men akk så vanskelige formel for kreativitet:

Lekenhet + Kunnskap = kreativitet.

«A state of mind»

Spør du en gruppe mennesker om hva kreativitet er, får du mange svar. De fleste går omtrent i følgende leie:

Å gjøre ting annerledes enn vi er vant til Spon-

tanitet Gå et nytt sted med kjent stoff Problemløsning Hardt og ofte smertefullt arbeid

– Kreativitet kan være alt det der. Kreativitet er «a state of mind», sier Larocca.

Mad Men

Begrepet «kreativitet» er nokså nytt. Det fantes ikke i noen ordbøker før 1930, hevder Larocca.

– Det var en forretningsmann som het Albert Whithouse som først brukte dette begrepet. I 1927, forteller hun. – Mannen er for lengst glemt, men ikke ordet.

For de som har sett TV-serien Mad Men – om reklamebransjen i New York på 1950- og 60-tallet – så beskriver den tiden da begrepet kreativitet ble allemannssie. Det var da snakk om «The big idea» – den store ideen.

– Men reklamebransjen ødela også mye av begrepet, mener Paulina Larocca. – Alt handlet om kreativ annonsering og om penger.

Men da forskeren og psykologen Howard Gardner ved Harvard i 1983 publiserte sine teorier om flere typer intelligens (multiple intelligences) – herav kreativ intelligens – så fikk begrepet flere og nye bein å stå på.

I dag er det opplest og vedtatt at det finnes mange typer intelligens – fra kunstnerisk, logisk og kreativ til «gatesmart».

Og det finnes flere typer kreativitet. Du har den typisk kunstneriske kreativiteten eller den som skaper nye tjenester og produkter. Men også mennesker som har det ille lærer seg ofte å være kreative for å takle utfordringer og overstige hindringer i eget liv.

iPhone har mye av skylda

Hvorfor er det da så vanskelig for mange å være kreative? Hvorfor må vi på kurs for å lære? Hvor-

for bremses arbeidsdagen kreativiteten hos så mange?

For Paulina Larocca finnes det mange bremsere for kreativiteten. For det første er for mange konkrete og rigide målsettinger og kategoriseringer av arbeidsoppgaver og medarbeidere ikke noe som bidrar til utpreget kreativitet.

– Det er greit med mål. Og alle virksomheter vil jo tjene penger, men for mange «bokser» og kategoriseringer er drepende for kreativiteten, påpeker hun.

Dessuten er de tre «B-stedene» for kreativ tenking ødelagt, mener hun. De tre B-ene er «Bath, Bed og Bus» (baderom, soverom og bussen).

– Der tenkte vi tidligere helt fritt. I dag har vi selskap av smarttelefonen. Det bidrar til å hemme kreative tanker, mener Paulina Larocca.

Et kjent diagram som skal illustrere når man er mest kreativ, viser den såkalte flytsonen.

Den sier at man er mest kreativ når man scorer høyt på ferdigheter og har mange utfordringer – men samtidig har fravær av både redsel og kjedsomhet.

– Det er en bra illustrasjon, men husk at mange blir kreative når de er redde. Og når man virkelig kjeder seg, så jobber hjernen på høytt, påpeker Larocca.

Å skape en kreativ kultur

Hva så med kreativ ledelse? Kan man bedrive den slags?

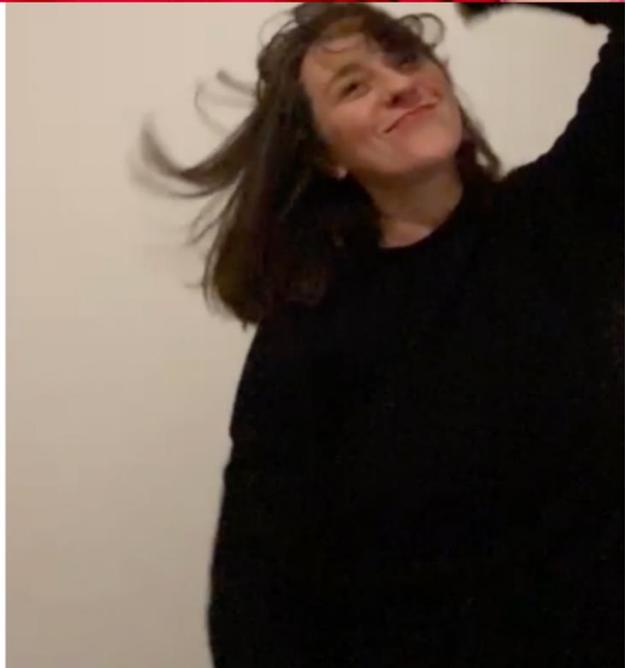
– Kreativt lederskap handler om å skape en kultur der alle kan ha ideer, føler at de blir verdsett og har ansvar for å bidra til en kultur for innovasjon, sier Larocca.

– Men hva er forskjellen mellom kreative ledere og «resten av leder-gjengen»?

– Kreative ledere forstår at de ikke har alle svarene, og at «svarene» kan komme fra den mest uventede kilden, ikke nødvendigvis den mest erfarne eller den alle mener er den smarteste.

– Kreativt lederskap aksepterer at alle har noe å bidra med, og disse lederne evner å gjøre folk komfortable med å dele tankene sine uansett hvor rare eller ukonvensjonelle de er, sier hun.

«Å lære hvordan man utsetter akkurat lenge nok, slik at 'gale' ideer får rom for å puste, fører til at vi løsner fra vår nåværende tankegang»



Weekly Appearances on 2SER Radio from 2023 and on-going



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James Murray speaks with 2ser resident creative expert, Paulina Larocca, about ways in which we can be more creative, as well as figuring out what creativity is.

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Text in at 0468441073 with your tips and tricks so that James and Paulina can discuss them on the show!

What is
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With
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APPENDIX B: Visualise Your Thesis Entry

This appendix provides a link to a video clip that further illustrates the methods, sessions, and activities central to my creative practice. The video serves as supplementary material, offering a dynamic view of the interactions, processes, and experiments that shaped my research and its outcomes.

My entry in UTS Library's 2023 Visualise Your Thesis competition, titled *Problems to Possibilities: Methods to Improve the Effectiveness of Instruction. Deferring Judgement in Creative Problem Solving: A Practice-Based Approach*, can be viewed via the following link: [Watch the Video](#)

APPENDIX C: Zoom Call with Elaine

This appendix contains a link to the transcript of my Zoom call with Elaine, featuring my notes and analysis. Key insights and observations are highlighted, with my personal reflections presented in italics.

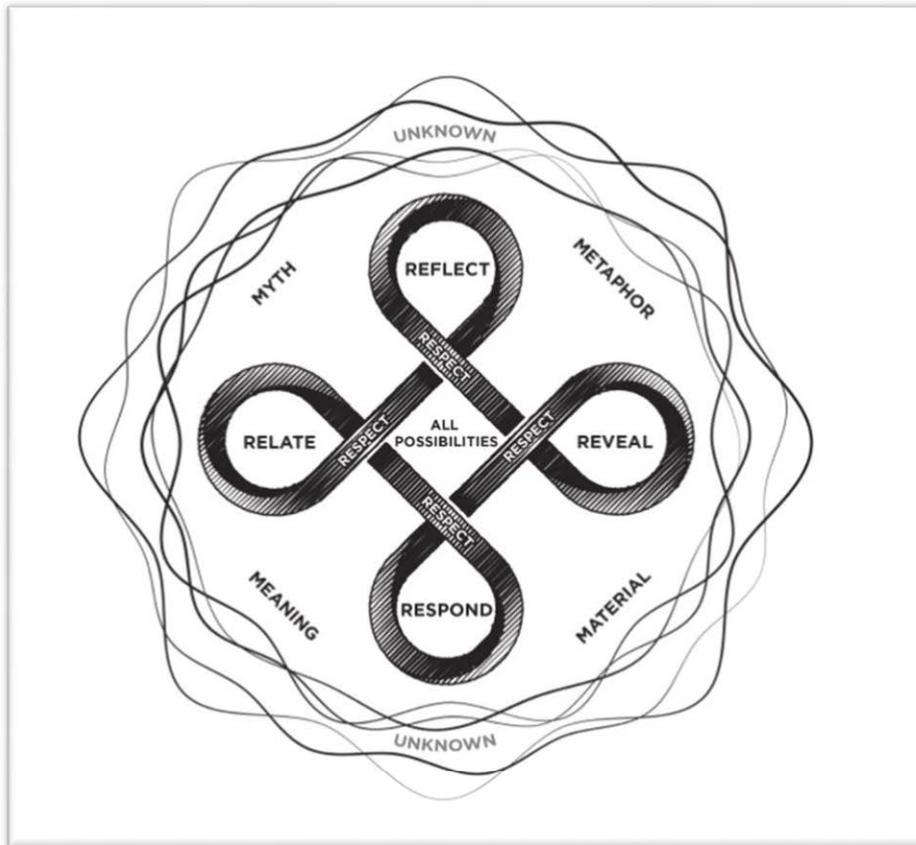
[View the Transcript](#)

APPENDIX D: Creative Framework Development

This appendix contains an earlier paper featuring an example of a creative framework I developed (Larocca, 2023), utilising the Indigenous Order of Thinking and the conceptualisation of respect (Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020). This framework played a role in informing the Deferring Judgement Framework.

Only the framework is included to highlight the foundational elements and concepts that contributed to the evolution of the Deferring Judgement Framework.

The Parable Proxy of Possibilities (PPP) Framework



This framework draws inspiration from the Indigenous Order of Thinking, where the notion of Respect is central (Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020). Respect here is not merely an absence of judgement but an active practice of seeking to understand diverse perspectives without imposing preconceived standards. This approach is foundational to the later development of the Deferring Judgement Framework, which extends these principles into a broader context of creative practice. By foregrounding respect, the framework challenges conventional approaches that often retain judgement and uphold the status quo, instead inviting a more inclusive, empathetic, and expansive way of thinking that honours multiple forms of knowledge.