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Painting Intimacy: Art-Based Research of Intimacy

Michal Lev

Lesley University, michlev@gmail.com

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PAINTING INTIMACY: ART-BASED RESEARCH OF INTIMACY

A DISSERTATION

MICHAL LEV

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

LESLEY UNIVERSITY

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Lesley University
 Graduate School of Arts & Social Sciences
 Ph.D. in Expressive Therapies Program

DISSERTATION APPROVAL FORM

Student's Name: Michal Lev

Dissertation Title: PAINTING INTIMACY: ART-BASED RESEARCH OF INTIMACY

Approvals

In the judgment of the following signatories, this Dissertation meets the academic standards that have been established for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Dissertation Committee Chairperson:	Shaun McNiff, PhD	3/11/19
Internal Committee Member:	Vivien Marcow Speiser, PhD	3/11/19
External Committee Member:	Barbara McIntyre, PhD	3/11/19
Director of the Ph.D. Program/External Examiner:	Michele Forinash, DA	3/11/19

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

Shaun McNiff

 Dissertation Director

I hereby accept the recommendation of the Dissertation Committee and its Chairperson.


Sandra Walker

 Dean, Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences

STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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ABSTRACT

This art-based research explores whether — and, if so, how — the process of painting, together with witnessing and reflection on the process and imagery, further an understanding of intimacy. The research also examines the conditions that favor intimacy, the obstacles to intimacy, and the particular features of artistic media, processes and reflection, through the editing of video footage, that can further the intimate experience. The participants in the study were five adults (including the researcher) between the ages of thirty and eighty who were familiar with the creation of visual art. Among them were three women and two men who vary in their socio-cultural characteristics and marital status. The research process included six modes of inquiry as interdependent elements: drawing and painting by the co-researchers in three experimental sessions witnessed by the researcher; reflective discussions with co-researchers; artistic responses by the researcher; a private exhibition; editing of video footage and creation of edited videos; and culminating discussions and review with the participant co-researchers. This study identified two interdependent operational elements within intimacy: commitment to the present moment and looking closely. Specific features of artistic media, processes and reflection through video acted as mediators and furthered intimate experience. These empirical qualities are: (1) persistence and continued immersion, (2) being physically close and zooming in, (3) attention to detail, and (4) sensuousness. Four conditions were found to favor the intimate experience: (1) dedication of time and space, (2) openness to seeing and being seen, (3) an urge to move closer, and (4) curiosity: the desire to question and wonder. It was noted that obstacles to intimacy include (1) mental and physical distractions, (2) the inner judge, and (3) restlessness.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

I have always been intrigued with the process of painting and its embodied effects. During my childhood, I was curious and enchanted when I witnessed my father painting in his home office. He had a special expression during those hours: his authoritative presence became softer, fully consumed with the imagery in front of him. I would sit a little behind him and follow the movements of his hand as he dipped the paintbrush in the color paste, creating a world that seemed magical to me. In those moments and in the space we shared, I was drawn to his painting materials, his tools, and his presence.

I recall the musky fragrance of oil paints and tempera in my father's studio space to this day. Those intimate memories accompanied me as I grew older and immersed in painting. In time, I realized that the creative process had the power to make me calmer, more serene and connected to myself — experiences that I later identified as intimate. My personal interest in exploring the relationship between painting and intimacy followed me into my professional practice. In my work with couples and families through art psychotherapy, I have witnessed art's manifold effects on one's connections to self and to others.

This research project builds upon my art-based pilot study (Lev, 2016), which explored whether art and art making could be considered mediators for intimacy within personal expression. I approached the process of mediating as acting between participants, serving as an intermediary or agency between persons or positions. The pilot was conducted as a part of the doctoral program of Expressive Therapies at Lesley University, in which I worked on my own, creating drawings and paintings and reflecting on them. The results of the study revealed that the empirical artistic processes of drawing

and painting suggested certain qualities of intimacy, such as the urge to move closer and the embracing of small details. It also suggested that the presence of another person was not necessary for experiencing intimacy, and that the process of making art and the resulting artworks could become mediating agents.

During this research project, I approached intimacy as a temporary experience of body and mind in which we feel closeness and familiarity within certain conditions.

The Research Questions

Four questions guide this research:

- Can the process of painting and drawing, together with witnessing and reflection on the process and imagery, further an understanding of intimacy — and if so, how?
- Are there particular qualities or features of artistic media, processes, and reflection through the editing of video footage that further intimate experience?
- What are the conditions that favor intimacy?
- What are the obstacles to intimacy?

As described in detail in Chapter III of this study, the questions changed during the project to reflect the discoveries as they unfolded naturally, in my effort to maintain transparency and accountability for the information that was entrusted to me.

My Research Paradigm: Art-based Research

I used art-based research that involved me as the researcher and participant co-researchers in artistic processes as modes of inquiry. The study was assembled incrementally, with respect for the way in which new knowledge and discoveries emerge from the creative process.

Participants and Setting

In this research project, I worked with four participant co-researchers recruited from self-referrals and acquaintances, between the ages of thirty and eighty, who differed

in their socio-cultural characteristics and marital status. I refer to them as co-researchers due to their value in informing the research questions as equals with me, the primary researcher.

Three of the co-researchers were painters and one was an art therapist who was familiar with the expressive languages of visual art. None of them had ever participated in a research study before, nor had anyone witnessed and documented their creative processes prior to this project. The research was held in the participants' private studio spaces in five different locations (including my own studio), mainly in Israel. Detailed descriptions of the study setting and participants are presented in Chapter III — The Method.

The Research Process

The research was constructed from six modes of inquiry as interdependent elements:

Drawing and painting by the co-researchers in three experimental sessions lasting approximately 90 minutes

This phase took place in the private studio space of each co-researcher while I was present as an active witness, similar to my presence during art-therapy sessions in which the client creates art while the therapist witnesses the process. The co-researchers wore a head-mount video camera while they drew and painted to enable direct focus on their hands and imagery during the process.

Reflective discussion with each co-researcher immediately after the experimental session

The discussion that followed each painting session was conducted while the two of us were seated in the studio space, looking at the painted artwork of that session. I was interested in the co-researchers' experience and reflection with the goal of eventually discussing their understanding of intimacy.

My artistic responses to individual sessions and the process of inquiry as a whole

I used painting as a mode of interpretation for my experience as a silent witness to the co-researchers' painting processes. I utilized the same painting media, materials and techniques that the co-researchers used in each experimental session as I painted alone in my own studio space. This enabled me to gain access and pay attention to the multiple ways of knowing that cannot be understood through linear, logical analysis.

A private exhibition

The exhibition, which took place after the three experimental sessions with the co-researchers and my own response-art sessions that followed, consisted of 28 artworks (the co-researchers' artworks and my own response art). Presented for myself alone, the exhibition continued for a couple of weeks, with the goal of reflecting upon the research questions, relationships between the artworks, and their possible impact when they were viewed and experienced together.

The creation of edited videos

I created five edited videos, each one approximately ten to fifteen minutes long, for each participant in the study (the co-researchers and myself). The process of editing the video footage included multiple viewings of the video files produced during the experimental painting sessions of co-researchers, my response art to their sessions, photographs of the processes and artworks, the transcribed texts and my journals. My careful examination of video footage and immersion in the body of work, while cropping and organizing videotaped moments that seemed to echo ideas from the verbal discussions and response art sessions, informing the research questions. This mode of inquiry accentuated the value of using video footage editing as a research inquiry and systematic analysis mode.

Culminating discussion and review with participant co-researchers

This phase included two reflective sessions with each co-researcher. In the first session, I met with each of the co-researchers to watch their individual edited videos, and then encouraged their reflection on the video and discussed the research questions. The information generated from these discussions was systematically explored and added to the total collection of research materials that was included in the final edited video for the whole research project. During the creation of this culminating video, which was eight minutes long, I identified elements that were common and different for all the participants in answering the research questions. Each co-researcher was then invited to a concluding discussion in which they viewed the final edited video, and then reflected and reviewed the research findings.

Study Outcomes

The literature about intimacy has mainly explored it in the context of interpersonal relationships that use quantitative and qualitative methodologies to define and assess the phenomenon. It also reflected an association between intimacy and sexuality that may cause intimacy to be excluded from the therapeutic discourse, rendering it a taboo. This is not the focus of this paper.

My study explored intimacy from an intra-personal perspective, using experimental processes of painting, video editing, witnessing and response art to define conditions that favor intimate experience and those that impede it.

The study identified two operational elements of intimacy: commitment to the present moment and looking closely. The research suggests four qualities of painting, video editing, witnessing and reflection on the creative process and artworks as facilitators of intimate experiences: (1) persistence and continued immersion, (2) physical proximity and zooming in, (3) attention to detail, and (4) sensuousness.

The study underscores the potential of expressive art therapies to invite intimacy through the following four conditions: (1) dedication of time and space, (2) openness to seeing and being seen, (3) an urge to move closer, and (4) curiosity: the desire to question and wonder. The study also suggests that obstacles to intimacy may include: (1) mental and physical distractions, (2) the inner judge, and (3) restlessness. This research shows that intimacy is temporary, of the moment, and that we can either invite intimate moments into our space or push them away.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This review of literature looks at existing literature about intimacy from an interdisciplinary perspective, as well as the possible relationship between intimacy and the creation of art, witnessing, and reflection on the process and imagery. It also discusses art-based research as the methodology in this research project, which consists of video editing, painting, witnessing and response art as research modes. The literature was reviewed in the hope of informing the following research questions:

- Can the process of painting, together with witnessing and reflection on the process and imagery further an understanding of intimacy — and if so, how?
- Are there specific qualities and features of artistic media, processes, and reflection through the editing of video footage that further intimate experience?
- What are the conditions that favor intimacy?
- What are the obstacles to intimacy?

Intimacy in Research

To date, most of the literature and research that explore intimacy is focused on interpersonal relationships between people who are close to one another, particularly couples (Blass, 2017; Carter & Carter, 2010; Chan, 2017; Wieden, 2018), and is seen as an indicator of relationship quality (Finkbeiner, Epstein, & Falconier, 2013; Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2004). Over the years, researchers invented quantifiable rating scales in order to assess and measure intimacy levels within relationships and determine the conditions that might increase or impede levels of intimacy, such as The Functional Analytic Psychotherapy Intimacy Scale (FAPIS, Leonard, 2014); the Miller Social Intimacy Scale

(MSIS, Miller, 1982); the Emotional Intimacy Scale (EIS, Sinclair & Dowdy, 2005); and the Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships (PAIR, Schaefer & Olson, 1981).

There is also ample literature about the positive correlation between high levels of intimacy, well-being and one's sense of self (Kabat-Zinn & Salzberg, 2018; Lama, 2009; Osho, 2007). Despite the importance of intimacy to well-being and in relationships, intimacy was found to hold several ambiguous meanings within the general perception of adults (Skyler, 2010), mostly erroneously associated with sexuality (Greeff, Malherbe, & Hildegarde, 2001; Ogden, 2006; Perel & Foundation, 2012). In addition, the many definitions of the word "intimacy" may at times cause it to carry no meaning at all (Kasulis, 2002).

Definitions of Intimacy

The Webster Unabridged Dictionary (2001) suggests eight definitions of the term *intimacy*, among which are:

- a close, familiar, and usually affectionate or loving personal relationship with another person or group
- a close association with or detailed knowledge or deep understanding of a place, subject, period of history, etc.
- the quality of being comfortable, warm, or familiar; privacy, especially as suitable to the telling of a secret. Some synonyms include closeness, familiarity, warmth and affection

In the Harper-Collins British Dictionary, one of the two definitions of the term were: close or warm friendship or understanding; personal relationship (Collins, 2012).

The researcher and philosopher Kasulis (2002), who explored intimacy and integrity from a cultural perspective, devoted a chapter in his book to unearthing the deeper structure of the term "intimacy." He found that the Latin origin of the word

“intimacy” meant “to share one’s innermost qualities” (p. 30). He differentiated between the intimacy that exists between objects or things, which describes a state of being, and intimacy among humans, a goal to which human beings aspire. His understanding of intimacy included the following points:

1. While intimacy is objective, it is experienced as personal rather than public.
2. In an intimate relationship, the self and the other belong together in a way that does not sharply distinguish between the two.
3. Intimate knowledge has an affective dimension.
4. Intimacy is somatic as well as psychological.
5. The ground of intimacy is not generally self-conscious, reflective, or self-illuminating (Kasulis, 2002, p. 32).

The findings also suggested that certain conditions, such as sharing the psychological space with another, must be present in order for humans to achieve intimacy with one another. These conditions included elements of trust, deep knowing, empathy, consent and ongoing will.

Obert (2016), an English linguistics and literature researcher, explored intimacy through the writings of English poets. She developed an interpersonal theory and supported Kasulis in suggesting that the difficulties in defining intimacy lay in its complexity and in its being “a unified feeling-state” (p. 26). She described intimacy as a litmus test that checks one’s proximity to *others*. Obert argued that vulnerability, curiosity, empathy, and irreducibility (an understanding that one can never fully connect with another) were the four conditions of intimacy, which coexist in an unsteady manner.

In the legal arena, a study by Albin (2016), which explored intimacy imposed on domestic workers, defined it as a form of relationship in which one was exposed to private and personal information, leading to trust and dependence between the parties.

Her definition supported that of Zelizer (2000), who proposed that intimacy reflected what happens when one receives information that is not given out publicly, directing their attention towards the information's source. Zelizer was referring to information that included elements of personal secrets, interpersonal rituals, bodily knowledge, weaknesses, and mutual memories of embarrassing events.

In the sphere of sociology scholarship, the researcher Eva Illouz (2007), who explored the junction between emotions and communication, defined intimacy as the interpersonal realm in which information and attention were transferred. This realm, which was built upon trust, affected the actions of its participants. Illouz's findings corresponded to Laurenceau's philosophical writings (Laurenceau, Barrett, & Rovine, 2005), in which he described intimacy as a temporary or continued process of exchange that involved exposure and a reflective response. Sartre, in his book *Intimacy* (Sartre & Alexander, 1960), spoke of a private and secret knowing of one's innermost physical conditions. Some examples of these intimacies may be seen in Lulu's imaginative descriptions of her husband's fingernails, the unique smell of his body, and the folds and curves of his skin. Sartre was echoed by Moore (1994), who spoke of the intimacies that existed within small communities such as families, colleagues, and neighborhoods, in public and private conditions. Moore wrote about the cracks and imperfections within these relationships, leading to intimate knowledge that was magnified and valued. Leonard Cohen later wrote and sang about secret cracks and imperfections that lead to sacred revelations of truths:

Ring the bells that still can ring;
Forget your perfect offering.
There is a crack, a crack in everything;
That's how the light gets in.
(Cohen, 1992, "Anthem").

The Experience of Intimacy

My search of literature yielded only scarce resources that defined and explored intimacy as a concept. The literature that I found described intimacy as a manifold and complex experience that results in positive effects, mental and physical alike.

Some of the descriptions for the experience of intimacy were an exchange of telepathy and divination (Goldin, 2011); an odd and powerful space where we meet (D'Erasmus, 2014); being sheltered (Bachelard, 1994); and discovering something new in the familiar (Lawrence, 2017) — in all of which perception and emotion enmesh.

Maclaren (2014) posited that the experience of intimacy involved physical touching and being touched, and in fact, is composed by them (2014). She proposed the term *inter-corporeal intimacy*, in which touching played a significant role and explained that touching an *other* and being touched by an *other* promote an awareness of the objectivity of this *other*, differentiation, and a sense of self that eventually leads to intersubjectivity. *Inter-corporeal intimacy* was the healthy form of interpersonal relations, in which one acknowledges the presence and alterity of the other. Maclaren argued that the significance of the sense of touch in intimacy explains the common metaphorical use of the word when we say that something has touched us.

D'Erasmus described feeling tension within intimacy that was produced in sub junctions — the space between two possibilities — desire and loss (2014). Maclaren also described a tension that existed in intimacy by sensing that an *other* is simultaneously near and far, close and distant (2014). According to Obert (2016), who also identified tension within intimacy, the intimate experience consisted of both curiosity and vulnerability that were charged with tension due to their inhibited paradox. Our desire to know the *other* was interwoven with a corresponding desire to be known, which translated to self-exposure. She explained that physical proximity was what we crave the most in our relationships, perhaps because of the inherent consciousness that we can

never fully enmesh with an *other*. This position, she said, fueled our curiosity towards others (Obert, 2016).

In *Handbook of Closeness and Intimacy* (Mashek & Aron, 2004), the editors assembled communication studies, clinical psychology research, family studies, social psychology and developmental writings through an interdisciplinary lens. The book aimed to provide ways to measure the constructs of closeness and intimacy by reviewing situational factors and their effects on closeness and intimacy.

Interestingly, these resources explored the phenomenon within relationships involving two or more people while focusing on the interpersonal aspects, and the majority of literature about intimacy did not consider exploring the phenomena within oneself and/or during the creation of art.

Intimacy through Art

Among the limited yet valuable resources that explored intimacy in relation to art was Dissanayake's book *Art and Intimacy* (2015). This book offers an interdisciplinary phylogeny (developmental) perspective in examining the relationship between love (used as a synonym for intimacy) and art.

Dissanayake proposed four stages within human development in which art and intimacy were intertwined: mutuality, belonging, meaning-making, and elaborating. She found that the behavioral gestures that exist in the physical development of humans — being touched in the womb, seeing and imitating with their eyes and faces, using their hands for survival in making fire, tools, scraping and molding — became symbolic gestures for the human emotional development and communication. She described *mutuality* between mother and infant as the prototype of interpersonal intimacy. According to Dissanayake, *mutuality* entailed an interpersonal experience of sharing feelings and being directed towards each other with interest and curiosity. She described art and love as taking anyone who experienced them to a realm in which body and mind

became intertwined. Physical love had spiritual effects, and divine art was experienced viscerally. Both love and art had the capacity to make us feel known by another temporarily (Dissanayake, 2015).

Intimacy in the poetic image may be seen in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (Woolf & Bradshaw, 2006). Woolf succeeded in drawing intimacies through her poetic, imaginative descriptions, such as the luminescence of candlelight as it traveled among the members of the Ramsay family. Readers were given the illusion of seeing what the Ramsays saw, feeling close to the characters as if they shared the same space and candlelight in private, familial situations that outsiders normally cannot access.

Intimacy in the film can be seen in the screenplay by Charlie Kaufman, *Being John Malkovich* (1999). In this film, characters enter the body and mind of another person (the actor John Malkovich) to gain access to alternate realms. Within these realms they communicate with other characters whom they would not have met otherwise. Kaufman used abstract and symbolic metaphors to present inner parts of the self that are rarely visited (Jonze, 1999).

In D'Erasmus's work *The Art of Intimacy: The space between* (2014), the author explored aspects of fiction writing and their relation to intimacy. She proposed that readers longed for intimacies in art to reveal beauty, but also shadows that are normally unlit, unnoticed and unseen. She posited that art offers a presentation of what we know exists but are not always aware of.

Dissanayake, who saw a primal, physical aspect to intimacy, echoed Ogden's (1989) primitive "autistic-contiguative" position, suggesting that intimacy involved a physical synchrony and mental attunement that evolve into an interest in *others* and a desire for interpersonal relationships. By linking art to intimacy, she demonstrated how using our hands to work with clay, for example, can lead to a state of intimacy because

the rhythms and the sensorimotor effects of the creative activity induce primal, developmental memories that are instilled in humans (Dissanayake, 2015).

Prolonged immersion

The development of an artwork is a process that takes place over time that normally encompasses prolonged immersion in the craft.

Studio interviews with painters in the writings of Arthur (1983) and Peppiatt (2012) revealed that the persistent immersion in painting was mindful and meditative. The meditative aspects can be related to repetitive hand movements painting involves, like the repetition of a mantra that helps to center meditators' physical presence by the persistence of a repetitive thought (Kabat-Zinn, 2005).

Mindful aspects to painting were referred to by the painter Frank Auerbach who confessed to being trapped by the painting process, as if something had taken over his body, soul, and mind, and commanded that he express them (Peppiatt, 2012). The ceramist-researcher Richards (2011) wrote about the basics of pottery work that entail the ability to simply be but were far from being simple. She explained that doing so requires “[living] in our bodies, in our hands, through our hands into the materials we work with” (Richards, 2011, p. 12).

The painter David Leffel (2009) suggested that the ability to immerse continually in painting has to do with the visceral pleasure that is caused by the painting materials, which is amplified by playing with them during the painting process.

Sensory-based experience

The tacit activity of painting involves using our hands as primary tools for knowing. Since the dawn of human evolution, the hands were used for survival in tasks of making, molding, grasping, holding, and communicating non-literately (Dissanayake, 2015). Significant evidence can be found that these primal sensorimotor activities,

performed mostly with our hands, are satisfying due to their engagement with effort, continuity, repetition and pleasure (Strawn & Falick, 2007).

The painter Tony Bevan supported this stance when he described his joy in working with materials such as charcoal, unearthing its qualities like an infant discovering them for the first time: “A particular stick of charcoal might be incredibly soft or rad, or it might scratch” (Peppiatt, 2012, p. 84). Several still-life realist painters explained that the preparatory process of touching the objects before they painted them, becoming acquainted with their textures, surfaces, and unique color patterns, brings them closer, leading to an intimacy that can help them convey their authenticity (Arthur, 1983; Currier, 1996); as McNiff suggested, “Depth is on the surface” (2014, p. 42). For other painters, such as the photo-realist Linda Stanton Moore, studying the qualities of painting materials and their possibilities was an important part of her painting process. Moore becomes personally involved and intimate with the subjects of her paintings, leading viewers to extend their gaze in the objects painted until they acknowledge their qualities, such as the thin threads of a rug, they might never have noticed before. This wonder, a combination of amazement and apprehension, was described to ignite in viewers an urge to get closer and touch the objects in her paintings (Feit, 1992).

Looking closely

The process of art-making was connected to that of art-viewing by their manner of informing and developing one another (Yesucevitz, 2014). This stance supported phenomenological philosophies that encourage viewers of art to observe the visual qualities of the artwork for a long time in order to derive meaning (Betensky, 1995).

According to Lévinas and Poller (2003), during the observation process, the imagery of the artwork is treated as an *other* to which soul is summoned and with which it interacts. Israeli (2018) suggested that Lévinas considered this *other* as an invitation, a conduit to the transcendence that lies beyond phenomenology:

It is an appearance that does not succumb to the descriptive property of an object. Rather, the face [visage] is an appearance that conceals more than it reveals; its nudity reveals a mystery. (Israeli, 2018, p. 205).

Israeli's interpretation of Lévinas described the relationship with an *other* as enigmatic and inspirational, teasing a counter-response from the soul. This approach, which values the tension that exists within ambiguity, suggests that it might generate creativity. It also echoes Bachelard's words: "The image touches the depths before it stirs the surface" (1994, p. xxiii), indicating that images have the power to penetrate our being to the extent that we feel as if we ourselves have created them. McNiff argued that artworks could function as *others* that enable relationships with aspects of oneself in ways that are unseen and beyond one's comprehension (1995).

During my pilot study, I suggested that art, due to its ability to open an aperture into oneself, provides an opportunity for intimate reflection of these attributes through the created imagery (Lev, 2016). This reflection included spending time with the imagery, looking at it, and dialoguing with it. Fish (2013) also described looking closely at the painted imagery as inviting the creator and viewer to see the subject of their familiarity differently. This quality of seeing differently corresponds with D'Erasmus, who spoke of a different kind of knowing that exists within intimacy, one that engages a powerful gaze that is intertwined with deep emotions, looking closely to distinguish the new in the familiar (2014). She supported Bachelard (1994), who described intimacies gained by an inner vision that were characterized by a deep familiarity with one's passion, with light, colors, or form.

It seems that these ideas place intimacy within one's control, knowledge, and will, to employ certain conditions that permit seeing differently.

Proximity and closeness

The photographer Eldad Rafaeli explored intimacy in relationships in three spheres: between couples, between the individual and the community, and between human beings and nature (Wagner, 2016). His exhibition was displayed in the Modern Israeli Art Museum in Ramat Gan, in which Rafaeli laid bare his intimate struggle with issues of proximity and closeness. The show was titled *Every Distance Is Not Near*, a line from the song “I Shall Be Released” by Bob Dylan (Dylan, 2016, p. 303). Rafaeli admitted that he was able to achieve intimacy with his subjects by bringing them closer to himself, acknowledging their reflections within him first, and only then projecting these qualities onto the subjects’ imagery.

The painter David Leffel discussed his intimate painting journey in his book *Self-Portraits: A Visual Journey of Insights*, emphasizing how it involved a continuous never-ending process of looking inward, learning and questioning. He referred to his use of the mirror to look closely at his face and then express his inner experience on the canvas (outside). Leffel explained that for him, painting was a way to gain insights, clarity and deeper understanding (2009). The two artists referred to the intimacy that was achieved by their inner gaze to parts within the self that provided a closer, more personal view for their imagery, outsiders could see.

Leffel and Rafaeli’s belief that working from the inside out was a way to experience intimacy contradicted the perception of Jacob (2014), who believed that the soul lives as much “out there” as it does “in here” (p. 151). Jacob, a photographer-researcher, spoke of an intimacy that exists between all objects and things in the world by their aesthetic experience. He suggested that the proximity between objects in an artwork was, in fact, intimate and existential. The elements in a painting corresponded aesthetically with one another, but also with images in his memory (Jacob, 2014). His perception echoed that of Kandinsky (2012), who argued that shapes and colors

influenced one another to form complex relationships that excite the soul and lead to viewers' identification. Each form was demarcated by its surroundings, which determined its internal content and so affected it.

In the foreword to the second edition of Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* (1994), Stilgoe wrote: "The house is a nest for dreaming, a shelter for imagining" (Stilgoe, 1994, p. viii), describing the house as a container, a provider of space for complex relationships between objects. Within that space, intimacies between objects were described in delicate, fragile layers that revealed the historical relationships of the people who owned, touched, and used them. Both Stilgoe and Bachelard suggested that intimacy required a dedicated space — interior and exterior — in order to exist.

Intimacy and the Creative Space

The philosopher Kasulis (2002) wrote that intimacy requires a private space in which humans can feel protected enough to share their innermost selves. Kasulis used the term *intimation*, suggesting the mutual expectations that exist between intimate companions, to understand one another with no need for detailed explanations. The author believed that intimate relations involved sharing one's secrets, as well as an openness to letting the *other* take these secrets in. Therefore, he argued that intimacy could not exist in public, and required a physical space that was private and safe. Kasulis supported the conclusions of Marion Milner, who believed that art and the image were "circumstances in which it is safe to be absent-minded" (Milner & Letley, 2010, p. 191).

Kalmanowitz (2013) suggested that private and safe space existed within the camera. In her research, she used the camera as a facilitating agent for processing images of refugee centers in a war zone. The space of the camera provided safety for inspecting the scenery by its selective frame, freezing of time, and the aesthetic qualities of the photographs it produced. Consequently, Kalmanowitz created a series of paintings inspired by the photographs in which she attended to questions that rose inside herself.

Her studio and the paintings also provided safe, sacred, space for the intimate exploration of the researcher (Kalmanowitz, 2013; Kalmanowitz & Ho, 2017). Her perception supported Henley, who related to the rather small area in which artists normally work that exists within the large studio space: “Hence, some form of sheltered, therapeutic space... that provided a protected stimulus barrier from the studio-at-large” (Henley, 1995, p.188).

D’Erasmus (2014) distinguished between intimacies within the creative space of visual imagery and those in creative writing. A writer of fiction, she looked at her creative tools — words, sentences, dialogue, characters, and scenes — and tried to identify moments in which they succeeded in creating the experience of intimacy for the reader. Unlike what she had supposed, the intimacies did not take place via direct interactions between the characters, but rather within the locutions — the places they shared in the language that emanated from their private, personal spaces. In other words, D’Erasmus identified the aesthetics of writing that could convey a certain atmosphere. Her recognition echoed that of Langer (1953), who referred to artists’ capacity for using aesthetic tools, such as form and structure, which transform human relationships.

Physical and virtual spaces for intimacy

If we think about space, try to visualize it and define it, we would most likely need its boundaries, like the white space between black letters, or content that requires a void in order to be seen.

Virtual spaces are not necessarily the ones that exist in digital media. Here, the word “virtual” may also suggest the opposite of “visceral” — in this sense, abstract. In my pilot study (Lev, 2016), I related to images that I painted as siblings, to which I gave life. The life of the image had an independent existence and could therefore enable dialoguing with it (Hillman, 2000; McNiff, 2004). Its visual presence enforced an imagined, virtual triangular space between its creator and its viewer in a three-way

relationship. This suggests that the creation of art can also become an invitation to relate, an invitation to intimacy. D'Erasmus (2014) also suggested a similar notion of intimacy in triangularity in her description of what she felt when she observed artworks. She explained that contrary to her initial belief that aesthetic perfection ignited her urge to be closer to the artwork, she realized that the intimacy was generated by the fragile, triangular space between the artist, the image and the viewer. In that space between, she described vitality, electricity and content that were being delivered.

Malchiodi (2018), in highlighting the importance of space in art-making, touched upon the acceptance of virtual spaces that could serve the same healing functions as physical studio spaces. Controversies regarding the virtual studio space have fueled numerous debates for art therapists and theoreticians who describe them as alienating, cold and lacking intimacy, even as the passing of time and younger generations render such arguments irrelevant. Two of the chapters in her book were written by McNiff, who as far back as the 1970s suggested that the virtual studio might possess qualities that were similar to the physical studio and mentioned the triangular relationship that exists between the mouse, the screen and the person (2018, 1975).

Schaverien spoke of the dynamic energy that existed in the space between client-picture-therapist. She distinguished between the aesthetic qualities of images that clients created during art therapy: diagrammatic and embodied. Each of these two types of images carried different symbolic meanings of inter- or intra-personal relationships within that triangle (Schaverien, Gilroy, & McNeilly, 2000). According to Schaverien, the primary intention of the diagrammatic images that clients created was to convey a message to the therapist (inter-personal), while the embodied images engaged their creators intimately within themselves (intra-personal). Her viewpoint may suggest that the experience of intimacy through art depends on the aesthetic qualities of the artwork.

Intimacy and Psychotherapy

Literature shows that until recent years, the issue of intimacy in psychotherapy was taboo, due mainly to the association between intimacy and sexuality (Bond, 2006; Ogden, 2006; Pearson, Child & Carmon, 2010; Sayre & Kunz, 2005). Although this relationship is widely explored in the fields of psychology and sociology within romantic relationships (Mashek & Aron, 2004), the association between intimacy and sexuality was suggested as being far from the truth when it came to exploring intimacy within the therapeutic relationship, healing, and the creative space (James Hillman, 1985; Jung, 2014; Milner & Letley, 2010).

In the early 1950s, Harry Stack Sullivan discovered that personification and identification were affected by and directly related to close interpersonal relationships (Sullivan, 1953). He suggested that the baby acted upon its caretaker's reflections and reactions and that therefore, positive personification was the result of qualities and behaviors that received supportive feedback. Sullivan was successful in treating schizophrenic patients by maintaining therapeutic relationships with them that were based on trust, empathy, and transference. He understood that patients' close environments and communities were primary factors in their mental condition. Sullivan's theory also highlighted the significance of closeness for mental health.

Several approaches to therapy over the years, which pointed to increased intimacy as a significant factor in the success of treatment (Gottman & Gottman, 2018; Hendrix, 1996; Johnson & Talitman, 1997; Kohlenberg & Callaghan, 2010; Knox, 2011), went as far as exploring desire and transference. Some findings of these studies posited that the therapeutic relationship not only enabled the creation of intimacy within therapist-patient relationships, but aspired toward it and honored it (Schaverien, 2003; Rosiello, 2013). However, these approaches also reported on the lack of explicit assessment scales of intimacy in therapy, which might support its significance for mental health. This is

surprising considering the interpersonal and therapeutic benefits that intimacy might provide and the great deal of evidence of the healing capacities of features within intimacy in the creative space (Phelps, 2017; Wyss, 2018).

Intimacy and Expressive Art Psychotherapy

Dissanayake argued that intimacy is being challenged in the twenty-first century, during which technology and digitalization have taken over our time and space, and that this could endanger the formation of mutuality (synonymic with intimacy), our sense of belonging and formation of identity (2015).

Perhaps the following description of McNiff might result in a more optimistic prognosis: “My daily concerns seemed to take a back seat as I became immersed in drawing... I felt a deep inner quiet and a sense of well-being” (2014, p. 16). This shows how painting was healing by the way it brought McNiff closer to himself. In this sense, the principles of expressive art psychotherapies are that the creation of art within a therapeutic setting that includes dedicated time and space, among other things, enables deep introspection of the self (Moon, 2002). The creative space in therapy could become sacred, meditative and safe through the experiential rituals that are interwoven in creative endeavors (Marcow-Speiser, 1997). Also, activities in which we purposely engage the body and the mind in the present moment, such as within art-making, were found to enable centering of the self and promote healing and calmness (Kossak, 2015; Summer, 2018). Thus, they may also create some of the conditions that invite intimacy.

Referring to Winnicott’s intermediary space (1971), just as children explore the self through play and tactile engagement by drifting into imaginative realms as they exercise their natural curiosity toward the world, so should adults. Unfortunately, playgrounds have become rare and out of adults’ reach (Feen-Calligan, McIntyre, & Sands-Goldstein, 2009). Also, the manual tasks that were suggested as creating intimacy (Dissanayake, 2015) have become redundant in modern times.

Erzen argued that these conditions have promoted the rapidly growing interest in daily meditation and contemplative practice (Erzen & Çikrikci, 2018). She proposed that the increased interest in Eastern approaches to well-being was due to the lack of human connection and the loneliness and depression that resulted. Kabat-Zinn explained that one of the major obstacles to mindfulness is lack of will, which is increasingly triggered by distracting inner voices created by the high speed of modern culture (Kabat-Zinn & Salzberg, 2018). Other challenges to intimacy are presented by the technology that inundates our daily routines and “fear of missing out” (FOMO, Samana, 2017). These symptoms in our society are addressed by movements such as The Slow Movement (www.slowmovement.com), which promote a shift from multitasking and overscheduling to slowing down, devoting time and attention to doing one thing at a time.

These conditions highlight the potential of art-making as well as the ability of the therapeutic creative space to create the conditions and mechanisms for bringing people closer to the self and inviting intimacy.

My Choice of Research Methodology: Art-based Research

It has already been established, empirically and scientifically, that creativity and art can lead to other ways of knowing (Allen, 1995, 2016) in research (Antal, 2013; Kapitan, 2014; Pentassuglia, 2017). When it comes to exploring social and psychological phenomena, the arts have access to places where words do not, and they speak the same language of the topic being explored (Langer, 1953). Stirring up the solid ground of scientific quantitative research methods makes us step out of our comfort zone to make way for innovative thinking (Wheatley, 2012), as Etienne Gilson described Bachelard’s (1964) method of taking knowledge apart, breaking up concepts, and then constructing and rebuilding them in a new way. It has been argued in the literature that the research method should align with the topic it aims to explore (Silverman, 2017). Since intimacy was the subject of my exploration, and since art was found to facilitate expression and

mediate deeper meaning (Lev, 2016), it seemed natural to use art-based research as my method of inquiry.

The Role of Video, Witnessing, and Painting in Addressing the Research Questions

The role of witnessing has been written about widely in art-therapy and psychotherapy literature (Allen, 2012; McNiff, 2013), inferring that a witness is not there to judge, but rather to affirm the presence of an *other*, to a point where the one being witnessed feels acknowledged, understood, and existent (Winnicott, 1971). When witnessing the creative process is used as a mode of research, it could offer a new kind of mirroring (Kohut, 1977), altering one's perspective (Learmonth & Huckvale, 2012). For this reason, a witness need not always be a human being. In my pilot study (Lev, 2016), I found that artworks and imagery played the roles of witnesses as they hung on the studio walls. Their physical presence transformed them into natural witnesses, liberating their creator from the criticism and judgment that often impede self-expression. Allen (1995) and McNiff (1998) suggested approaching artworks as separate entities to discover new attributes in familiar things.

Based on Bachelard's (1994) perception that intimacy requires exploration, searching and researching to discover the new in the familiar, the role of witnesses to the participants' painting process could deepen an understanding and increase researchers' curiosity to explore the work further. Prolonged witnessing of the painting process could also invite intimacy into the creative space by being present in the moment, committed and attentive to detail in "dual levels of consciousness" (Robbins, 1998, p. 20) in a mode of listening-inward and listening-outward. Similarly, the process of painting could raise the awareness of details that inform the research questions in becoming close to the material (Havesteen-Franklin & Camarena Altamirano, 2015) while zooming in and honing significant evidence. Fish (2013) referred to the prolonged presence with the

image in observation as a facilitator of understanding in looking closely and systematically.

Much has been written about the disruptive effects of the virtual world on the capacity to become intimate, especially for the young generations (Gardner & Davis, 2013), and the virtual world as increasing its hold upon our lives (Harari, 2016). In contrast, imagery has been known to stimulate awareness and memory that could lead to intimacy, and video even more so (Yates, 2013). Like bringing up a memory in our imagination, viewing video footage enlivens experienced moments and offers alternative perspectives and viewpoints as viewers become close with them. In addition, available video applications enable editing processes that require less training. According to film editor Ralph Rosenblum, editing normally takes about two or three times longer than the filming itself, and requires devoting time and commitment to the present moment. It includes numerous viewings, selecting, tightening, pacing, embellishing, arranging, and cutting videotaped scenes, and is described as a complex process that is mainly about juxtapositions (Rosenblum & Karen, 2009). The infinite possibilities for meaning-making with any raw footage highlights its value, as well as its challenges, as a research mode of inquiry.

CHAPTER III

Method

This research project was built on findings from a pilot study (Lev, 2016) and aimed to explore how, if at all, can the process of drawing and painting, together with witnessing and reflection on the process and imagery, further an understanding of intimacy? The research inquired whether particular qualities and features of artistic media, processes, and reflection through video footage editing further intimate experience. It explored the nature of intimacy, its obstacles, and the conditions that favor the phenomenon of intimacy.

The study used art-based research methods involving me as the researcher and participant co-researchers (hereinafter: “co-researchers”) in the process of drawing and painting as a mode of inquiry. The study was assembled incrementally with respect for the way in which new knowledge and discoveries emerge from the creative process.

The Original Research Questions

The primary research question, which was proposed and approved in the research proposal and early stages of the project, was:

- Can the process of painting and drawing, together with reflection on the process and imagery, further an understanding of the intimate experience?

The secondary questions (hereinafter, the sub-questions) were:

- What is the nature of intimacy?
- Are there particular qualities and features of artistic media and processes that further the intimate experience?

The systematic review of the research material led to adjustments in these research questions, as follows:

Revised Research Questions

The primary research question:

- Can the process of painting and drawing, together with witnessing and reflection on the process and imagery, further an understanding of intimacy — and if so, how?

The secondary research questions (research sub-questions):

- Are there particular qualities and features of artistic media, processes, and reflection through video footage editing that further intimate experience?
- What are the conditions that favor intimacy?
- What are the obstacles to intimacy?

Participants and Study Setting

Four adults between the ages of thirty and eighty who are familiar with the creation of visual art participated in the study. Before their participation in the study, they were each approached by phone and presented with the research topic, the research questions, and settings. Five individual sessions were held with each participant: three experimental sessions and two reflective sessions of approximately ninety minutes each. I informed the co-researchers that the first three sessions would take place in their private studio places, where I would witness them drawing and painting using their choice of media and materials, and then conduct a verbal discussion about their reflections on the painting process and imagery in order to explore their understanding of intimacy. The two reflective sessions with each participant (sessions four and five, in sequence) included viewing edited videos, followed by a verbal discussion about the research questions and findings. Appendices A and B include the co-researchers' consent forms for participation in the study and the display of their artworks for reproduction, presentation, and inclusion in academic assignments. The co-researchers were also told

they were free to discontinue their participation in the research at any time and that copies of the study videos, dissertation and outcomes would be available for them after its completion.

The setting of the study included multiple locations, which were the personal workspaces of each participant, to further comfort and ease and support authentic expression. Co-researchers were recruited through self-referrals and acquaintances, drawn from the general public, artists, and mental health professionals.

Sociocultural Perspective

The co-researchers of this study vary in their socio-cultural characteristics, such as age, gender, economic status, ethnic and religious roots, sexual orientation and marital status. Among them were two males and two females between the ages 32 and 78, as detailed below:

- Ofira is a 79-year-old secular Jew and painter. A remarried bereaved mother with two children and five grandchildren, she lives in central Israel.
- Eran is a 52-year-old painting artist. A married, secular Jewish man with four children, he divides his time between the Greek island of Lesbos and the Israeli artists' village of Ein Hod.
- Nir is a 41-year-old art therapist. A gay, formerly orthodox Jewish man, he lives in central Israel with his male partner and their child.
- Nirit is a 32-year-old Ethiopian painter who moved to Israel at six years of age. She is single and lives in Tel Aviv.

I, the researcher, a non-religious Jewish woman in my mid-40s, live and practice art and psychotherapy with couples and families in central Israel. For practical reasons, the research was conducted mainly in my country of residence, which may have inherent sociocultural consequences and biases. Despite these conditions, I made every effort to

recruit widely from all groups living in Israel and respect the co-researchers' rights and the integrity of their unique experience and backgrounds. The research project therefore complied with protective research measures and was approved by Lesley University IRB regulations (Appendix C).

The Study Process

The research process comprised six modes of inquiry as interdependent elements: (1) drawing and painting by the co-researchers in three experimental sessions; (2) reflective discussion with each co-researcher immediately after the experimental session; (3) my own artistic responses to the individual sessions and the process of inquiry as a whole; (4) a private exhibition; (5) the creation of edited videos; and (6) culminating discussions and review with participant co-researchers.

Following is the description of each element.

1. Drawing and painting by the co-researchers

The first element of inquiry included three experimental sessions, each lasting approximately ninety minutes, in the private studio space of each co-researcher. During each session, the co-researchers drew and painted while wearing a head-mount GoPro Hero3+ video camera to enable direct focus on their hands and imagery in-process, with as little attention to their surroundings as possible. Although I was present during each of the three sessions, I did not initiate or encourage any conversation during the individual creative processes so as to interfere with the co-researchers' work as little as possible.

Painting and drawing

The participants were free to choose their own media, art materials, and subjects for painting. They were asked to work on a different artwork in each session, if possible, in the hope of deciphering the qualities of painting materials and techniques that furthered an understanding of the intimate experience, but they could keep working on a recent painting if they wished to do so.

The co-researchers participated in drawing or painting as a familiar language of expression. Familiarity with the media was necessary to free their attention from technical issues and promote in-depth focus on the research questions.

Witnessing

During this phase, the relationship and gaze of the co-researchers were centered on the painting. I sat on a chair a little behind the co-researchers, trying as much as possible not to interfere or affect their process. I was merely present, a witness to their creative work. Still, I tried to encourage their focus on the art process; similar to my presence during art-psychotherapy sessions in which the client creates art while the therapist observes as witness.

My position as an active witness made use of my emotional openness and a felt sense that provided information in answering the research questions. Without my being explicit about it, my “baseline” position signaled to the co-researchers that they were free to become intimate with their work. Most of the co-researchers’ studio spaces included numerous artworks that had been painted by them in the past. The imagery of their artworks also functioned as silent witnesses to their painting process and reflections.

I saved the body of information generated during the first phase in dedicated files on my PC and backed it up in the cloud.

2. Reflective discussions between the co-researchers and the researcher

The second mode of inquiry included an open discussion between each co-researcher and me. I recorded the discussions on my iPhone. The discussion that followed each painting session took place while both of us were seated in the studio space, looking at the artwork that had been painted during the session. I usually began the conversation by asking a general question such as “How are you now?” Later on, I asked about the co-researchers’ experience and reflection during each session, with the goal of eventually discussing their understanding of intimacy.

Attention was given to physical, visceral information brought to the co-researchers' awareness, in the hope to inform them how the process of painting together with reflection on the process and imagery furthered their understanding of the intimate experience. The discussions inquired about the participants' definition of intimacy and explored if and how it was affected by their painting session and reflections. The discussion also inquired about specific qualities of their art materials and techniques as furthering the intimate experience.

The painted artworks of each session were labeled [*First name of co-researcher*], *Session number*, *Artwork number*. The video footage from each session was labeled [*First name of co-researcher*], *Session number*, *Video number*. The audio recordings of the discussions in this phase were labeled (*First name of co-researcher*), *Session number*, *Audio number*.

Transcribing and translating audiotaped discussions

Since all the co-researchers were Israelis, the discussions were held in Hebrew. After each session with co-researchers, I transferred the recorded MP3 files from my iPhone to my PC. I then played the files aloud, translated them from Hebrew to English, and transcribed them to Microsoft Word documents. I was careful to maintain the accuracy of the co-researchers' ideas in order to keep information from getting lost in translation. The printed English transcriptions served as an additional mode of inquiry, while multiple readings of the documents allowed me to become intimate with the texts while devoting time and attention to the words in search of essential passages that addressed the research questions. During the systematic analysis of the transcriptions, recurring elements and motives stood out as identifying qualities.

I saved the body of information generated in Phase Two in dedicated files on my PC and backed them up in the cloud.

3. Artistic responses by the researcher

Visual art responses

The third mode of inquiry included my artistic responses (hereinafter: “response art”) and reflections that followed each session with co-researchers. In this mode, I focused on how the painting process, together with reflection on the process and imagery, furthered my understanding of intimacy. I used painting as a mode of interpretation for my experience as a silent witness to the co-researchers’ painting processes. This enabled me to gain access and pay attention to the multiple ways of knowing that cannot be understood through linear, logical analysis. In these response art reflections, I used the same painting media, materials and techniques that the co-researchers did in their painting sessions, though during these sessions I was alone in my private studio space.

My attempts to trust the natural flow of conversation with each co-researcher led to the primacy of my artistic response because the participants did not necessarily articulate qualities of intimacy and the discussions did not yield direct answers to the research questions. I looked for ways to help me get closer to the participants, to understand them and their painting processes. Therefore, I used art’s manifold ways of knowing.

Process guides

I used some of the process guides from my pilot research (Lev, 2016) to further my examination of the artistic experience and the co-researchers’ understanding of intimacy. These questions focused on the process of painting and the artworks that resulted. It is important to note that all of the questions presented did not necessarily require a verbal or written response, but offered an open platform for responsive expression.

What is the nature of intimacy?

This question was the starting point of every response-art session as I strove to remain focused on the research questions. Instead of seeking an immediate answer, I maintained a questioning mode to stimulate exploration rather than a solution.

What do I see?

I asked this question immediately after the artwork was done. It suggests looking at things as they are, empirically and as openly as possible. I also asked the following sub-questions:

- What painting materials did I use?
- What are their characteristics?
- How did I use each material?

Each of these questions was addressed in the hope of answering the study's first sub-question: Are there particular qualities and features of artistic media, processes... that further intimate experience?

How comfortable do I feel now?

The question brought me to awareness of my body and sensory knowledge. This intelligence involved all my senses as agents of understanding. I was specifically interested in my breathing, body posture and movements before, during, and after painting, and explored their relationship to the intimate experience.

Were there moments of intimate experience during the painting process?

This question focused on the research third and fourth sub-questions — What are the conditions that favor intimacy, and what are the obstacles to intimacy? — in order to spark moments of awareness of the phenomenon.

What do I feel toward the artwork?

I strove to see the image for what it was, be attentive to any feelings it stirred within me, and respond to them. Dialogues encouraged seeing the image carefully, focusing on my feelings rather than my thoughts, in the hope that they could answer the

second part of my primary research question: Can... together with witnessing and reflection on imagery further an understanding of intimacy — and if so, how?

Did I have any insights?

Insights reflect new inner understandings. The question encouraged me to pay attention to emerging ideas and other forms of knowing that could answer the research questions.

If it could speak, what would it say to me?

By treating the artwork as an entity separate from its creator, it gains objectivity and becomes a neutral agent for dialogue and information.

Interplay with art

I chose to refer to these experiments or conversations as “interplays.” The prefix *inter* implies between and among. Thus, interplay lies between play and reciprocal play. I played with art in various painting media, and art played the role of *the other* in me.

My purpose in using the same media and technique as the co-researchers for the response art sessions was to provide information that only materials and creative processes could, in order to answer the study’s first sub-question: Are there particular qualities and features of artistic, processes... that further the intimate experience?

In addition to responding to each session with the research questions in mind, I waited at least one week after the third experimental session with the co-researchers and responded artistically to the whole body of work that each one generated. The rationale behind this stage was to explore the effect that many artworks as witnesses might have on intimate experience.

I also videotaped, journaled and then systematically reviewed the sessions of Phase Three. I labeled the visual art responses as follows: *Response Art: [First name of co-researcher], Session number, Artwork number*. I labeled the reflective writings after the sessions in Phase Three as follows: *Reflective Writing: [First name of co-researcher], Session number*. I labeled the photographs of the artworks and the painting process as

follows: *Response Art*, [First name of co-researcher], *Session number*, *Photo number*. I saved the body of information generated in Phase Three in dedicated files on my PC and backed them up in the cloud.

4. The private exhibition

The fourth mode of inquiry took place after the three experimental sessions with each co-researcher and my own creative responses to the sessions and to each co-researcher's body of work. Relying upon the finding that intimacy is the opposite of grandiose experience (Lev, 2016) and exploring it further, I held a presentation of three artworks per participant and my own response artworks ($N=28$) as an exhibition in my studio space.

The exhibition was presented for me alone, so that I could respond artistically to the whole body of work generated, with the goal of reflecting upon the research questions, relationships between the artworks, and their possible impact when they were viewed and experienced together. I arranged the artworks in the studio space to dedicate an area per participant, in the hope to assimilate a community created by families of artworks.

The presentation continued for a couple of weeks, in which I was invited to respond artistically and continue to contemplate and wonder about how the painting process, together with witnessing and reflection on the process and imagery, further an understanding of intimacy. I photographed, videotaped and examined this part of the process as well.

5. Creation of edited videos

In the fifth mode of inquiry, I created a video, ten to fifteen minutes long, for each participant that included material from all the sessions and previous phases. I viewed these videos during the individual reflective sessions with the co-researchers (the fourth session).

Video files were created during each experimental session with participants in the hope to allow authentic, transparent documentation of the co-researchers' painting processes. Every videotaped session in the studio was transferred to my computer and saved as an MP4 file, to free space on the GoPro Hero3+ memory disc card for the next videotaped sessions and so forth. In the process of editing the videos, the saved files were transferred to Windows Movie Maker software on my PC and then edited using the software tools. Titles were added to signify the different sessions with no additional sound and effects.

The process of editing the video footage included multiple viewings of the video files produced during the co-researchers' painting sessions, video footage from my response art to their sessions, photographs of the processes and artworks, the transcribed texts and my journals. The careful examination of video footage included being intimate with the body of work, cropping the images, and organizing videotaped moments that seemed to echo ideas from the verbal discussions and response art sessions that addressed the research questions.

I devoted attention to the co-researchers' use of art materials and their hand and body movements by noting the time and duration of significant repeated gestures during the video files of each participant. I noted what their painting routine included and how much time they spent on preparations and readying themselves for the painting process. I examined how long it took them to become encapsulated within the process, as well as the things that encouraged their persistent immersion in painting, and what interfered with it. I looked at how attentive they were to their environment, to my presence, how they used each material, how they held their painting tools, and so on.

Since I did not initiate or encourage any conversation during their painting sessions, it was easier to direct my attention to their hands and their head movements. I noted the amount of time they spent in each phase of their painting process. I noticed

their physical distance from the painting when the frame enlarged or reduced the size of the painted imagery when they moved closer to or farther away from the painting. I wondered whether I should include sections of significant points and ideas from the transcribed texts of the discussions, and whether I should add any background music. Each decision had its own pros and cons, which made me realize the effect these decisions could have in underscoring different findings within the research material. I realized the considerable impact such details could have on the general outcomes of my research project.

It was especially delicate with remaining loyal, credible and accountable for transferring the co-researchers' understandings and ideas I was trusted with, through the edited videos. This stance eventually led me to put no music, no background sounds, nor cites of co-researchers or other texts within the videos, since they could be distracting from an intimate presence with the video footage. I treated these videos as research tools, and as such, their primary role was to inform the research questions with as fewer distractions as possible.

Another major problem I encountered was the length of the edited video footage. I ended up with more than 270 minutes of raw video files for each co-researcher. I found it challenging to reduce the raw footage to less than ten minutes without losing its essence because every minute felt important in revealing more and more layers of intimacy. The result was five edited videos of approximately fourteen minutes in length, one for each participant.

Unexpectedly, editing the video footage led me to the discovery that witnessing the painting process generated significant information in answering my research questions. It accentuated the value of using video footage as a research inquiry and systematic analysis mode. Watching and reflecting upon the video files enabled a new form of intimate relationship to grow. Dedication of time and space to being alone with

the work, as the computer became an intimate studio space free of distractions, inviting me to look closely and attentively at details of the painting processes, and the imagery created. The video also led to re-enactment of the sensuousness and aesthetic qualities of participants' painting processes during our shared presence in their private studios. The use of live-in-motion photography available nowadays in mobile phones and applications suggests looking at the self from a 'third-eye' perspective. The filmed action and person can be seen and related to as an *other*, and possibly ignite a reflective mode of inquiry. The video camera and mobile phone audio recorder offered additional empirical viewpoints, with an ability to bring unattended places to light, and perhaps act as mediators for an intimate experience. The role of art as a mediator for intimacy was defined in my pilot research project as a provider of intermediate space, and as a bridge between the imagined and the physical (Lev, 2016).

My role as a practicing art psychotherapist with adult clients led me to believe that the discussions with co-researchers in their private studio spaces during the three experimental sessions would create the requirements for intimacy. Yet another surprising discovery was that I felt more intimate with co-researchers and their artworks during my response art painting, while witnessing their painting process and while editing the video footage, than I did during the verbal discussions with them. Being alone with the participants' work enabled me to take as much time as I needed and persevere in the work. Their processes were open for me to see, and I was free to zoom in, explore deeply and focus on the research material at my own pace. I used the video footage as a mediator, an agent that helped me see the painting process and imagery closely.

I labeled each edited video of a co-researcher as follows: [*First name of co-researcher*], *Edited Video* and generated private YouTube links for each edited one. I saved them on my PC and backed them up in the cloud.

A Systematic Review of the Research Process

I made every effort to maintain credibility and transparency by exploring all the information generated from the research study from various perspectives. Transcribing and translating conversations added to the multimodal way of looking at the information, akin to triangulation. Words brought ideas and experiences into consciousness, the video honed in on movements, and imagery formed a conduit to imagination and free thought. The various modalities complemented, differentiated and informed one another.

One of the main principles of art-based research is respecting and honoring the discoveries as they unfold by trusting the artistic process of inquiry. The process of inquiry was created by working with painting materials, creative writing, photography, and video, and then allowing spontaneous interaction with these modes of expression. Hence, by reviewing the information gathered from the three experimental sessions with co-researchers, and the response art sessions of my own that followed, I could not find sufficient answers to my research questions.

While distilling the results from my sessions with co-researchers, I realized that my attempt not to bias them with my understanding of intimacy led me to avoid asking them explicitly to answer the research questions. Instead, I planted the questions in their minds at the beginning of each experimental session, hoping that they would address the questions during the verbal discussions. When specific answers to the research questions were not sufficiently provided, I understood that some changes in the research design were required.

My advisor shared my thoughts and suggested adding inquiry modes in the hope that they would inform the research. At least one additional session with co-researchers was required, in which they would specifically address the research question and sub-questions. I amended the original research question, which was a simple yes/no question — Can the process of painting and drawing, together with reflection on the process and

imagery, further an understanding of intimacy? I added the word “How” at the beginning of the question so as to allow a detailed reply. I also included witnessing the painting process, as I found it to be significant to the process. The revised primary research question was: [How] can the process of painting and drawing, together with witnessing, and reflection on the process and imagery, further an understanding of intimacy? I made other important adjustments to the research questions. The research findings emphasized how reflection through video footage editing furthered intimate experience. Thus, the first research sub-question became: Are there particular features and qualities of artistic media, processes, and reflection through video footage editing that further intimate experience? I also amended the original first research sub-question: What is the nature of intimacy? I realized that it needed to be more specific. Consequently, the second research sub-question became: What are the conditions that favor intimacy? And the third research sub-question was: What are the obstacles to intimacy?

6. Culminating discussions and review with co-researchers

Viewing the edited videos with co-researchers

In this mode of inquiry, I met with co-researchers to discuss, reflect upon and answer the updated research questions. One of the sessions was held in my studio space, and the other three sessions were held in the studio spaces of the co-researchers. During these individual reflective sessions (session four in sequence), I presented the co-researchers with the research process and findings up to that moment.

This fourth session with co-researchers was unlimited by time. I invited them to watch the preliminary video footage, which was ten to fourteen minutes long, edited for each of them, and then encouraged them to reflect upon and discuss the research questions through the following specific derivatives:

1. What is your definition of intimacy?

2. Can you identify the qualities in your painting process that furthered the intimate experience? Please focus on media, materials, technical steps within the process, physical state, feelings, and insights.
3. Can you identify the elements that helped you understand intimacy during your reflection on the imagery?
4. What qualities that you describe as intimate did you notice as you watched your painting process in the video?

The session ended with me asking the participant, once more, to define intimacy. I recorded these thoughtful discussions, translated them and transcribed them as I described above. I added the four additional sessions with co-researchers, together with my artistic responses to these sessions and my thoughts about the role of witnessing, to the research body of knowledge.

Culminating thoughts and exploration of the research project information

After the fourth meeting with each co-researcher, I updated my research findings to reflect any new information that emerged.

I examined the research body of knowledge by distilling outcomes in lists of elements that were found to answer how the process of painting and drawing, together with witnessing and reflection on the process and imagery, furthered an understanding of intimacy.

As I found the video footage editing process to be a vitally important resource in my systematic review and meaning-making, I created another video to sum up the research as a whole to that point. The summary video was approximately ten minutes long. Unlike the edited videos that I had prepared for each of the participants, which echoed their individual processes, this inclusive video was comprised of footage from all the participants' processes as an examination, review, and answers to the updated research questions.

During the creation of this inclusive video, I identified elements that were common and different for all the participants in answering the research questions. I made every effort to remain faithful to each co-researcher's unique understanding of intimacy while distilling the characteristics that stood out through the bundle of research material. I was also determined to stay within the timeframe of ten minutes for the video's total length. I therefore used the five edited videos that had been prepared for each participant, treating them as raw footage.

I used the distilled lists of the research results that included elements and qualities of intimacy as sub-dividers of the video. In order to maintain transparency and authenticity in linking the results to the co-researchers' processes, I translated quoted sentences of participants from Hebrew into English and used them as subtitles within the scenes, to which I added narration in my own voice and also soft instrumental music. The review process with co-researchers during the individual reflective sessions that followed (session five in sequence) proved that my original position and my advisor's stance had been correct: the music was unnecessary. In discussion with my advisor it was determined that the music did not bias nor impede the experimental process.

The inclusive edited video was entitled *Painting Intimacy: Edited Inclusive Video, Ver. 1*. I saved it on my PC, backed it up in the cloud, and generated a private link to Youtube to facilitate remote access.

Final sessions with co-researchers

After examining and studying the results, co-researchers were invited to a fifth and final individual session to review and reflect upon the research findings.

Two sessions were held in the co-researchers' studio spaces, one session was held in a quiet coffee shop, and another was held through a video chat using the WhatsApp mobile application since the participant lived abroad. The sessions were recorded, transcribed and translated into English. Each session began with watching the inclusive

edited video that comprised an interpretation and review of the research project, and followed with a verbal discussion of the research findings through the following questions:

1. What is your reflection of the inclusive edited video?
2. What do you feel about the research outcomes that were presented?
3. Do you have any reservations about these findings?
4. Do you have any suggestions/thoughts/ideas for future research?
5. What is the value of this research project for you?

Viewing the inclusive edited video together with each co-researcher was in itself a culminating process that affected their sense of intimacy. The time gap between the fourth and fifth sessions with me allowed them to look more deeply into the research questions, and the video enlivened their experiences vividly. The video aroused curiosity about the other participants, whom they had never met. Their attention was strongly directed toward the visual footage. The sessions generated considerable interest, as evidenced by the co-researchers' requests to watch all or parts of the video once again, this time pausing at moments that generated questions and expressions of their understanding of intimacy.

Some questions, which were about the other participants' processes, generated a new sense of intimacy between them, one that did not require them to be physically present together. Some participants commented about the intimacy gained by the position of the video camera. The head-mounted camera led them, as viewers, to feel as if they shared their peers' perspective in this project. The conversations also focused on the conditions that favored intimacy, the obstacles that prevented it, and their insights from participating in the research.

These sessions helped to hone and distill the results of the research. After the sessions, I made more changes to the final edited video, *Painting Intimacy — Final Edited Movie*, and updated my research findings.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The purpose of this study was to expand the findings of a pilot research project (Lev, 2016) that found empirically that the artistic processes of drawing and painting suggested certain qualities of intimacy, such as the urge to move closer and the embrace of small details. The pilot research project also found that the presence of another person was not necessary for experiencing intimacy, and that the process of creating art and the resulting works could be mediating agents. In this research project, I worked with four co-researchers using an art-based research methodology to explore the following questions:

1. Can the process of painting, together with witnessing and reflection on the process and imagery further an understanding of intimacy — and, if so, how?
2. Are there particular qualities and features of artistic media, processes, and reflection through video footage editing that further intimate experience?
3. What are the conditions that favor intimacy?
4. What are the obstacles to intimacy?

This chapter will present the results and findings of the primary and secondary research questions, generated by the six methodological phases as described in Chapter III: witnessing the experimental painting sessions of the co-researchers; their observations of the process and imagery through our verbal discussions; my responses through painting and writing; the private exhibition of artworks; editing video footage; and the concluding sessions with the co-researchers after viewing the edited videos. The final edited video, *Painting Intimacy*, which offers a summary of the research, can be

accessed using the following link: [Painting Intimacy — Final Edited Movie \(https://youtu.be/F811Dr6GamQ\)](https://youtu.be/F811Dr6GamQ).

First Research Question

Can the process of painting, together with witnessing and reflection on the process and imagery, further an understanding of intimacy — and if so, how?

The participants suggested that the phenomenon of intimacy consists of two operational elements: (1) commitment to the present moment, and (2) looking closely. These key elements were demonstrated throughout the six methodological phases as shown below.

Commitment to the Present Moment and Looking Closely

The three experimental sessions

The experimental sessions took place in the private studio space of each co-researcher. They usually began with some welcoming small talk and continued with the co-researchers' painting routine for approximately one hour, during which I was present and witnessed the process. The only direct suggestion that I gave co-researchers in each session was in keeping with the research question: to think about their understanding of intimacy and how the process of painting furthered their understanding. They were free to choose their own painting subjects, materials and techniques. No conversation was initiated throughout their painting processes, but only afterward, during the reflective discussions. None of the co-researchers had participated in a research study, nor had they been witnessed while painting. Despite their initial concerns, they were welcoming and accepted my presence.

While the co-researchers worked, I took care to sit one or two meters away so as to distract them as little as possible during their creative process. This short distance enabled me to become familiar with their artistic space and see how it was organized. I was able to follow their procedures, rhythms and movements, and gradually feel closer

to them. After the first ten minutes or so, I was completely present in the moment, attentive and focused. I welcomed any thought or question that emerged and wrote it down on my notepad. I paid attention to my breathing, emotions, and any perceptions and thoughts that could inform the research project.

Just as I was committed to the present moment, so were the co-researchers. They had their own ways of setting up their creative space, physically and mentally. Nirit prepared paints and stirred them for a somewhat extended time. The repetitive, circling movements she made with the spatula formed a ritual of transition from her daily, mundane space to the creative, sacred space. Ofira and Nir organized their painting materials carefully, making sure that the brushes were clean and dry and that all their other tools were prepared and accessible. Eran looked at many painting backgrounds he had created before deciding which one he was going to work on. During the discussions that followed their painting processes, they all explained how painting required that they be completely present and committed, and that this was possible only if they had gone through the required steps before and during their painting session. Once they were ready, their commitment to the present moment was demonstrated by the qualities that we identified later.

As I witnessed the co-researchers' creative processes, I noticed certain changes and transformations that took place in their demeanor as they painted. I observed differences in their body movements, rhythms, posture, and focus of attention. For much of the time, the participants made fewer movements, the rhythm of their movements slowed, and their breathing grew steady. They leaned toward their paintings in order to be closer to them. Their painting hand remained in one spot for longer periods of time, and they looked closely at the imagery being created (Images 1 and 2). During the conversations that followed each experimental session, the co-researchers defined these conditions as intimate. "Encapsulated," "closed up in my cocoon," "disconnected from

everything around me,” and “floating inside imagination” were a few of the phrases they used to describe intimate moments within the painting process. Eran mentioned a strong presence that seemed to be taking over his body, soul and mind — a presence that brought him continually closer to the materials and the process.



Image 1. Nirit leaning toward the painting



Image 2. Detail: Nirit looking closely at the image

I experienced similar states in my own response art sessions and during the process of editing the video footage. I became immersed in the creative process as my artwork progressed and developed. I was completely present in the moment. No distractions, physical or mental, interfered with what I did, and I noticed myself looking closely at what was in front of me.

Editing the video footage

The process of editing footage revealed and strengthened what the co-researchers defined as *intimate moments*. These were signified by a slower rhythm of motion, fewer hand movements, and a steady grip on the painting tools. During such moments, the head-

mounted camera movements were much slower, and the proximity of the camera lens to the painting was very close (Image 2). Such moments were underscored by previous moments that took place before and after them, represented by counter-conditions that showed faster hand-work on the painted medium, a more rapid pace and quicker movements toward and away from the painting, and greater distance between the head-mounted camera and the painting. The participants later described these moments as *non-intimate moments*. Such moments consisted mainly of preparing their studio space and art materials, fidgety gestures, and more rapid breathing.

I resonated with the co-researchers' perceptions of *intimate moments* and *non-intimate moments* through my own experience of intimacy as I edited the video footage. I was surprised to find intimacy in this methodological phase of the research project. The computer and its accessories have never struck me as potential mediators for intimacy. However, when I sat in front of my computer screen, looking closely at the photos and streaming visuals, I felt a new sensation. After some time in my sustained immersion, I began to lose track of time and became less aware of my environment. My attention, my body, and my mind were focused entirely on the video footage, and *tempus fugit*. The slower and steadier the images and hand movement on the screen became, the closer I felt to them (Image 3). Moreover, the I-position viewpoint enabled by the GoPro video camera led me to experience seeing as the other sees, which furthered intimacy.



Image 3. A still shot from the video footage of Eran in an intimate moment

These insights led to the identification of the two qualities: commitment to the present moment and looking closely as necessary components of intimacy.

Conversations with co-researchers after each experimental session and after viewing the edited videos listed particular features of their painting processes and materials as furthering the intimate experience. The empirical facilitators that they listed were (1) persistence and continued immersion, (2) being physically close and zooming in, (3) attention to detail, and (4) sensuousness. While I have listed these elements separately for the purpose of presentation and definition, we found them to be interrelated and interdependent components of intimacy.

Second Research Question

Are there particular qualities and features of artistic media, processes, and reflection through video footage editing that further intimate experience?

1. Persistence and Continued Immersion in Painting

Painting and drawing as creative activities develop through a process over time. The co-researchers were free to choose their own painting media and subjects during the experimental sessions. They were encouraged to work on a different painting during each session in order to explore the effect that different techniques, materials, and subjects had on intimacy.

While the participants' subjects, materials, painting style, and techniques differed greatly from one another, some characteristics of their painting processes and the development of their works were similar. Each participant began by getting into the mood of painting. They explained that the transition from their day-to-day tasks to painting required attention, as well as physical and mental preparation.

Eran dedicates the early hours of his day to painting. He said that during these hours the phone does not ring, everything is quiet, and he can devote himself entirely to the creative process. He is immersed in painting for four to five hours every morning and ends most days in the same way. He reported that spending long periods painting was necessary for the work's development, and that it kept pace with his emotional transformation. The time that he devoted to painting drew him closer to himself and enabled him to visit places in himself that he would not have visited otherwise. Eran recalled that in these deeper places, he felt very calm, and his breathing steadied and slowed. His painting process was free of distraction. His attention was intimately focused and directed toward the painting in front of him (Video timeline: 00:01:04–00:01:23).

Nirit, who offered a similar description, also said that she devoted herself totally to the painting process. During our conversations after her painting sessions, she said that the depth of her painting process consisted of such focused moments, which suggested that the act of painting was layered, manifold and complex. Nirit's description matched a general understanding among all the participants that the process of painting was full

of surprises that drew the painters closer to the painting. According to the participants, the only way that they could have such a profound, meaningful experience was by devoting sufficient time and space to painting — time and space that they longed for but mostly lacked in their daily lives.

All the co-researchers had similar insights. Nir said that he experienced prolonged immersion in painting as healing, which could make him physically healthier when he felt ill or alienated. He attributed these features to the repetitive movements of his hand as he painted — movements that pulled him toward what he described as his center, his core. Ofira lent support to this statement by referring to the movements of her hand and paintbrush as meditative. She admitted that in her day-to-day life, it was challenging for her to be present in the moment and to immerse herself in one activity at a time, but that this happened naturally when she painted.

The video footage showed pauses in the painting process during which the participant stepped back from his or her painting and the visual shot moved quickly to a different area in the studio. Sometimes the painter paused only briefly, taking a few steps back to view the painting in perspective. At other times, the pause was longer, when the painter was busy with other activities. During the culminating sessions with co-researchers, after they had watched the edited videos, these pauses were understood to be brief breaks that they referred to as *non-intimate moments*. They explained that their prolonged deep focus and immersion in painting required taking breaks, and that once they had done so, they could go back to painting. The edited videos helped the participants see these moments throughout their painting routines and identify the features that facilitated intimate experience.

2. Being Physically Close and Zooming In

A synergistic integration existed between the physical proximity of participants to their painted platforms, materials (referred to as an *other*), and their closeness to their own experiences.

Closeness and zooming in were identified as bearing a direct relation to intimacy. When the co-researchers were asked to define the intimate experience, they used terms such as “being close,” “closeness,” and “looking closely.” Therefore, it was no surprise to find these elements repeatedly within the systematic exploration of research material. The word *close* appeared many times, with variations, across the different methodology stages and information sources. It was verified when I witnessed co-researchers paint during the sessions. They placed themselves close to the painting that they were working on and to the materials that they used (Image 4). Their painting processes required their direct involvement in order to develop. Eran used a technical pen with a thin, sharp point to contour shapes of dried ink on paper. He described this phase within his painting process as intimate because it revealed forms within imagery that he might have overlooked — forms that reminded him of the sea he loved. Despite the early hour, he used a lamp and lenses to help him zoom in on the shapes, which were very small. As Eran drew, I followed the pen’s circling motions closely, and felt my body gradually becoming calm, my breath becoming steady, and intimacy approaching. Physical closeness to the art materials and the painting was also apparent in Nirit’s work (Images 2 and 3). She explained that keeping her body close to the canvas helped her to remain focused on the act of painting and feel closer to the imagery that she was creating.

As I edited the video footage, I noticed that the subjects in the frame were enlarged and remained still throughout the long duration of the painting process. The participants’ bodies leaned toward their paintings, and the movements of their brushes or other painting tools slowed. The head-mounted video camera that they wore zoomed in

on their hands, and every motion was shown clearly on the screen. In the culminating sessions with the co-researchers after they viewed the edited videos, they admitted that the angle and perspective of the shots made the development of their paintings seem tangible. This led them, as viewers, to zoom in on the painting hand, identify with it, and feel as if they were taking an active part in the painting processes of the other participants (Video timeline: 00:01:24–00:01:34). Their experience was intimate and close. They attested to feeling empathy and closeness as they zoomed in on the image that was shown on the screen.



Image 4. Ofira, positioned close to her painting, looking closely and zooming in

The participants' use of artistic media for bringing back the memory of an *other* also resulted in closeness. Ofira, in her first experimental session, chose the color umber brown to represent a worn-out, antique background for the portrait of her friend Yossi. This hue reminded her of his “artistic junkyard surroundings” and made her feel closer to him. Eran's painting tool brought back the image of his mother in her studio. He recalled his first acquaintance with the graphic pen as a child: “Back then, graphic pens were very pricey because of their fine, sharp edge,” he said. “My mom would let me play with the damaged ones whenever I visited her in her studio.” The pen that Eran used as his primary painting tool, together with the delicate style of painting that it required, made him feel closer to his mother.

Other co-researchers achieved closeness through a specific hand motion or painting technique that made them feel closer to a memory. Nir, in his third experimental session, painted on CDs with Artline felt-tipped pens, holding the CD in one hand as he painted with the other (Image 5, Video timeline: 00:01:35–00:01:50). This process reminded Nir of a client who painted in the same way. During the conversation that followed the painting session, he recalled that using the same painting materials and technique as his client made him feel greater closeness and intimacy with him. Nirit said that the subjects of her paintings made her feel close and connected to them. Almost all of her subjects are Ethiopians who represent her community's folk tales, cultural circumstances and events, which give her an intimate connection and alleviate her homesickness.

As part of my response to Ofira's first session, I painted a portrait of my stepdaughter and her baby boy. I noticed that I paid close attention to the physical features of her face, as I zoomed in in on the curves of her nose and the pigments of her skin as they shifted in light and shadow, and how looking closely at her physical features made me feel closer to her (Image 6, Video timeline: 00:01:51–00:02:08).



Image 5. Nir, using the same media as his client
in order to feel closer to him



Image 6. Michal, zooming in on physical details of her subject's face in order to feel closer to her.

3. Attention to Detail

The process of editing the video footage showed me that the co-researchers' physical closeness to their paintings during the creation process enabled them to zoom in on the details and be attentive to the qualities and aesthetic elements of their images. They paid close attention to lines, hues, forms and areas of the paintings that required additional care.

As they viewed the video footage, they saw their images, which were magnified due to the close-ups, in such detail that it was almost like seeing them anew. Nir said that seeing the creative process on the screen made him pay even more attention to details in the painting process and his imagery than he did while he was painting them. Ofira and Nirit, who saw their paintings in their earlier stages thanks to the video recording, echoed Nir's reaction. Ofira remarked that her emotional response to the artwork's unfinished state was like seeing a child's photo album, which reminded her of old times. This analogy felt intimate to her.

All of the participants paid careful attention to detail throughout the painting process. Eran said that he treats the painting materials with respect and appreciates the way that they inform his process. He recalled intimate moments when the imagery

revealed small, seemingly insignificant details. When I asked what made these moments intimate, Eran said that he could feel empathy and care for objects that he would not have noticed before, and that his interest in them and his familiarity with their characteristics were intimate. Ofira demonstrated her respect for the materials and her familiarity with their qualities by her focused movements during the creative process, her perseverance in using the tools, and her ongoing curiosity regarding them (Video timeline: 00:02:09–00:02:26).

I began work on the paintings I created in response to each session with the co-researchers by listening to the recorded conversations and watching the video footage of the session. These preparations served as a learning device to help me get into the experience of the other. In a manner similar to Stanislavski's (Benedetti, 1999) "art of experiencing" (p. 202), I watched the way that their physical studios were organized and took note of the materials and tools that they chose for their painting styles, as well as every other detail of their processes. I observed how they mixed their colors and perfected their hues, their posture throughout the session, the rhythms and movements of their hands, and the effect of these movements on their brush strokes. I focused on their physical features as if I were an actor, getting closer to my characters by imitating the physical conditions in order to understand their emotional ones. I used a physically grounded and systematic method in order to gain insight into what they referred to as *intimate* and *non-intimate moments* during their painting processes. My notes after the response painting sessions showed me that my attention to the details of their work helped me to think about them during my own painting process and feel intimacy with them. During my response painting session after the first experimental session with Ofira, I wrote the following:

The light coming from my studio window affected the hues of the oils on the painting, dazzling and blinding me. I moved my head a few

centimeters to the left and then to the right, again and again, in order to see clearly. This movement reminded me of Ofira and the way she moved her head from the canvas to the computer screen and back. I feel closer to her now as if we were sharing this moment together.

As the co-researchers and I reflected on imagery, we became aware of elements within the artworks that influenced one another. A line had its own contour, but also framed the elements next to it. Attention to the surrounding space/environment was also evident during the process of editing the video footage. I struggled with the task of choosing photos, looking at one after another in my search for the ones that reflected the co-researchers' ideas. Each choice highlighted a different momentum within the painting process, and so carried a different quality. My effort to be accountable for the co-researchers' definitions of intimacy led me to consider various options in great detail, such as the length of time that each photo was shown in the video timeline, the photos in their proximity to one another, the transition between motion and stills, and the addition of subtitles, sound and other details that might inform the research project. Once these elements were combined in the edited video, they felt like siblings within a family, and their permanence as components of the video established their connection firmly as an intimate community.

4. Sensuousness

The element of sensuousness was one of the first that the co-researchers identified as furthering an intimate experience. Their descriptions of colors, textures, and smell were consistent throughout our conversations and the concluding discussions. Even when they spoke about an inner voice, they referred to listening as the essential attribute and spoke of how intimacy allowed for the acknowledgment of sensuousness within their painting processes. It was no surprise that all of the participants described the painting process as engaging most or all of their senses.

During Nir's first session, his creative process included touching the art materials with his hands, tearing pieces of paper for a collage, placing glue onto the canvas with his fingers, smearing oil pastels, squeezing the glue tube, and rubbing dried glue off his fingers. In his description of the work during the discussion after the experimental session, he explained that the materials' tangible qualities enhanced his experience as he painted. Nir reflected that touching the art materials helped him to learn their features and discover their creative possibilities (Image 7, Video timeline: 00:03:02–00:03:13).



Image 7. Nir, touching the art materials that enhance his sensual experience

Eran's painting process also included direct contact with the painting materials. After each painting session, his studio space, clothing, and fingers were covered with blue ink stains. He said that painting was an inseparable part of his identity and his daily life. Unlike the other participants in this project, Eran painted on the large coffee table in his living room. Despite its location in the center of his home, the table was dedicated entirely to his painting process, materials, and tools. Eran said that the art materials were intimate witnesses of his life. Similarly, for him, the images that he painted were witnesses of sea life, and the sea was a witness to his painting process: "The sea, my

image, the art materials — we are intertwined, intimately involved, and influence one another” (Image 8).



Image 8. Eran: the sensual qualities of the sea
are reflected in the image

The other participants also said that the sensory qualities of the materials furthered intimate experience. Nirit described a physical sensation she had every time she mixed and stirred color pastes. She found joy and excitement in watching the spatula disappear inside the paste and turning it over and seeing how this caused the hue to change. She explained that this process was intimate because one material touched and influenced the other. Ofira agreed with Nirit, adding that even though she had a keen *aesthetic eye* (which was evident in her house and garden), her senses were enhanced and intimately mingled with the painting process, more than they were in her daily life. She said that the painting process showed her that it was fine for the senses to be active and entirely involved in the process. Ofira acknowledged that her daily arrival in the studio space, the sensuous smell of oil colors that grew stronger, and her continued immersion in painting invited an experience of intimacy. The participants spoke of an embodied perception of detail that was interwoven in the painting process — a perception that

required no verbal explanation, which made them feel they belonged and connected to the image they were working on, to their materials, and to their creative space.

My notes after I created a painting in response to Ofira's first session identified intimacy, filled with the sensual joy of painting a beloved subject and looking at it for a long time. "I could not escape the pleasure of painting someone I cared for and loved," I wrote, "realizing how close I feel with them as I focus and gaze repeatedly at their faces." I also felt intimacy as I edited the video footage: I noticed a mesmerizing sensation in my body as I followed the participants' hand movements with my eyes as they slowed (Video timeline: 00:03:14–00:03:32). My sensory experience echoed Nirit's description of feeling goosebumps as she mixed colors. That sensation drew me toward the caressing strokes of the brush onto the canvas, the developing imagery, and the colorful palette shown on the screen. It was as if we were all participating intimately in the painting process.

Third Research Question

Which Conditions Favor Intimacy?

In answering the third research question, participants spoke of specific conditions that could further the experience of intimacy. These were: (1) dedication of time and space, (2) openness to seeing and being seen, (3) an urge to move closer, and (4) curiosity: the desire to question and wonder. These conditions were empirically identified through the six methodological phases.

1. Dedication of Time and Space

This research project was conducted in five studio spaces. The four co-researchers invited me into their studios to witness their painting processes and discuss the research questions in three sessions of approximately two hours each, which were dedicated solely to that purpose. Each space differed from the others in location, size, structure, belongings, and other physical characteristics. We also met at different times during the

day. The fifth location was the studio space in which I worked by myself during the response art sessions and the private exhibition.

Despite the different characteristics in each studio, the participants identified similar elements that were present in all of their sessions — elements that contributed to their experience of intimacy. Ofira spoke of the temporary nature of the phenomenon, describing it as “slippery, evasive, even shy,” and noted that it was easily scared away. Therefore, her reflection upon the edited video gave her the insight that both painting and intimacy required that she be completely present in the process. Nir agreed, adding that intimacy took place when the space was physically and emotionally prepared for it. During our discussions, he said that before he began the creative process, he made the space available, comfortable, and safe, and the equipment accessible. He chose the platform and media to contain his art and to contain himself. He referred to the mental aspects of the process that he used to prepare for containment and devotion, and suggested that just like painting, intimacy required specific preparations. The conditions he needed were peace and quiet with an accepting environment free of criticism and judgment, so that he could feel safe and be fully present in the moment. The other participants agreed. Nirit discussed setting up the studio space as the prologue of her painting process, and made an analogy to intimacy, saying: “My studio space is a sacred space for exploration.” She talked about inviting intimacy into her painting process through routine ceremonial preparations such as creating and stirring the color pastes. Eran spoke about the relationship between time and intimacy. He suggested that like painting, intimacy could exist only when sufficient time was devoted to it. He added that this was necessary for an experience to become intimate, since there is a gradual process that leads to intimacy: “It does not happen unless we invite it into our space and signal that it has enough time to exist.” (Video timeline: 00:04:03–00:04:19).

During the many hours in which I edited the video footage and observed the participants' painting processes, I noticed when the footage attracted and interested me and when I felt alienated from it. In most cases, this had to do with the conditions and the setting of my work space. I felt close to the person on the screen, the image, and the hand movements only when I worked alone and dedicated time to doing only that. Mostly, it felt as if time passed more slowly than usual when these conditions were met. It was time that I devoted, with respect, to that one task: a time when there were no other demands or tasks calling for me. Also, my space had to be private, quiet, and safe, allowing me to watch the footage closely and connect empathetically with the material on the screen.

2. Openness to Seeing and Being Seen

The co-researchers suggested that intimacy existed during their painting process when they were open to taking in the materials, the sensations, their feelings, and their insights.

The video footage helped Nir to see his enmeshment with the painting materials, and how touching the materials with his fingers and letting them penetrate his skin involved reaching out and bringing something in. He recalled that these moments were intimate when he felt one with his art, like a private knowledge of the oil pastels under his fingernails. Nirit agreed, adding that intimacy required being open not only to seeing, but also to being willing to be seen by the other. According to Nirit, observing her painting process revealed parts of herself, exposing her and making her vulnerable. She gave an example from her second session, during which she felt intimacy toward her image as she painted *The Sleeping Woman* (Image 9). It required that she [the woman in her painting] let down her guard. She was willing to be seen this way: unfinished, exposed.

Consequently, Nirit felt she was seen by the woman (Video timeline: 00:04:20–00:04:46). She said that like painting, intimacy required letting down her guard to offer a genuine opportunity for an *other* to see her with an open heart. The feature of openness that the co-researchers spoke of gave them the ability to change their perspectives and see the familiar in new ways. The GoPro video camera emphasized this feature in providing the viewpoint of the creator, letting the viewer see as the other sees.



Image 9. Nirit: Openness to seeing the woman and being seen by her

Ofira suggested that like her desire to paint, the intimate experience came when she was ready for it and when she was willing to become intimate herself. She explained that when she was open to seeing an *other* (be it a material, a painting tool, or a color), this enabled her to see *other* parts within herself, which were reflected by that *other*. For example, Ofira recalled that when the tube of color paste was about to run out and needed a firm squeeze, this made her understand fatigue, and also making the most out of life before it was actually over.

The co-researchers found that intimacy required seeing differently — or, better yet, seeing anew. They described another aspect of looking, one that was created by entering into a relationship with the subject that they observed. Eran felt that the longer and more frequently he looked at his imagery, the more he saw everything that existed in

it. He said that he would not have been open to seeing this way unless he had set aside time for it of his own free will.

As I witnessed the co-researchers in their experimental sessions, I felt that the decision to be seen by an other was intimate in itself. All of the co-researchers admitted their initial concern over being observed as they painted. Nirit confessed that she was concerned about showing her artworks in an unfinished state. She was worried that doing so might make her feel too exposed and therefore unsafe. Ofira echoed Nirit's concerns, saying that over the fifty years she had been painting, she had never agreed to have anyone in her studio space as she painted. Their initial concerns were allayed by the many intimate moments they reported feeling during the sessions. Our discussions in the concluding sessions led to the understanding that willingness to seeing and to being seen by an *other* required adopting the mindsets, viewpoints, and habits of an *other*. This understanding supported the notion that their willingness to allow me, a stranger, to witness their private painting processes was itself a facilitator of intimacy.

A surprising element that I discovered in my systematic exploration of the research material was that my silent but active witnessing of the co-researchers' experimental sessions in their studios was far more intimate than the discussions that followed them. Contrary to what I had expected, I felt longer and more frequent intimate moments as I witnessed them. It was as if the time and the space that I devoted to watching, observing carefully, wondering about, and imagining, gave rise to an openness (both theirs and mine) to share the intimate space. The four co-researchers said that they had never experienced anyone observing their work "in that way" for such long periods of time. It therefore surprised them to see how, despite their previous concerns and my otherness, they could feel consumed in their painting processes even though they were being observed. Nirit spoke of the witnessing way that the co-participants mentioned during the culminating session:

I knew you were there, a little behind me, as I painted. You were silent, attentive, and interested in what I was doing. It made me feel like you could really see me. I felt that I was doing something important and that there was a significant value to my painting process. It was different from the way I had valued it before.

3. An Urge to Move Closer

In order to record the painting sessions, I used a GoPro Hero3 video camera that was mounted on each participant's forehead.

As I viewed the video footage later on, the method I had chosen made me notice things that I had not seen during the sessions. It allowed a third-eye perspective that looked at the painting hand and the image from an I-position, as if the viewer were participating in the process of creation. When the co-researchers watched the edited footage a few weeks or even months later, they felt as though they shared the participant's vision and movements. This position made them, as viewers, feel closer to the painter and the image shown on the screen. The co-researchers said that they felt intimacy during these moments because they could share the other participants' rhythm, hand movements, and brush-strokes. At times it felt as natural to them as their own movements and rhythm, and at other times, it underscored the differences between them. They reported that they felt as close to the person they were observing as if they were inside them.

Still, a paradox remained. As the participants viewed the footage, they were reminded of moments during the sessions that they had forgotten, moments that had brought them closer to their painting processes, even as they were aware of their positions, seated in front of the computer screens. Unlike the painter whose process was being shown on the screen, they, as viewers, could control the footage. They could pause the video for as long as they wished, rewind parts to view them again, and fast-forward to other parts. The physical nature of the medium allowed us to view the footage whenever we desired, see the stages of the artworks' development, and study the

movements of the participants' hands as they painted. The participants noticed moments during which they felt a desire to move closer to the screen and identified them as *intimate moments* (Video timeline: 00:05:13–00:05:34).

The process of editing the footage pushed and pulled me into and out of the enmeshment that I had felt while painting. I observed that when the painter's forehead was close to the painting, the image presented on the screen was enlarged, the hand moved slowly, and the paintbrush caressed the canvas. Correspondingly, during these moments I had an urge to move closer to the computer screen, zoom in on details in the visual shots, and then pull back again. There was an energy, a tension, pulling and pushing me towards the screen, similar to the energy that the co-researchers reported, which pulled them towards the painting as they painted. This parallel process created twinship between the viewer and the painter, which the participants defined later as *intimate*.

The private exhibition also highlighted the urge to move closer. While the paintings hung on the studio walls, I moved them around to see whether their physical proximity to one another, as well as my physical position as a viewer, affected intimacy (Images 10, 11, 12). I noticed that when I sat farther away from the painting, I felt alienated from it, and when I pulled my chair closer to the display, I felt warmer energies towards the imagery. I realized that there was a connection between my proximity to the paintings and my feelings of intimacy toward them.



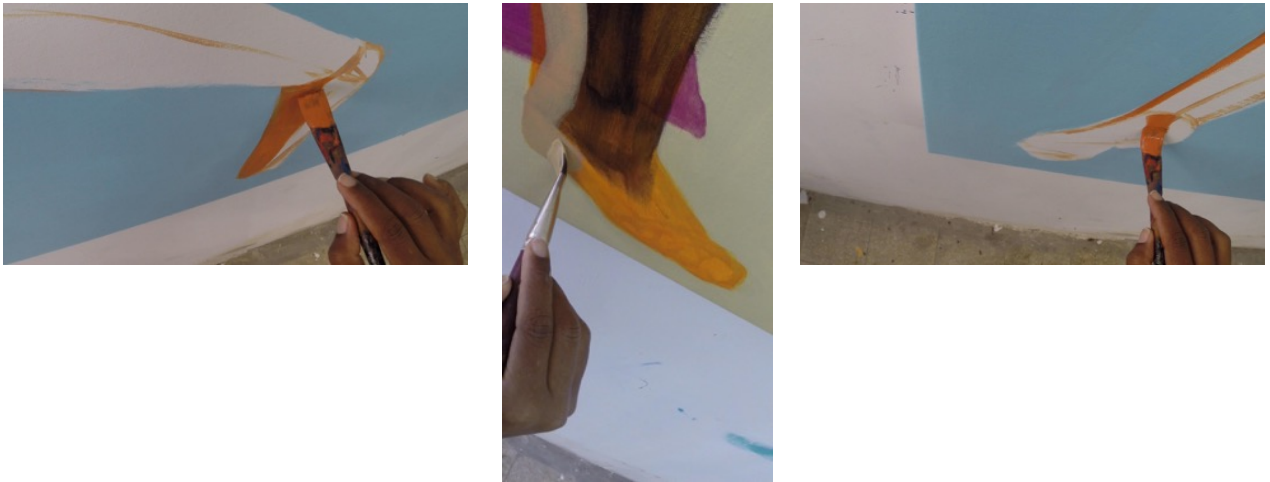
Images 10, 11, 12 (left to right). The private exhibition:

Intimacy and proximity of the artworks

I also explored the distance between the paintings on display and its relation to intimacy. When I moved the paintings closer and farther away from each other, I found that when the distance between them was increased, I saw each painting on its own, and not in relation to any other painting. Accordingly, when the paintings were placed closer to one another, it was difficult for me to see each artwork on its own, and I found myself pondering the relationship between them. It was challenging to observe one painting without the other. This situation led to two scenarios. In one, I felt an urge to play with the physical distance between the artworks, bringing them closer and closer together in order to see their effect on one another. In the second scenario, I felt an urge to get closer to one of the paintings and inspect it without the other getting in the way.

This finding echoed Eran's reflection on the tension that existed in the composition of his imagery. He noted that when shapes were located close to one another but did not touch, it caused his eyes to try to connect them, closing the gap. At the same time, he realized that the gap was what created the tension and his urge to bring them closer. The participants talked about playing with that urge. They discussed the consequences of giving in to the desire to position shapes close to one another, close to the edge of the painting, and what happened when they did not surrender to the desire

but maintained it instead. Nirit said that maintaining this urge led her to feel intimacy by attracting and engaging her eyes in the area where the tension existed (Images 13-15). During the culminating discussions, the co-researchers acknowledged that they had invited intimacy into their space by discussing an element and giving attention to it.



Images 13, 14, 15. (left to right). Nirit sustains tension in composition, leading to intimacy.

The urge to move closer was identified as facilitating intimacy due to the physical and visual characteristics of art materials, their sensory qualities, and aesthetics. Ofira spoke about the enchanting qualities of the painting materials and how they attract her to approach them, touch them, and explore them. The visual and visceral qualities of the painting materials sparked her curiosity and her wonder about them, and her desire to know them and their creative possibilities by engaging with them.

4. Curiosity: The Desire to Question and Wonder

Like the physical urge to move closer, the participants spoke of a complementary mental condition that furthered the intimate experience: curiosity — the desire to question and wonder.

The nine sessions with the co-researchers showed how painting involves sustained curiosity — the desire to search and re-search. The participants said that as they paint, they are always searching for line, form, and composition, and that this journey

leads them to develop intimate relationships with those elements (Video timeline: 00:05:34–00:05:50). They said that intimacy was part of their process of searching, and that their discoveries led to new searches. Ofira talked about being curious, speaking of her subjects as an invitation to look again at what she had seen many times before but might have missed. In my discussions with the co-researchers after each experimental session, they reflected on the imagery that they had created. They revisited their painting processes and imagery by placing themselves at a distance from their paintings, and so differentiating between themselves and their work. They said that the longer they observed their images, the more their curiosity about the images increased. Nirit said that staying with the image invited intimacy due to the time and space they had shared, but also because of the interest the image aroused in her, which occupied her thoughts even days after painting.

Nir discussed his never-ending interest in the image and how he constantly questioned and explored it. He realized that this interest in an *other* invited intimacy. Eran expressed his agreement with Nir's idea by adding that intimacy, like painting, was an invitation to find something new in the familiar, in the supposedly known. He said that curiosity about something familiar meant caring for it, treating it with empathy, and being interested in it, and that these attributes led to intimacy.

The process of editing the video footage also showed how curiosity led to intimacy. As I edited, I questioned and wondered about the imagery of my response art. I wondered: Why was it there? What made me create it? Why did I choose those subjects to paint? I also wondered about the videos I edited. I asked myself: What is the footage teaching me? What photos might enhance the participants' perceptions? What elements should I place between each shot? The curiosity I had regarding the imagery and the video footage as an *other* exposed the relationship that had been created between us, and showed that my interest in these *others* invited intimacy.

The participants found that the act of being witnessed fulfilled the condition of curiosity as facilitating intimate experience. During the culminating session with Nirit, she confessed to feeling important and worthy when she knew that I was observing her work. Contrary to her initial concern to being observed, she was surprised to see how profoundly it intensified her painting process. She recalled being consumed by many questions during the experimental sessions. She was curious to know what made me choose her as a co-researcher in my exploration of intimacy, what I saw in her process, what I could learn from silent observation, and what I was writing throughout. She said that these questions gave rise to intense thoughts that pulled her deeper into the painting process and made her even more focused on her work. At the same time, it made her acknowledge intimate moments in the space that we shared.

Nir spoke about the feature of witnessing via the edited footage, and found that it was similar to witnessing the creative process in art therapy. He said that his role as a witness in art therapy invited authenticity into the creative space, in which not only beauty, but also shadows, found expression. His role as art therapist — and as witness — was to hold the therapeutic space, inviting observation, reflection and then acknowledgment of the creative process. Nir suggested that witnessing in person and via video signaled to the one being observed an interest in the *other*, curiosity regarding things that generally go by unnoticed while discovering their significance. The other participants agreed with Nir's view. They found that witnessing encouraged an openness to be seen and see the beauty — and also the shadows — by setting aside time and space, and that these elements facilitated intimacy.

Fourth Research Question

What Are the Obstacles to Intimacy?

Within the discovery of conditions that favored intimacy, my exploration of the information I gained during my research identified three major obstacles to the intimate

experience. These were: (1) mental and physical distractions, (2) the inner judge, and (3) restlessness.

1. Mental and Physical Distractions

The participants in this study described intimacy as temporary and of the moment. They saw, sensed, and felt it during their painting processes when certain conditions invited its existence — and distractions could chase it away just as easily.

The research material demonstrated what the co-researchers described later as *non-intimate moments*. On viewing the edited videos, the participants were able to identify moments when the painters were farther away from their paintings, their gaze was not directed toward one place for an extended period of time, and when they moved around the studio. The participants described physical distractions to their painting processes as anything that demanded their immediate attention, causing them to lose their focus. The discussions and culminating reflections revealed these distractions as obstacles to intimacy as well. Eran suggested that these distractions were signals by the body to acknowledge the temporary nature of the intimate experience, and that were it not for the non-intimate moments, we would not notice the intimate ones. Nirit agreed with Eran's view that the distractions underscored intimacy that had existed before. She explained that when she was immersed in her painting process, she was unaware of her bodily needs; she did not feel cold, hunger, or fatigue, and hence, felt the intimate experience. However, at some point, any of these instances could easily take her out of the painting process and chase intimacy away.

The participants also identified mental distractions as obstacles to the intimate experience. They defined these distractions as any thought, emotion, or feeling that was not directly related to their painting processes and caused them to lose their focus. Nir cited stress as one example. He reported that feeling anxiety during painting blocked him from having a deeper connection to the creative process. During our discussion after the

first experimental session, he said that it was difficult for him to dive into the painting process right away, especially with me there. He recalled that at the beginning of each session, his guard was up. This prevented him from being present in the moment and giving himself over entirely to painting. As a result of these feelings, he recalled these moments as non-intimate. The other co-researchers agreed; they described their difficulty in focusing on painting when their minds were preoccupied with distracting thoughts. The video footage showed that during these non-intimate moments the participants paused their painting process for longer periods of time to regain their focus (Video timeline: 00:06:09–00:06:24).

The co-researchers and I discussed the degree to which physical and mental distractions became obstacles to the intimate experience during the culminating sessions. After viewing the edited video, the participants said they could overcome brief distractions such as a notification on their phones, a sudden noise or a passing thought, and that in such cases intimacy remained unaffected. They agreed that the intimate experience was blocked when the interruption was long enough to remove the painter's attention from the painting process. In these cases, it took them longer to regain their focus.

2. The Inner Judge

All the participants said that the inner judge was a major obstacle to the intimate experience. They all suffered from this inner judging voice that led them to think and feel critically towards the imagery and toward themselves.

During my culminating discussions with the participants, we identified the inner judge's role as an obstacle to intimacy, and then debated as to whether this inner critic played any other role in the intimate experience. Eran suggested that it did. He admitted to complaining about his deteriorating eyesight, which forced him to wear glasses and turn on a lamp as he painted. While these physical appliances blocked his vision, their

more severe obstructing features reminded him of his increasing age and the lost capabilities that accompanied the aging process. He said that these thoughts had begun as an inner critic, but when he continued to ponder them, he regained the intimate experience. Eran's inner judge reflected his vulnerabilities, and seeing these shadows made him feel closer to them (Image 16, Video timeline: 00:06:40–00:07:15).



Image 16. Eran: The inner judge criticized my deteriorating eyesight, obstructing intimacy

The participants said that the inner judge was mainly present during the reflecting process about their imagery. The video footage showed that when the painters stepped back from their paintings to review them, intimacy ended, at least for the moment. When Ofira viewed the edited video, she noted that her close proximity to the canvas showed her immersion in painting, and that these were the moments during which she sensed intimacy. But when she stepped back to observe her painting through the mirror and explore its composition, there was no intimacy. Instead, she felt alienated from the artwork, angry and disappointed with herself, and her inner critic pushed intimacy farther and farther away.

I said that when I painted, it was very important to me that I was creating something *good*. As I edited and viewed the footage from my response painting sessions, I noticed how meticulously I caressed the canvas with the tip of the paintbrush and how I made sure I covered the surface until the transparency of the color felt just right. The finished artwork was of great significance to me. I recognized a part within that was asking me for quality and excellence. During the response writing after painting, I wrote: “I will keep a painting of mine, which I don’t appreciate, facing the wall.” The inner critic that the co-researchers spoke of kept me from expressing myself authentically through painting. Yet that same inner critic might lead me to an even more profound painting process when I could listen to its voice, was open to see what it was there to tell me and engaged in dialogue with it. These instances allowed me to continue my painting process, and the inner critic gradually relaxed.

3. Restlessness

During the process of identifying restlessness as an obstacle to intimacy, the research information revealed a paradox. The structure of this research project used advanced technological devices that required practice and skill, such as software editing programs, a high-end 4G mobile phone and recorder, the Hero3 GoPro video camera, and a laptop. While I used all of these things to explore intimate experiences, I found that intimacy required simplicity.

The participants acknowledged the technology that inundate their daily routines, making it more challenging to be present in the moment and participate in one thing at a time without fear of missing out. This insight helped the participants identify restlessness as an obstacle to the intimate experience. They suggested that intimacy was naturally present during their painting processes because painting, like intimacy, required that they devote time and space to doing one thing at a time, attentively. Among other qualities, painting and intimacy required continued immersion in the process, close observation,

zooming in, and paying attention to detail. The co-researchers said that dedication to the process of painting and the intimate experiences contained in it made them feel calmer, more attentive to their physical and emotional needs, and even healthier. Surprisingly, the physical efforts painting sometimes involved did not tire them or drain their energies. Rather, all the participants said that they felt rejuvenated after their painting sessions.

Summary of Results

In this research project, I worked with four participant co-researchers in order to discover whether the process of painting, together with witnessing and reflection on the process and imagery, further an understanding of the intimate experience — and, if so, how. In exploring the phenomenon of intimacy, we also inquired what the conditions that favor intimacy are, what the obstacles to intimacy are, and whether there are particular qualities and features of artistic media, processes, and reflection through video footage editing that further intimate experience. The results and findings for the research questions were generated by the following methodological elements: witnessing the painting sessions of co-researchers; their observations of the process and imagery through our discussions and by viewing the video footage; my artistic reflections after observing the experimental painting sessions; journaling; response painting; and an ongoing in-depth examination of the video footage and the editing process.

In answering the primary research question, I found that the process of painting and drawing, together with witnessing and reflection on the process and imagery, indeed further an understanding of intimacy. The intimate experience consists of two primary operational elements: (1) commitment to the present moment, and (2) looking closely. These two key elements stood out through all the methodological phases.

In response to the first sub-question inquiring whether particular qualities and features of artistic media, processes, and reflection through video footage editing further intimate experience, I identified four empirical, interrelated and interdependent

facilitators that foster and encourage the intimate experience: (1) persistence and continued immersion, (2) being physically close and zooming in, (3) attentiveness to detail, and (4) sensuousness. The tangibility of the materials, as well as the technical aspects of the craft, demand closeness and attention to detail. Similarly, the sensory nature of artistic expression during sustained immersion in painting, drawing, and video editing furthers intimacy.

The research information was consistent in answering the second and third research sub-questions: What are the conditions that favor intimacy, and what are the obstacles to intimacy? Four empirical conditions were found to favor and invite intimacy: (1) dedication of time and space, (2) openness to seeing and being seen, (3) an urge to move closer, and (4) curiosity: the desire to question and wonder. Consequently, it was noted that obstacles to intimacy are: (1) mental and physical distractions, (2) the inner judge, and (3) restlessness. My findings revealed that intimacy requires an openness to seeing and sensing not only the beauty of the ordinary, but also the vulnerabilities.

The conditions that favored and interfered with intimacy defined the phenomenon. This showed that intimacy is temporary, of the moment, and that we can either invite intimate moments into our space or push them away. Although it may sometimes seem elusive, the intimate experience can be noted, felt and sensed both while it exists and also in retrospect. Experiencing non-intimate moments made it possible to experience intimate ones. Intimacy can be present when one devotes sufficient time and space to them and when physical and mental distractions are less likely to interfere. Intimacy depends on willingness to be seen, sometimes in exposed and vulnerable ways. It also requires a relaxation of self-criticism, which increases the ability to see and be seen.

My findings suggest that an experience can become intimate when specific conditions are present, and that sustained intimacy is within our reach.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

This research study was based on the creative process and builds upon the findings of a pilot study (Lev, 2016) that explored art as a mediator for intimacy, which I conducted on my own as artist-researcher-therapist.

In this research project, I worked with four participant co-researchers to further my exploration of the intimate experience via the following questions:

- Can the process of painting and drawing, together with witnessing and reflection on the process and imagery, further an understanding of intimacy — and if so, how?
- Are there specific qualities and features of artistic media, processes, and reflection through the editing of video footage that further intimate experience?
- What are the conditions that favor intimacy?
- What are the obstacles to intimacy?

Although the co-researchers differed from one another in age, marital status, religious practice, ethnic roots, gender, and socio-economic status, they knew the world of painting: three of them were experienced painters, and one was an art therapist. None of them had ever participated in a research study before. The study setting included five different studio spaces (the co-researchers' and my own). Four were located in Israel, while one was in Lesbos, Greece.

I used an art-based research methodology as my primary mode of inquiry by respecting and honoring discoveries as they unfolded and trusting the artistic process to inform the research questions (McNiff, 2013). My method included six interdependent elements, as discussed in Chapter III: witnessing experimental painting sessions of co-

researchers, their observations of the process and imagery through verbal discussions, my own responses in painting and writing, a private exhibition of artworks, editing video footage; and concluding sessions with co-researchers after viewing the edited videos.

Chapter II showed that the literature exploring intimacy to date is focused primarily on interpersonal relationships, particularly couples (Blass, 2017; Carter & Carter, 2010; Wieden, 2018). Many explorations of intimacy can be found in the psycho-sociological arenas featured in a range of quantifiable evaluation and assessment measures, in an attempt to understand the nature of intimacy, the conditions it requires, and its resulting effects (Leonard et al., 2014; Miller, 1982; Schaefer & Olson, 1981; Sinclair & Dowdy, 2005). However, these writings were not consistent with my perception of intimacy's deeper consciousness.

The various ambiguous definitions of intimacy among adults (Skyler & Bayer, 2010; Kasulis, 2002) and the exclusive correlation between intimacy and sexuality (Greeff, Malherbe, & Hildegard, 2001; Ogden, 2006; Perel & Foundation, 2012) were limiting. These definitions only pushed intimacy farther away from the boundaries of proper psychotherapeutic discourse, largely rendering it taboo (Pearson, Child & Carmon, 2010), and were not in step with intimacy's contribution to wellbeing (Kabat-Zinn & Salzberg, 2018), the therapeutic relationship (Gottman & Gottman, 2018; Sullivan, 1953), healing (McNiff, 2014; Phelps, 2017), and the creative space (James Hillman, 1985; Jung, 2014; Milner & Letley, 2010).

In this study, I approached intimacy with the goal of informing new ways of knowing through art (Allen, 1995).

Operational Elements of Intimacy

As presented in Chapter IV, the study identified two consistent operational elements within intimate experience: (1) commitment to the present moment, and (2) looking closely.

Commitment to the present moment

The participants in this study described meditative aspects within their process of painting that can be related to repetitive hand movements and their mindful concentration on the craftsmanship painting involves. They referred to the disciplined aspects of creating and stirring color pastes, the prolonged development of their artworks that could take hours and days to complete, the space and time painting required, the cognitive challenges of constructing the artwork in a recurring search to find solutions, their physical tones and demeanors, and their sensations of rejuvenation after painting.

Their views echoed those of Bachelard (1994), who believed that intimacy requires exploration, searching and researching to discover the new in the familiar, and other painters that noted how persistent immersion in painting was meditative and mindful as the writings of Peppiatt (2012) and Arthur (1983) revealed.

Because the artistic process and product develop over a period of time as noted by the participants, a bold, inherent characteristic of making art is the requirement to participate fully in the task continually and extensively. Time was found to have an effect on the participants' experiences of intimacy. They referred to moments when they felt that time paused or even stretched, and that they lost track of time. These states suggest the temporal nature of intimacy. Dissanayake (2015) referred to the aspect of time in both intimacy and art-making and their capacity to make us feel known by another for a temporary time. Yesucevitz (2014) also referred to time, linking the process of meaning-making to spending time with imagery in observation

and dialogues (McNiff, 2004), as phenomenological approaches to art-therapy suggest (Betensky, 1995).

The co-researchers acknowledged a relation between the art materials to the body, the space, and the mind during art-making. This notion supports the ceramist Richards (2011), who referred to pottery work as a facilitating agent regarding the ability to be in the moment, and also writings of expressive therapists that described an embodied aspect to intimacy. These writings suggested an experience in which the body and mind entwined, bestowing the capacity to enable centering of the self (Dissanayake, 2015; Kossak, 2015), and bringing the creator closer to self and *others* (Lévinas & Poller, 2003).

The physiological demeanors of body, such as slower pace, fewer movements, steady breathing and focus were noticed while I witnessed the co-researchers' painting processes, during my response art sessions, through the process of editing the video footage, and while viewing the video footage. I found that the more the artworks develop, the more immersed we become in the creative process — to a degree in which no distractions interfere with the creative process, inviting deeper awareness and looking closely at the art.

Looking closely

I discovered the element of looking closely in intimacy while doing the research for my pilot study (Lev, 2016). The study suggested art's ability to open an aperture into oneself and provide opportunities for intimate reflection on the created imagery. This was affirmed by the co-researchers, who indicated that looking closely at their paintings revealed forms within imagery that they might have overlooked, and thus permitted them to see these elements anew. Several other researchers referred to a new aspect of looking during painting, one that invited the creator and viewer to see the subject of their familiarity differently (Fish, 2013) by engaging a powerful gaze,

intertwined with a deep emotional relationship that was developed towards the imagery (D'Erasmus, 2014).

The edited videos showed that the head-mounted video camera gave an intimate perspective to the shots — an I-position — which made the painting process seem tangible. This finding strengthens Dissinayake (2015) in her claim that the tactile synchrony in rhythm and movement described the experience of *mutuality* (i.e. intimacy). I suggest that this position led viewers to zoom in on the painting hand shown on the screen, identify with it, and feel as if they were taking an active part in the other participants' painting processes. The co-researchers attested to feeling empathy and closeness as they zoomed in on the image and described the experience as intimate.

Features of Artistic Media and Processes that Further Intimacy

My discussions with the co-researchers involved distinguishing between *intimate moments* and *non-intimate moments*. These distinctions led to the identification of four features of the painting process, painting materials, and video-editing as furthering the intimate experience: (1) persistence and continued immersion, (2) physical proximity and zooming in, (3) attention to detail, and (4) sensuousness.

Persistence and continued immersion

In this research, continued immersion together with persistence in art-making and reflection, contributed to being present in the moment and looking closely, as well as to being less distracted by the surrounding environment. I found that the creative process was manifold and complex, and that surprises and challenges drew the painters closer to the process and kept them committed. My findings echoed descriptions of artists being pulled by an urge to paint continuously (Peppiatt, 2012), and their never-ending learning process through painting that informed their self-awareness and brought them closer to self (Leffel, 2009).

The co-researchers reported that the long periods they spent in painting were necessary for the development of their artworks and that these kept pace with their emotional transformation, by drawing them closer and visiting inner parts, rarely visited. Their words resonate with D'Erasmus, who proposed that we long for intimacies in art because they reveal places that are normally unacknowledged, unlit, nor seen (2014), and that art could present what we know to exist but are not always aware of (Jonze, 1999).

The co-researchers described the continuous effects their extensive process of painting had on their lives, which extended even beyond the actual process, occupying their thoughts and emotions in their dreams and in their lives outside the studio. These observations reinforced Lévinas (Lévinas and Poller, 2003) and Israeli (2018), who proposed an enigmatic and inspirational relationship between the soul and imagery, when the imagery was treated as an *other*. Viewing the edited videos, in which the co-researchers saw their images magnified and focusing on details due to the close-ups, was described to be intimate because it was almost like seeing them anew.

Physical proximity and zooming in

The findings of this research project show that the *intimate moments* were sparked by their counterparts, *non-intimate moments*, which demonstrated pauses in the painting process, when the painters took a few steps back to view the painting in perspective. These short pauses were required in order to go back to painting in an engaged way. The video footage made it easy to identify these moments throughout the painting process and link them to intimacy. Editing the footage was suggested by McNiff (2018) to promote closer engagement with the subtle processes of artistic expression, enabled by the ability to zoom in and show alternative view-points to the filmed experience.

The findings suggest a synergistic integration between physical proximity to the artworks, materials and tools, and our closeness to our own experiences. This echoes Kasulis (2002) who explained that intimate familiarity with *others* occurs when the experiences become second nature, like artists' tools that function as extensions of their hands with familiar qualities. Similarly, the study of Phelps (2017) showed that art-making and close proximity of the painters and viewers to the painting promoted tacit knowledge, contemplation, and deepened their understanding.

Closeness was also achieved by the use of artistic media for evoking the memory of an *other*. A specific hue, painting tool, hand movement, the subjects of the painting, or the technique could bring back the memory of a close person. My findings expand the suggestion of Mashek and Aron (2004) that intimacy and closeness could take place within inter-personal relationships involving two or more people, in suggesting intimacy to be intra-personal (within the person) as well. My approach was demonstrated by the close proximity of the participants to the painting they worked on and the materials they used. The intra-personal nature of intimacy was also suggested by Bachelard (1994) and McNiff (1995), who found intimacy by looking closely and continuously at the objects in their homes.

Attention to detail

The study suggests that intimacy is furthered by attention to detail. I found that the physical closeness to the paintings during the creative process enabled being attentive to the aesthetic elements and qualities of the images; to the lines, hues, forms, and to areas of the paintings that required more care. The observations of painters Tony Bevan (Peppiatt, 2012) and Linda Stanton Moore (Feit, 1992), who spent extensive amount of time in studying the qualities of their painting subjects and painting materials intimately, were echoed during the discussions with the co-researchers. They indicated

that this type of attention increased their interest and curiosity regarding the aesthetic nuances of imagery, materials, and tools.

The prolonged witnessing of the painting process that I experienced during the study, was found to invite intimacy into the creative space in a mode of listening-inward and listening-outward (Robbins, 1998). This involved being present in the moment, committed, and attentive to detail. Similarly, interpreting my experience through painting in the response art sessions raised an awareness of details that informed the research questions. This was influenced by becoming close to the material as Havesteen-Franklin and Camarena Altamirano (2015) suggested.

Sensuousness

The results of this research showed that the element of sensuousness was among the first that the co-researchers identified as furthering intimate experience. Their descriptions of colors, textures, and smell were consistent throughout our conversations and the concluding discussions. The painter David Leffel (2009) suggested that the ability to immerse continually in painting has to do with the visceral pleasure evoked by the painting materials, which is amplified by playing with them during the painting process.

The co-researchers spoke of how intimacy allowed for the acknowledgment of sensuousness in their painting processes and they described the painting process as engaging most or all of their senses. Their observations support Strawn and Falick, who found that artistic activities that are usually performed with the hands, were satisfying due to their engagement with effort, continuity, repetition and pleasure (2007). The sensual aspects within intimacy were also observed by Dissanayake, who found art and love (synonymic to intimacy) to be entwined. She related the rhythms and sensorimotor engagement within creative activities to inducing primal memories that are instilled in us as humans (2015).

Touching the art materials was also a way for the participants to learn their features and creative possibilities, as Bachelard (1994) noted that intimacy was gained by an inner vision, characterized by a deep familiarity — with one's passion, with light, colors, or form. The participants spoke of an intimate embodied perception of detail that was interwoven in the painting process — a perception that required no verbal explanation, made them feel that they belonged to and were connected to the image they were working on, their materials, and their creative space.

Conditions that Favor or Impede Intimacy

In exploring the nature of intimate experience, we found four conditions that could invite intimacy: (1) dedication of time and space, (2) openness to seeing and being seen, (3) an urge to move closer, and (4) curiosity: the desire to question and wonder. In contrast, we identified three major obstacles to the intimate experience: (1) mental and physical distractions, (2) the inner judge, and (3) restlessness.

Dedication of time and space

This research was conducted in five different studio spaces. Although the studios differed from one another, the rituals of the artists who painted inside them and the compositions of their work were salient in providing the conditions for intimacy. The studio space, its smell, its temperature, were found to signal a certain familiarity that invited intimacy.

Within the experimental sessions, my response art sessions, and the video editing process the working space was always smaller than the studio at large. Henley (1995) identified that artists required a sheltering space that was also therapeutic in offering a barrier from the large studio space. Similarly, Kalmanowitz (2013) regarded the camera as a contained space that permitted safety for emotional processing, and McNiff (2018) spoke of the triangular space between the computer screen, mouse and

creator that could manifest therapeutic holding. These writings were echoed in my suggestion that space was required to be safe in order to invite intimacy.

Kasulis (2002) believed that intimacy could not exist in public, but rather required a physical space that was private. In what he referred to as *intimation*, companions felt safe to share their innermost secrets, and were open to let the *other* take in these secrets. I agree with his perception that safety and privacy are important for intimacy, however, in contrast to Kasulis, I suggest that these conditions could also be provided by a space that was not necessarily physical. I found that virtual spaces (the opposite of visceral), such as the abstract in fiction writing, film and visual art, use aesthetic tools to transform human relationships (Langer, 1953) and hence, could offer space for intimate experiences. This finding also strengthens Hillman (2000) and McNiff (2004) in acknowledging the existent, independent life of an image that enabled dialoguing with it and relating to it within an imagined, virtual space that was intimate as reinforced by findings in my pilot research (Lev, 2016). I therefore suggest that the creation of art could become an invitation to relate, an invitation to intimacy.

The participants also acknowledged that intimacy was invited when sufficient time was dedicated for painting, in which they were committed to the present moment. This time element was normally lacking in their daily lives. The dedication of time to doing a single thing, such as during meditation, was found to be healing (Kabat-Zinn & Saltzberg, 2018; Osho, 2007). It promoted well-being through a shift from multitasking and overscheduling to slowing down, as suggested by movements such as The Slow Movement (www.slowmovement.com).

Openness to seeing and being seen

The culminating discussions with co-researchers were consistent in identifying that intimacy required their willingness to see an *other* and equally, to be seen by an *other*. This acknowledgement resonates with Jacob (2014), who described mutual

correspondences between one and an *other* as conditions that favored intimacy. It differs, however, from Jacob's term *analogy*, which refers to a state of enmeshment and thus, denies differentiation between self and other. This was demonstrated for instance, by Nirit's awareness of the woman in her painting as *other* and of the woman's willingness to be seen in her unfinished condition.

Obert's understanding of intimacy differed from Jacob's *analogy* as well, in saying that one cannot fully enmesh with the other, and also in arguing that vulnerability, curiosity, empathy, and irreducibility (an understanding that one can never fully connect with another) were the four conditions of intimacy, which coexist in an unsteady manner (2016). Although the four conditions I found to favor intimacy are different from those of Obert, we agree that the conditions must all play a role in the creation of intimacy. I also support Obert in seeing intimacy's manifold complexities and have found that intimate moments rested primarily on our ability to accept *others* rather than alienate them.

My role as a witness affirmed the co-researchers' identification and personification (Sullivan, 1953). The co-researchers found my witnessing to their painting processes and my response art paintings as supportive feedback, raising their value and self-worth. This finding also demonstrated how witnessing enables holding (Kohut, 1977), by being committed and present in the moment while maintaining an awareness of difference (McNiff, 2013), and by being an accompanier — staying close by (Allen, 2012). It also supports Sullivan (1953) in finding that within intimacy the security and qualities of the *other* become as important as one's own.

The urge to move closer, and curiosity: the desire to question and wonder

The results of this study showed that being interested in the other, was demonstrated by the physical urge to move closer and by the mental desire to question and wonder. These signals were conditions that could invite intimacy into one's space,

since they expressed a keen interest in seeing, being seen by, and interacting with an *other*. They echo Bachelard's (1994) perception that intimacy involved exploration, searching and researching to discover the new in the familiar, as well as Dissanayake's term *mutuality* that described the experience of sharing feelings and being directed towards each other with interest and curiosity (2015).

In contrast to Dissanayake's interpersonal approach to intimacy, I found that within *intimate moments* feelings and interest were also generated towards *others* such as art materials, tools, and images that were sometimes symbolic for inner parts of the self, and hence, these instances demonstrated intimacy as an intra-personal experience.

The video footage showed that during intimate moments the painters were leaning towards their paintings. Similarly, the edited videos demonstrated how when viewers were interested in what was presented on screen, they bent towards the computer screen to see closely. The interest in *others* was also seen in Feit's (2012) description of Moore's realist imagery that led viewers to reach out and touch her paintings. A different angle was suggested by Lévinas, who proposed that the urge to engage with art was a response to the images that conceal more than they reveal (Lévinas & Poller, 2003). Israeli (2018) suggested sustaining the tension within ambiguity as a trigger for generating creativity.

My findings also suggest the urge to move closer as a signal of tension that reinforces an awareness of polarities. This view supports D'Erasmus (2014), Maclaren (2014), and Obert (2016), who proposed that the tension they experienced in intimacy was produced in the space between desire and loss, curiosity and vulnerability, and in being close or distant.

Obstacles to Intimacy: Distractions, Restlessness, and the Inner Judge

I found that non-intimate moments existed when the painters were farther away from their paintings, when their gaze was not directed toward one place for a prolonged

period of time, and when they moved around the studio. In this sense, this study suggests that intimacy can be inhibited by external and internal elements just as easily as it is invited.

The physical distractions were described as anything that demanded the participants' attention for long enough to make them lose their focus. I associate the distractions from intimacy with intimacy's temporary nature, similar to Dissanayake's (2015) *mutuality* (intimacy) that took place for brief moments. Restlessness as inhibiting intimacy was demonstrated through the video footage, whenever the co-researchers were multitasking instead of doing one thing at a time. In these instances, the shots moved rapidly, leading viewers to look away.

In this study, I defined mental distractions from the intimate experience as any thought, emotion, or feeling (such as stress, anxiety, judgment or criticism) that interfered with the creative process and the observation of it. Kabat-Zinn wrote about these distracting inner voices, claiming that they were a response to the rapid pace of modern culture (Kabat-Zinn & Salzberg, 2018) and our fear of missing out (Samana, 2017), thus pushing people toward contemplative practices such as daily meditation (Erzen & Çikrikci, 2018).

Obert (2016) suggested that the mental distraction that presents an obstacle to intimacy could be our fear of vulnerability — losing *others* and also *others'* perceptions of us. However, I found that the fear of intimacy might result from the recognition of our vulnerabilities, and that once these shadows were acknowledged and attended to with curiosity, they could reinforce intimacy and even enhance it.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Just as art suggests multiple perspectives and truths, the limitations of this research project may also be its strengths. The method of this research project utilized art as a primary mode of inquiry by using the creative language to reflect human

experiences. My artistic approach and belief in art as an embodied, universal language seemed natural and more appropriate for an exploration of intimacy than traditional research methodologies — which could not, in my view, provide the conditions for profound experiences. Despite the multiple tiers of information extracted from the six phases of the research methodology, in which one modality informed the others, it is appropriate to acknowledge some limitations.

One of the questions that I considered during my efforts to explore intimacy objectively concerned my view and definition of intimacy, which was based on the findings of my research pilot (Lev, 2016). While this project, unlike the pilot, involved other participants in the exploration process, my own participation in the modes of inquiry might still raise questions for some audiences, who may be concerned with how credible and transferable the study outcomes might be. In addition, my professional identity as an art psychotherapist who treats couples with intimacy issues might bias the research due to my belief in the power of the creative experience to generate insights and effect change.

These concerns notwithstanding, the findings of this research study can be expanded to explore intimacy in additional expressive modalities, settings, and communities.

Conclusion

This study expanded the findings of my pilot research (Lev, 2016), which used art-making as a mode of inquiry and found empirically that the processes of drawing and painting illustrated certain qualities of intimacy. As I proposed in the conclusions of the pilot, I worked in this research project with participant co-researchers to explore intimacy further. I used art-based methodologies that included six interdependent modes of inquiry to explore whether the process of painting, together with witnessing and reflection on the process and imagery, could further our understanding of intimacy.

The findings were consistent and affirmative in identifying two operational elements of intimacy: commitment to the present moment and looking closely. These fundamental elements were also acknowledged as naturally present in creative endeavors and thus, highlight the connection between art-making and intimacy.

In exploring whether certain features of artistic media, processes and reflection through video editing could further intimate experience, four interrelated and interdependent qualities of artistic media were identified: persistence and continued immersion, physical closeness and zooming in, attention to detail, and sensuousness. These features distinguished between intimate moments and non-intimate moments by facilitating commitment in the present moment as well as reducing distractions. The descriptions of colors, textures, and smell were consistent throughout the research in their ability to engage the participants in the creative endeavor for an extended period of time.

The findings also emphasized how video surprisingly furthered intimate experience and how the use of GoPro video camera, the way it was used in this research, enabled seeing experience as others see it, enhancing intimate experience. This discovery could have ramifications for future research in the field.

This research also found four conditions that favor intimacy: dedication of time and space, an urge to move closer, openness to seeing and being seen, and a desire to question and wonder. It demonstrates how these qualities are already active components within creative processes, and that the artists' preparatory rituals together with the compositions of creative work, are salient in providing the conditions for intimacy. The studio space (virtual and physical) availed the safety that was required for seeing and being seen by *others*, and the development process of artworks over time requires dedication of sufficient time to engage in continued immersion and commitment to the present moment.

Witnessing and reflection on imagery, two fundamental elements within expressive art psychotherapy, were directly linked to facilitating intimacy. The reflections increased the viewers' curiosity to explore the work further, offered alternative perspectives and enabled them to see the familiar anew. Prolonged witnessing of the painting process invited intimacy. This was furthered by the witness's commitment to the present moment and attentiveness to detail. The process also affirmed the identity and value of those being witnessed.

I propose digital imagery and video footage editing as potential agents for promoting intimacy rather than impeding it. I found that intimacy requires simplicity and that within the creative experience, intimacy can lead to feeling calmer, more attentive to physical and emotional needs, together with being centered and closer to the self. The process of painting, even when performed for a long time, did not tire or drain the energy of the painters; on the contrary, it rejuvenated them. The research therefore suggests that intimacy be included in the general discourse of psychotherapy and no longer regarded as taboo, and that its healing effect on mental health and well-being for the individual be taken seriously.

This research demonstrates that intimacy is within our control, knowledge, and will. We can thus employ certain conditions that enhance it. The research also suggests the important role of expressive art therapies in furthering understanding and awareness of intimate experiences, and in providing the conditions to invite intimacy into the creative space.

APPENDIX A

Participation Consent Form (in English)

Research Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in the research project titled “Art and Intimacy.” The intent of this research study is to explore whether the process of drawing and painting as well as reflection and imagery, can contribute to an understanding of intimacy. Your participation will entail three 120 minutes sessions, of using drawing and painting materials that are familiar to you in your own studio space. Each session will be videotaped by the researcher and will be followed by a verbal conversation with the researcher, and an opportunity to reflect upon the art making process. You will then be invited to the researcher's studio space to watch a 10-15 minutes video edited by the researcher that will include material from all sessions with you and other participants and given the opportunity to converse freely about your reflections on the entire research process.

Further points:

- Former knowledge about therapy is not necessary.
- You are free to choose not to participate in the research and to discontinue your participation in the research at any time.
- Identifying details will be kept confidential by the researcher. Information collected will be designated with a pseudonym, your identity will never be revealed by the researcher, and only the researcher and a manuscript editor will have access to the information collected.
- Any and all of your questions will be answered at any time and you are free to consult with anyone (i.e., friend, family) about your decision to participate in the research and/or to discontinue your participation.
- Participation in this research poses minimal risk to the participants. The probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are no greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.
- If any problem in connection to the research arises, you can contact the researcher Michal Lev at +972-54-6616280 and by email at mlev@lesley.edu or Lesley University sponsoring faculty rcruz@lesley.edu.

- The researcher will present the outcomes of this study in her doctoral dissertation and required presentations related to the dissertation at Lesley University. Any further publications or presentations of the research after the completion of the dissertation will be requested through a separate release form.

My agreement to participate has been given of my own free will, and I understand all of the stated above. In addition, I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Participant's signature	Date	Researcher's signature	Date

There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee at Lesley University, 29 Everett Street, Cambridge Massachusetts, 02138, Co-Chairs Robyn Cruz (rcruz@lesley.edu) or Terry Keeney (tkeeney@lesley.edu).

APPENDIX AA

Participation Consent Form (in Hebrew)

טופס הסכמה להשתתפות במחקר בנושא
"אינטימיות ויצירה אמנותית"

חוקרת ראשית – מיכל לב חוקר משני – פרופ' שון מקניף

אישור מס' **16/17-041** ועדת האתיקה, **PhD in Expressive Therapies, Lesley University**

הנך מוזמן/מוזמנת לקחת חלק במחקר העוסק באינטימיות ויצירה אמנותית. מטרת המחקר לבדוק כיצד רישום וציור בשילוב התבוננות רפלקטיבית ודימויים, בהבנת אינטימיות.

הסיבות למחקר:

המושג אינטימיות לרוב מפורש ומובן באופן חלקי בקרב מבוגרים, על אף שנמצא כגורם מהותי וישיר לרמת הסיפוק ולאיכות החיים אצל האדם באופן אישי, וביחסיו עם האחר. לכן, התמקדות בחשיפת פניה הרבים של האינטימיות באופן יצירתי ופירוש המושג המופשט באמצעות שפת האמנות, עשויה לעזור בהבנתו, בזיהוי מצבים אינטימיים ובהיכרות עם תנאים הדרושים להימצאותה. פיתוח כלים ליצירת אינטימיות בין האדם לעצמו עשוי להוביל להיכרות מעמיקה יותר של עצמו, ולהקלה ביצירת רגעים אינטימיים ביחסיו עם האחר ובסביבות חיו השונות. המחקר אף יוכל להדגיש את עוצמתה ויכולותיה של האמנות ושפת היצירה האמנותית בהקשר ליחסים הזוגיים, ובמרחב הטיפולי, המרפא.

בנוסף:

- ידע מוקדם בנושא זוגיות, הבעה ויצירה, אמנות וטיפול זוגי אינו נדרש.
- הנך רשאי/ת לבחור שלא להשתתף במחקר ו/או להפסיק את השתתפותך במחקר בכל שלב ובכל עת ללא כל השלכות.
- פרטים מזהים אודותיך יישמרו בסודיות על ידי החוקרת. זהותך ופרטים מזהים לא יחשפו, ורק לחוקרת ולעורך לשוני תתאפשר גישה אליהם.
- כל שאלה תיענה בכל שלב במחקר, ואת/ה רשאי/ת להתייעץ עם כל אדם (חבר/ה, מכר/ה) בנוגע להשתתפותך במחקר ו/או להפסיקה.
- השתתפות במחקר זה אינה מהווה סיכון למשתתפים ואינה יוצרת אי-נוחות מעבר לצפוי במפגשים ויחסים בינאישיים באופן שגרתי.
- בכל מקרה בו תיגרם בעיה הקשורה למחקר, יש לפנות לחוקרת מיכל לב, בטלפון:

054-6616280 ובדוא"ל: mlev@lesley.edu.

- החוקרת תציג את ממצאי המחקר כחלק מלימודי הדוקטורט שלה באוניברסיטת לסלי.

הצגת הממצאים ו/או פרסומם העתידיים יבוצעו לאחר השלמת תכנית הלימודים

ויבוצעו על ידי טופס הסכמה נפרד.

הסכמתי להשתתף במחקר ניתנת מרצוני החופשי והבנתי את הכתוב לעיל. בנוסף, עותק ממסמך זה יימסר לידי.

תאריך	חתימת החוקרת	תאריך	חתימה המשתתף/ת
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There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee at Lesley University, 29 Everett Street, Cambridge Massachusetts, 02138, Co-Chairs Robyn Cruz (rcruz@lesley.edu) or Terry Keeney (tkeeney@lesley.edu).

APPENDIX B

Consent Form to Use/Display Art (in English)

CONSENT BETWEEN:

Michal Lev and _____.

I, _____, agree to allow Michal Lev to use and/or display and/or photograph my artwork, for the following purpose(s):

- Reproduction and/or inclusion within the research currently being completed by the expressive arts therapy doctoral student.
- Reproduction and/or presentation at a professional conference.
- Reproduction, presentation, and/or inclusion within academic assignments including but not limited to a doctoral work, currently being completed by the expressive arts therapy doctoral student.

It is my understanding that neither my name, nor any identifying information will be revealed in any presentation or display of my artwork, unless waived below.

I DO I DO NOT wish to remain anonymous.

This consent to use or display my artwork may be revoked by me at any time. I also understand I'll receive a copy of this consent form for my personal records.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

I, Michal Lev, agree to the following conditions in connection with the use of artwork:

Keep your artwork safe, whether an original or reproduction, to the best of my ability and to notify you immediately of any loss or damage while your art is in my possession. I agree to return your artwork immediately if you decide to withdraw your consent at any time. I agree to safeguard your confidentiality.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Michal Lev, 6 Tarpad street, Ramat HaSharon, Israel 47250

The Lesley University Internal Review Board can be contacted via the Co-Chairs, Robyn Cruz (rcruz@lesley.edu) and Terry Keeney (tkeeney@lesley.edu).

APPENDIX BB

Consent Form to Use/Display Art (in Hebrew)

טופס הסכמה לשימוש ו/או הצגת אמנות

בין: מיכל לב / דוקטורנטית בטיפול בהבעה ויצירה, אוניברסיטת לסלי
 ובין: שם היוצרת / המשתתף/משתתפת במחקר / שם היוצרת / המשתתף/משתתפת במחקר

אני, _____ מסכים / מסכימה לאפשר למיכל לב להשתמש ו/או להציג ו/או לצלם את עבודות היצירה עבור השימושים הבאים:

שעתוק ו/או הכללה בהשלמת מחקר הנוכחי על ידי הדוקטורנטית בטיפול בהבעה ויצירה.

שעתוק ו/או הצגה בכנסים מקצועיים.

שעתוק ו/או הצגה ו/או הכללה בעבודות אקדמיות הכוללות אך לא מוגבלות להשלמת עבודת הדוקטורט, על ידי הדוקטורנטית בהבעה ויצירה.

אני מבין / מבינה כי פרטי האישיים ו/או פרטים מזהים לא ייחשפו בכל הצגה וחשיפה של עבודות היצירה, אלא בהסכמתי זו:

אני מסכים/ מסכימה אינני מסכים / אינני מסכימה מעדיף / מעדיפה להישאר בעילום שם

הסכמתי זו לשימוש בעבודות היצירה שלי, עשויה להשתנות על ידי בכל זמן. כמו כן ידוע לי כי אקבל עותק להסכם זה לשימושי הפרטי.

 תאריך

 חתימת המשתתף/ת

אני, מיכל לב מסכימה לתנאים הנקובים לעיל בנוגע לעבודות היצירה:

שמירה על ביטחון עבודות היצירה שלך, בין אם המקוריות ו/או שעתוקן, כמיטב יכולתי, ולידע אותך מיד במידע ויגרם נזק ו/או שינוי כל עוד הינן בחזקתי. אני מתחייבת להחזיר את העבודות מיד, במידה ונתקבל החלטה מצדך להפסיק את השתתפותך במחקר. אני מתחייבת להגן על פרטיותך.

 תאריך

 מיכל לב, דוקטורנטית בהבעה ויצירה
 טלפון: 054-6616280 mlev@lesley.edu

The Lesley University Internal Review Board can be contacted via the Co-Chairs, Robyn Cruz (rcruz@lesley.edu) and Terry Keeney (tkeeney@lesley.edu).

APPENDIX C

Lesley University IRB Approval Certificate



29 Everett Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Tel 617 349 8234
Fax 617 349 8190
irb@lesley.edu

Institutional Review Board

DATE: April 18, 2017

To: Michal Lev

From: Robyn Cruz and Terrence Keeney, Co-chairs, Lesley IRB

RE: **IRB Number: 16/17-041**

The application for the research project, “**Art and Intimacy**” provides a detailed description of the recruitment of participants, the method of the proposed research, the protection of participants' identities and the confidentiality of the data collected. The consent form is sufficient to ensure voluntary participation in the study and contains the appropriate contact information for the researcher and the IRB.

This application is approved for one calendar from the date of approval.

You may conduct this project.

Date of approval of application: 4/12/17

Investigators shall immediately suspend an inquiry if they observe an adverse change in the health or behavior of a subject that may be attributable to the research. They shall promptly report the circumstances to the IRB. They shall not resume the use of human subjects without the approval of the IRB.

APPENDIX D

Link to: [Album of Research Images — Painting Intimacy](#)

Album of Research Images - *Painting Intimacy*

1



(In partial fulfillment of a doctoral dissertation)

APPENDIX E

List of Edited Videos

1. [Nirit, edited video](#)
2. [Ofira, edited video](#)
3. [Nir, edited video](#)
4. [Eran, edited video](#)
5. [Michal, edited video](#)
6. [Painting Intimacy – Final Edited Movie](#)

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