**5. OBSERVATIONS**

**Qualitative Interview:**

The interview consisted of 6 anchored questions. First, subjects were asked to describe their experience. This was done to explore indicators of states correlated with creativity, as described above. Subjects reported feeling very calm, that the experience was almost “therapeutic”, and that they felt like they were creating something. Subjects expressed an increased insight into what it was like to create an image by painting, and many subjects said that they felt empowered to try drawing or painting again with this newly informed perspective. Subjects were almost always very surprised to see their own painting, often disappointed because they felt that they were really moving with the painter and creating something much more similar to her painting. Despite this, subjects still felt inspired to paint more. Moreover, most subjects described the experience as very intimate.

Several subjects reported that they initially felt very nervous and self-conscious of their body and their ability to accurately hit the correct corresponding points on the canvas, but that after awhile that fell away and they forgot about their own canvas. (Interestingly, almost all subjects had accurately captured the features of a face in a way that looked impressively similar to the artist’s painting, and then gradually the painting got destroyed, however this “destruction” of the painting was correlated to when subjects reported feeling the most immersed in the experience.) Several subjects remarked that when the painter mentioned changing something about the face to change the expression, the subjects themselves felt like they were putting that intention into their painting. One subject explains, “When she was talking me through the expressions that she was painting and talking about the mood of the person, I felt very much 8like I wanted to capture that mood.” Another subject reflected, “It almost feels like collectively discovering something that was in her head all along” and that it “allowed this completely different way of connecting to someone that doesn’t rely on facial expressions or anything.”

More specifically, the qualitative interview indicates that subjects had an increased understanding of the artist’s creative process. One subject summarized, “I think I got to experience the process of her painting.

Whereas before if you look at the painting it gives off a feeling, but this journey lets you understand why she painted it a certain way because she was explaining the process…you get the artist’s own meaning and feelings. It’s interesting too because since I am not a professional painter, it helps to understand what a painter thinks or goes through while he or she paints.” Similarly, another subject remarked, “I was like making my own version of her thoughts in her painting, I think.” Decety and Lamm (2006) argue that empathy is more than just the sharing of an emotion, but is an other-oriented social emotion that contributes to moral reasoning, motivates prosocial behaviors, and inhibits aggression toward others. Hoffman (1981) conceptualizes empathy as being a largely involuntary vicarious response to another person. The automatic habit of mimicry in affective expressions is contrasted to the slower, higher-order cognitive capacity to imaginatively render the thoughts and feelings of another person and transpose oneself into the other’s shoes (Decety & Jackson, 2006). According to Preston & Hofelich, (2012), prior experience is thus essential to trigger the appropriate representations to understand and interpret another person’s emotional states. However, only one subject in the present study reported having prior artistic experience, and all subjects scored quite high on the empathic accuracy scale. In this study, mimicry was sufficient to stimulate empathic understanding. Further exploration is needed to clarify the relationship between self-awareness and awareness of another person’s experience.