

# A Theory of Error

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## ABSTRACT

**Ideas developed in *A Theory of Error* explore notions of art and corporality, and in particular art representing the brain and mechanisms of thought, reflections about exploring the creative process and considering thought when the brain is simulated through digital imaging.**

**Using personal thought processes as a model, this project explores the creative process resulting from error. Error, not in the mechanical or technical sense, or even in the form of diagnosed mental conflicts, but discussed in terms of cognitive functioning.**

**In this instance the conception of error may be referred to as unpredictable disturbances to thought patterns.**

**Forming a conceptual background to the project are various interwoven theories from cognitive psychology, neuroscience, art and technology that examine the mechanisms of creativity in relation to mutation and disorder [1].**

## THE CREATIVE PROCESS IS FULL OF INCONSISTENCIES AND UNKNOWNNS

Is creativity associated with a specific location in the brain? Or is the process of creativity one of trial and error, of mental experiments, of lateral thought programming, or of an evolutionary model, dissociating and randomly recombining? [2]

This project explores a possible pathway for the origin of creativity, a visual translation of a cognitive process through mind mapping techniques onto a landscape template. In *A Theory of Error* open and folding landscape imagery references 'grey matter', or the physical surface of the brain, metaphorically dissected with signifiers implying scientific direction and philosophical suggestion.

## BRAIN ERROR

Cognitive error can arise from tension, disorder and chaotic mental processes – *the error was unintentional and an unexpected source for creativity.*

The project began as a study of private thought processes made visual, concrete and public, arising and developed from personal experiences of brain seizures. Unexpected disruptions – *being seized is unpredictable* – to known behaviour may be considered as offering benefit to our overall thinking, to our 'programming'.

Errors are not always creative and are not always a conscious benefit [3].

The creative process in this project extends from a point of tension and psychological dissonance, to a point of mental clarity. The acknowledgement and realization of the unexpected disruption is manifest through artistically symbolic forms. The human mind is a self-regulating mechanism and therefore *theory of error* requires its counterpoint through a *theory of order*, resulting in, and establishing a form of expression.

*I communicate my creative order to reflect the development of the research – in a non-linear and discursive manner.*

## THERE IS FREEDOM IN ERROR

Disorder is a natural phenomenon. It is evidenced in the process of evolution, witnessed in theories of chaos, revealed in the random firings of brain cells and experienced in our behavioural responses to the external environment.

Philosopher Jean-François Lyotard [4] refers to disorder as *free-association* or *aura*. He defines disorder as the mind's freedom and this freedom, this disorder, as *disseizure*.

Aura, in relation to a seizure (a dis-order of the brain), is the moment preceding a seizure. The aura is recognised as a state of altered perception and free association of thought. Following Lyotard's definition of freedom as *disseizure*, can it be interpreted that an apparent "disorder" of the brain also presents a freedom?

## ELECTRICAL IMPULSES

*Whimsical by nature*

Reflect on the concept of origins of creativity as points of tension. Where do thought processes begin and how are they orchestrated?

The nature of creativity has been investigated across a wide range of disciplines [6] from neuroscience, physics, cognitive psychology to information technology. The interrelationship of each of these methodologies provides a research base, an authority and tangibility for this group of works. ( See ARTWORKS at end of paper)

Contrary to the emphasis placed on the role of error in this project, the stimulus for investigation in each image has been carefully considered, refined and ordered. Through disorder, a pathway towards order has been navigated through the use of visual signifiers, in order to seek a visual and conceptual resolve.

Objectivity was integral to the dismantling and restructuring of this process while landscape becomes a psychological template, reflecting digital and photographic processes.

Each work is intentionally topographical in appearance. Changing landscape, including artificial etchings and constructed boundaries, reflect lines of thought, separating, merging and random in their direction. Free-associations in ideas, digital documentation of thoughts erring and reforming, reveal rhizomic characteristics' [5].

Mind-maps are a visual reference tool for tracking and documenting the theoretical path of the research project. The mind map titled: *A Theory of Error* articulates a mental landscape using text, arrows and gestural markings. Although the construction of the map appears mechanical and analytical, the lines and shapes are reflective of the fluidity existing in the abstracted landscape imagery.

## ART IS AN EXPRESSION OF FREEDOM FINDING ORDER

*I trace my thoughts on the continuous flow of lines in the landscape images. The lines of thought in their inscription fluctuate between erring and reforming. A process is like a line – it links points from beginning to end, it is free to change direction, overlap and meander towards a conclusion. Thoughts reflect in the stills of the oscillating landscape patterns, weaving and intertwining, irregular by nature. I make maps of the mind like I picture a thought – contours of complexity, places of tension, shadows of quiet. Maps are snapshots, stills of impermanence and fragments in a process for locating and positioning the subject within context. A momentary 'you are here'.*

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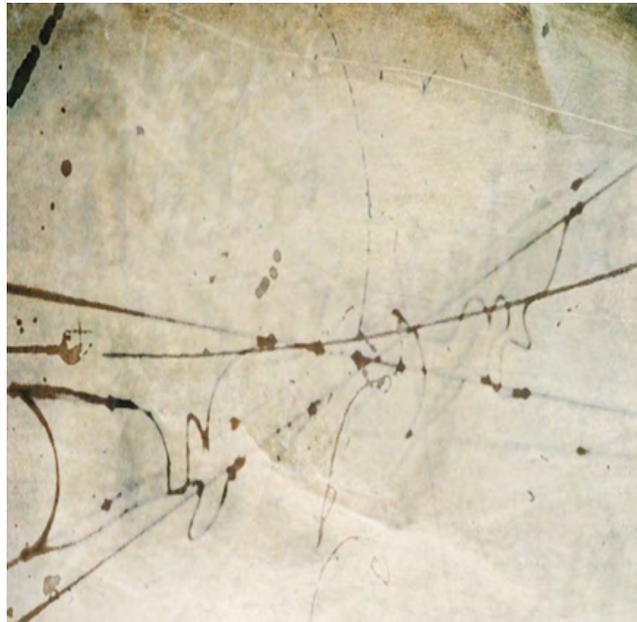
\* Deluze & Guattari liken cognitive processes to root systems [5]. *A rhizome is an open process running just below the surface, able to be broken off at any particular point, joined and disjoined.* A habit is more like the taproot with a definite direction and a predictable path.

## REFERENCES

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3. Pudmenzky, A. *The Origins of Creativity*, <http://student.uq.edu.au/212647/TOOC.HTM>, 1998
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6. See [1]

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## ARTWORKS



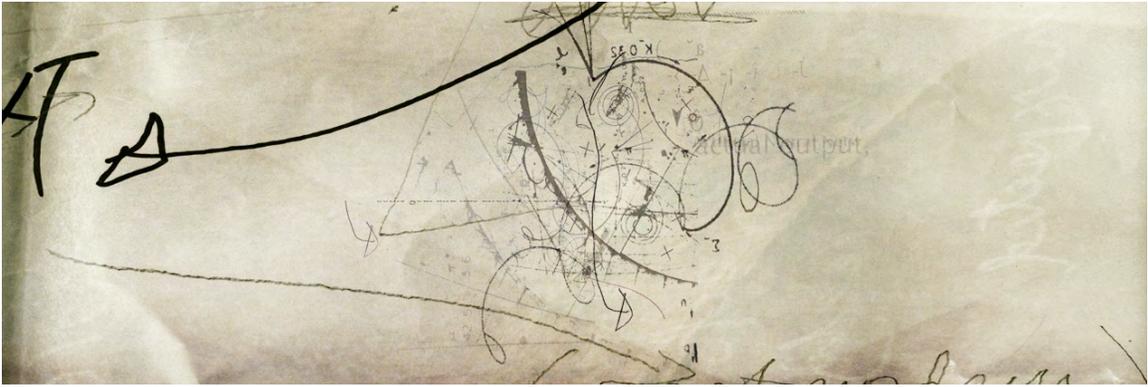
**Action Potential**



**Cognitive Template**



**Irregular by Nature**



**Synaptic**



**Memetic Mutation**