



**Practice-Based PhD in Art and Writing,
Goldsmiths University of London**

If “[T]he utilization of dream-elements in waking” can be seen as “the textbook example of dialectical thought”¹, as Walter Benjamin put it, then it just seems apparent that intuition can be a starting point for research. For Benjamin the images that develop in “the darkroom of the lived moment”² were most important. He emphasized the importance of experience for the production of knowledge. Artists often start their investigation of the world working from experience rather than knowledge. Experience thus leads to a form of understanding that starts further research. If the outcome of experience is meaning, and an

artwork can be seen as the outcome of experience, then artworks produce meaning and can thus be seen as the result of a research activity.

The suggestion that experience might issue in meaning nevertheless presents something of a paradox. For within ‘experience’ may be included boredom, ignorance, impotence, apathy, or even indifference. The last of these exemplifies the point. For if indifference is the mode of experience, the artist may substitute the purpose of a thing in the world – birdsong is an oft cited example – with aesthetic enjoyment. Thus the song is appreciated not for its message but for its beauty. Or, as Susan Sontag points out in “Notes on Camp”, the artist may examine sensuous