

# DEVELOPING AN ARTS OF LIVING

by

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(Under the Direction of Richard Siegesmund)

## ABSTRACT

This research is an exploration into the nature of caring. It began as an inquiry into art education and what the outcome of art education might be. It is a combination of scholarly writing, narrative storytelling, photographic journaling, student work, and the process and product of fabric arts to tell the story of how the practitioner and middle school aged students begin to develop an arts of living. An arts of living is defined as perceiving the quality and qualities of things, developing practices or habits that help shift one's perspective in order to deepen our understanding of others and encourage empathy. In short, it is a work of a/r/tographic research which tries to open up, trouble, and de/reconstruct the nature of caring in and outside the art classroom.

One goal of arts-based educational research (ABER) is to revision the fabrics of our own lives in order to begin to re/imagine others. Works of arts-based educational research explore the spaces between what is real and imagined, experienced and remembered, told and excluded, felt and forgotten. Yet the standard at which we judge a work of ABER is how well it contributes to the quality of education students receive, to make a difference in the lives of students (Eisner,

2008). Specifically, this work attempts to 1) model wholeness-in-process through reflective texts, wherein images and journal entries (as photographs or written reflections) are offered not as illustrations of the text, but rather as a part of a/r/tographic renderings, which guide our construction of meaning; 2) be a record of praxis in art education; 3) transverse the liminal space of pedagogy and curriculum; and 4) invite the reader to linger and trouble the nature of caring by engaging with the text.

INDEX WORDS: Arts of living, Experiential curriculum, A/r/tography, Art Education, Aesthetics, Care, Poststructural theory

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## DEDICATION

for  
Ezra and Silas  
my living treasures

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Matthew 6:21

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*One looks at life as a gift, a painting of lights and darks, each defining the other, not a series of good and bad things. Giving thanks, and often, frees the spirit and makes the heart secure.*

*~ Fay Bohlayer*

To those who have secured my heart,

My deepest gratitude to

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## PREFACE

What we call the beginning is often the end

And to make an end is to make a beginning.

The end is where we start from.

(Eliot, 1943/1971, p.58)



IMAGE 1.1: *Ecclesiastes 3:1-8/Field View, Front*, 2011, altered fabric. 33" x 27" x 44" x 50"

Running

is my only escape from this

and now I weigh less than my driver's license.

I'm withering away because of you;

I hate you for it.

You were supposed to be my support

my strength

my love.

Running

through these fields

while each lie

circles, hovers, threatens-

black and vicious;

you knew all along you were my betrayer.

Running

is where these images came to me.

On a cold day

with wind that pierces your lungs,

I came to escape

and found myself accepting

I love you.

But you were never you,  
 and I am no longer me,  
 and I never thought I'd hate you  
 but

you  
 broke  
 me.

How am I to keep

running?

(Journal Entry, December 28, 2010).

This research is an exploration into the nature of caring. It began as an inquiry into art education and what the outcome of art education might be. It is an exploration that is continuous and cyclical. What I present here is a combination of scholarly writing, narrative storytelling, photographic journaling, student work, and the process and product of fabric arts to tell a story. It began as a story of how middle school aged students begin to develop their arts of living, yet throughout the research, my own journey in developing an arts of living bled into the story. Our stories exist in relationship to one another. Like water on chalk, they are blended and intertwined, layered and smudged. Yet often the stories still retain their separate color and character. Traces remain of the unblended.

In short, this research is a work of a/r/tographic research which tries to open up, trouble, and de/reconstruct the nature of caring. Proponents of a/r/tography

recognize how “the simultaneous use of language, image, materials, situations, space, and time” allow research and theory to become “an embodied, living space of inquiry” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p.106). An authentic study into the nature of caring needed to be embodied, lived, and shared; it needed to be explored.

As an arts-based educational researcher (ABER), I believe that “research in the social sciences must begin with stories that help readers revisit and revision their understandings of the fabric of daily lives” (Leggo, 2007, p.xiv). The complexities of engaging in a/r/tography as well as composing a body of work that would share this story of caring without simplifications or summations presented a particular challenge. As arts-based researchers, we write and create alternative realities that challenge us to create a new set of meanings and values which we may have previously ignored (Barone, 2001; Barone & Eisner, 1997; Eisner, 2008). In works of ABER, there seem to be tensions—a play—or perhaps a continuum between what is real and imagined, experienced and remembered, told and excluded, felt and forgotten. Yet the standard at which we judge a work of ABER is how well it contributes to the quality of education students receive, to make a difference in the lives of students (Eisner, 2008).

I tell you now this work is both real and imagined, experienced and remembered, told and excluded, felt and forgotten. It is a work in caring, on caring, about caring, with caring. Specifically, this work attempts to

- model “wholeness-in-process in [an] explicit reflective text” (Sameshima, 2007, p. xii), wherein images and journal entries (as photographs or written reflections) are offered not as illustrations of the text, but rather as a part of

a/r/tographic renderings, which “guide our active participation in making meaning through artful, educational, and creative inquiry” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p.115);

- be a record of praxis, “the self creative activity through which we make the world” (Lather, 1991, p.11);
- transverse the liminal space of pedagogy and curriculum (Sameshima, 2008a);
- invite the reader to linger and trouble the nature of caring by engaging with the text and therefore the research as “intercorporeality, relationality, and process” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p.119).

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE NATURE OF CARING

#### **Exploring Relationship**

This research is about exploring relationship and the nature of caring in education. It began when I questioned what the arts can teach. More specifically, I questioned what the arts can teach beyond skills and knowledge. I first explored the possibilities during my masters research when I studied how an arts-based service learning project provided the opportunity for students to experience giving. I used a combination of educational criticism (Eisner, 1991) and teacher research methods (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Cole & Knowles, 2000) to analyze student artwork, student reflections, and my own reflective journaling and composed a narrative of the experience of teaching and hosting an Empty Bowls dinner (see Riddett-Moore, 2005; Empty Bowls, 2002).

It was a story of connective aesthetics (Gablik, 1995), where my students became artists who use care and compassion to bring local awareness to larger social problems. They participated in raising money for a local food bank while using their art as a public message to help those in need. Yet it was also a story about the authentic nature of giving. Students had to give their artwork away at the Empty Bowls dinner, an act that proved to be harder than giving away old coats or canned food. It was an experience that helped some students learn that giving something personal and meaningful, something they made with their own hands, is hard. For

some students, it was a chance to experience art in a new way, one that Gablik (1991) refers to as the re-enchantment of art, in which the artwork does not merely exist in the object created, but also in the action, the relationship to the audience. The tiny ceramic bowls became meaningful in the context of giving. The value of the lesson was measured not by the craftsmanship of the bowl, but rather by the reflections of the students on the experience of giving.

This research began my exploration in questioning the role of art in teaching concepts like giving and caring, for I believe they are closely related. For a child who cares for others, who has, from her own experience, internalized caring to be good, giving is easy. Or at least, giving is easier than a child who has never had the experience to give something that is of value, who has not internalized caring beyond his own nuclear family, or perhaps does not know how to care. I believe like Nel Noddings (1984/2003) that caring is something that must be learned<sup>1</sup> and nurtured, not a virtue to be obtained. Likewise, learning to give and learning to care for others is essential in developing a mindful, compassionate, and democratic society (Arendt, 1961; Dewey, 1916/1926; Noddings, 1984/2003; 1992; Pestalozzi, 1801/1898).

An essential aspect in learning to care is the ability to imagine the lives of others, to imagine new relationships, and to empathize. Maxine Greene

---

<sup>1</sup> How do we learn to care, or learn about what caring is in our lives? This question is at the heart of much of Nel Noddings' work (see Noddings, 1984/2003; 1992; 1995; 2003/2005). However, Noddings acknowledges that learning to care is not as simple as demonstrating caring actions, although outward actions do need to be practiced in order to develop habits in caring for and caring of people, animals, ideas, and the environment. Caring is complex and relational, and our definition and embodied sense of caring is influenced by innumerable factors. The focus here is how caring might be learned and embodied in art education.

(1995/2000) advocates for artistic experiences that develop students' imaginative capacities for the purpose of developing their capacity to empathize. She writes, "of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities" (p. 3). When we can imagine others' experiences with clarity of mind and heart, then we can begin to develop what Greene refers to as a "social imagination", or the "capacity to invent visions of what should and what might be in our deficient society" (p. 5). A social imagination and the ability to imagine things being otherwise is the first step toward solidarity. Richard Rorty (1989/1999) gives a broad, emotive view of solidarity, which contrasts a view of solidarity as the elimination of prejudice or the search for what is common in all of us. He writes:

Solidarity would be seen not as a fact to be recognized....but a goal to be achieved. It is achieved not by inquiry but by imagination, the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers...[Solidarity] is created by increasing out sensitivity to the particular details of pain and humiliation of other, unfamiliar sorts of people. (p. xvi)

For Rorty, solidarity is created—learned—by developing the ability to imagine another's pain and recognize our role in alleviating it. All other rational reasons for solidarity can be trumped by moral codes of conduct and the justification for one group's rights (Rorty, 1989/1999). Imagining the lives of others, often through works of art (literature, visual arts, music, and dance), helps us shift our realities in order for our lived experiences to align with our values and our imagined ideal. Shifting perspectives in order to shift realities is a skill that the arts



help develop (Dewey, 1934/1989; Eisner, 2002; Feldman, 1970; Greene, 1995/2000).

Yet how and what do we teach in order to develop a caring person with a sense of social imagination? Such a curriculum comes with risks. Caring and the development of an imaginative empathetic connection does not always have positive outcomes. Caring can be painful. One who cares may learn to be manipulative; we may empathize and imagine in order to dominate and control. We may also reject others' notion of caring as wrong or socially unacceptable. In this study, I use the work of deconstruction to help unpack the dangers in assuming values of caring. Deconstruction helps open up multiple definitions of caring while putting into question that which we assume to be true and good about teaching elements of care in the art classroom (Flax, 1990; St.Pierre, 2000).

\* \* \* \*

Disrupted

every damn day

I have to walk by your car her car

every damn day

I have to endure and pray

stand and deliver

teach and ignore

the weight in my stomach

every damn day

laugh with your students her students

walk with your students her students

create art damn art

lifeless and lank

pretend it doesn't bother me when they call me her name

every damn day

I look at our boys and see you

and hate you

love them

every damn day

you creep under my skin

I'm sick

shaking

breaking

crying

trying to bear it

every damn day

you are there

but it is not you

every damn day

(Journal Entry, December 2, 2010)

\* \* \* \*

### **An Aesthetics of Disruption**

Caring is not a standard; it is a quality. Early philosophers and educators believed qualities like compassion, honesty, courage, and empathy were best developed through experience and an ability to perceive with all the senses (Dewey, 1934/1989; Pestalozzi, 1801/1898; Schiller, 1801/1967). This perception through the senses was called aesthetics, a term used by Baumgarten in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to describe how we come to know the world beyond symbolic logic. It was a word that referred to a way of knowing in relationship (Siegesmund, 1999). To be engaged in the world aesthetically requires a felt connection, like the one my students had by participating in Empty Bowls.

An aesthetic felt connection is not an emotionally disinterested state. The joy of giving —often preceded by pain —helped my students reflect more deeply on the giving experience and understand the qualities of a giving person. It was possible because the students developed a relationship to their work of art—it meant something to them. Like many experiences in the arts, creating a bowl out of clay re-awakens the mind-body connection (Sameshima, 2007; Springgay, et al, 2005): students were physically involved in forming the clay and emotionally involved in giving it away.

The inclusion of projects in the art curriculum like Empty Bowls, which are invested with emotional caring, may create a disruption, one that, like the work of

deconstruction enables us to “rewrite the world and ourselves again and again” (St.Pierre, 2000, p.483). With its focus on the experience formed through the making of art and the consequent action of giving it away, Empty Bowls can disrupt previous notions of the outcomes of art education—outcomes that place the focus of art on simply creating more art, learning about art, and trying to imitate master artists<sup>2</sup>.

While you cannot prescribe learning to give as an assessable outcome of the lesson, you can ask students to dwell in the experience, in what Irwin and Springgay (2008) call the “in-between”, a relational site of space and time in which “each subject is created through encounters with others” (p. xxvii). When students dwell in the experience, I ask them reflect on the purpose and function of the art in relationship to society and to each other. In this way, the art becomes what is known in a/r/tographic research as an opening (Irwin & Springgay, 2008). An opening, like

---

<sup>2</sup> There is a new paradigm emerging in art education, where the foundations of curriculum and practice created through Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE ) (see Dobbs,1998; 2004) are being questioned and redirected. DBAE stressed that there is a foundational knowledge in the arts all students should have access to and be taught, just as we might believe all students should read Shakespeare or learn Algebra. My argument, (that I share with Eisner, 2002 and Noddings, 2003/2005) is that there cannot be a “one size fits all” art curriculum. Curriculum in the arts should take into account “the entire cognitive ambiance of the classroom and the school” (Eisner, 2002, p.157), meaning the social conditions, norms, attitudes of students, structure of the school...ultimately, the culture, which is ever changing and fluid.

A recent study conducted by Harvard’s Project Zero examined the quality of arts education and the factors that develop and instill quality curriculum and learning. It does not present itself as a recipe for arts education, as DBAE sometimes has the potential to do, but helps begin a discussion of the various outcomes of art education and what constitutes quality. The seven goals for an art education stated in the report included providing ways of perusing and understanding the world, helping students develop themselves as individuals, and teaching artistic skills without making them primary (Seidel, et al., 2009, p.9).

a cut or tear, gives “attention to what is seen and known and what is not seen and not known” (p. 118). These cuts and tears correspond to two critical 20<sup>th</sup> century arts forms: collage and bricolage. Collage is the cutting and tearing of texts and images to reshape meaning. Bricolage is the currying and tearing of everyday objects to reshape meaning.

The aesthetic connection achieved when students engage in the arts may help open up a space for students to experience a different kind of giving. The focus of the lesson is developing the students’ ability and openness to give, rather than their skills in forming clay into bowls. The idea of developing the self through the practice of art relates to the Foucauldian notion of care of the self (Foucault 1985/1985; 1984/1997). *Care of the self*, also referred to in Foucault’s writings as *developing an arts of existence*, is understood to be “those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries aesthetic values” (Foucault, 1984/1997, p. 10-11). Care of the self is first a theory on self-formation and transformation, not simply self-knowledge through reflection. Likewise, Maxine Green advocates for such spaces to exist in the classroom, spaces where students can be “*as they are*” rather than “*what they art*” (Green, 1997/2001, p.118). She alludes to spaces, physical and curricular, of developing the self.

\* \* \* \*

By its very nature conjugal love requires the inviolable fidelity of the spouses. This is the consequence of the gift of themselves which they make to each other.

Loves seeks to be definitive...The deepest reason is found in the fidelity of God in his covenant, in that of Christ to his Church. Through the sacrament of matrimony the spouses are enabled to represent the fidelity and witness to it. Through the sacrament, the indissolubility of marriage receives a new and deeper meaning.

(Catechism,1646,1647)

\* \* \* \*

The practices around care of the self are focused on developing qualities and using daily habits to turn those qualities into action upon the self and others (Foucault 1985/1986; 1982/1997; 1984/1997). It is developing a relationship to the self for the purpose of creating one's life as a work of art. It implies we work on our lives as artists do, in which the action of creating the work transforms not only the object of art, but the maker as well, for "why should a painter work if he is not transformed by his own painting" (Foucault, 1982/1997, p.131)? Care of the self, like aesthetics, is dependent upon experience. It is not simply a theory, but a practice. Both hinge on being attuned to experiences and using them to develop the self ethically, which is where my study into relationship and teaching art begin.

\* \* \* \*

Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,  
that never was it known  
that anyone who fled to your protection,  
implored your help,

or sought your intercession

was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence,

I fly to you,

O Virgin of virgins my Mother;

to you do I come,

before you I stand,

sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word Incarnate,

despise not my petition,

but in your mercy,

hear and answer me.

Amen

Be by my side, Mary. Help me lead my sons to meet your Son, to follow Him,  
and believe in His Divine Love. May we rejoice together as mothers, seeing the  
friendship of our children grow. Amen.

\* \* \* \*

## Aim of Art Education



IMAGE 1.2: *Bustle of Dress*, 2010, photographic journal

This research is about relationship and exploration. Both are about creating the self and experiencing the world in such a way that one is transformed. This produces an art of living. I believe this is the educational aim of art education. This is what I teach. My curriculum employs the tools of visual arts so that students achieve an aesthetic space of artful living. This work attempts to model this process of developing an arts of living as an artist/teacher/researcher in and outside of the art classroom.

As Elliot Eisner states, “Education is the process of learning to create ourselves and it is what the arts, both as a process and as the fruits of this process, promote” (2002, p.3). Eisner believes the power of transformation lies in engaging with the arts. Maxine Greene (1995/2000; 1997) believes the power of transformation lies in imagination. John Dewey (1934/1989) believes it is through aesthetic engagement. Michel Foucault (1997) and Nel Noddings (1984/2003) both



found transformation in relationships, to self and to others. While seemingly disparate, these educators and philosophers all explore how we develop an arts of living, or how we use artful engagement with the world to develop ourselves.

Why is it necessary for students to have a space in the school's curriculum to engage their world aesthetically and artfully? The educational necessity of the arts is based not only on providing students a means to explore their world, but to also share their emotional and lived experiences with others (Eisner, 1994; 2002; Ewald & Lightfoot, 2001). When we listen to their stories, we are telling our students we value their lives. We begin to build relationships with them that help us to be better teachers (Ewald, 2001; Hankins, 2003; Olsen, 1998). By teaching with a focus on aesthetic interactions, we help students see the extraordinary in the ordinary. Leggo (2008) stresses that "[i]f we do not learn to appreciate the significance of our own lived experiences, then we will always live in the frustrating illusions of fictive creations shaped in the images of popular and dominant cultures" (p. 92).

Hannah Ardent (1961/1968) also observed that building caring communities stems from sharing the emotional and personal aspects of our lives, a form of aesthetic engagement. By doing this, we create communities driven by felt concern for others. We have also largely neglected elements of the spiritual, the joyful, and the sensual aspects of our lives as worthy issues to address in curriculum (Abbs, 2003; Noddings, 2003/2005; Sameshima, 2008). In a recent article in the New York Times, David Brooks writes how much of our policies in education rely "on the prevailing view...that we are divided creatures. Reason, which is trustworthy, is separate from emotions, which are suspect" (2011, ¶ 3). He laments this reality and

calls for policy makers to pay attention to how we thrive when we educate our emotions as well as our minds and look to developing those habits and virtues that help deepen our relationships to others.

This echoes Nel Noddings (2003/2005) core principle in *Happiness and Education*. In her critique, Noddings calls for us to reassess our aims in education, stating that for too long our aims seem to be rooted in two things: to keep America economically strong and to give children opportunities to do well financially (Noddings, 2003/2005, p. 84). Her discussion on the validity of happiness as an aim of education is enlightening and provocative. She troubles many elements of our education we assume to be good, equal, and fair. She stresses that we need to critically examine why we support an aim and what it really means for the child and society. An example of her writing and the premise of the book can be seen in this excerpt:

Why, for example, have we decided to encourage young women to study math and science? Well, because it's the fair thing to do! Equity seems to require it. If equity is the aim, however, why are we not concerned that so few young men become nurses, elementary school teachers, social workers, early childhood educators, and full-time parents? The response to this is that equity refers to equitable financial opportunities...As we ask deeper questions about our aims-why are we doing X?- we uncover new problems and new possibilities...In the case under consideration here, we are also lead to use caution in encouraging young women to choose careers in math and science...very bright women are sometimes led to believe any other choice is

beneath them...and the joy of doing something wholeheartedly may be lost.

(Noddings, 2003/2005, p. 89)

I was drawn to this passage specifically because I was (and remain) a strong student in math and science. I was encouraged to become a doctor of medicine. All of my primary school teachers praised me for my ambition and looked with admiration on my career choice. Art could just be a hobby. If it weren't for my parents' and secondary teachers' insight and thoughtful influence, I might have pursued medical school without any realization of the daily life of a doctor.

Fortunately, I took the advice of those I admired and trusted, and I volunteered at a local hospital for two summers while still in high school. I saw the ins and outs of life in the ER, spoke with the doctors and nurses in patient care, and even experienced the trauma room first hand one night as a doctor, thinking I was an intern, pulled me in to feel a patient's broken knee cap and collapsed lung. I almost vomited as my gloved hand felt the fleshy tendon that had been torn from the knee and the broken particles of bone suspended in the wound. I had doubts as to my ability to perform well in the medical profession. It wasn't what I imagined. I set out to follow my true passion, which was art and teaching, and have never regretted my decision. Neither do I feel teaching is beneath me or was a "fall back" career. I know that I love teaching. I know that I would not have loved medicine (and I will become a doctor after all, just in another field).

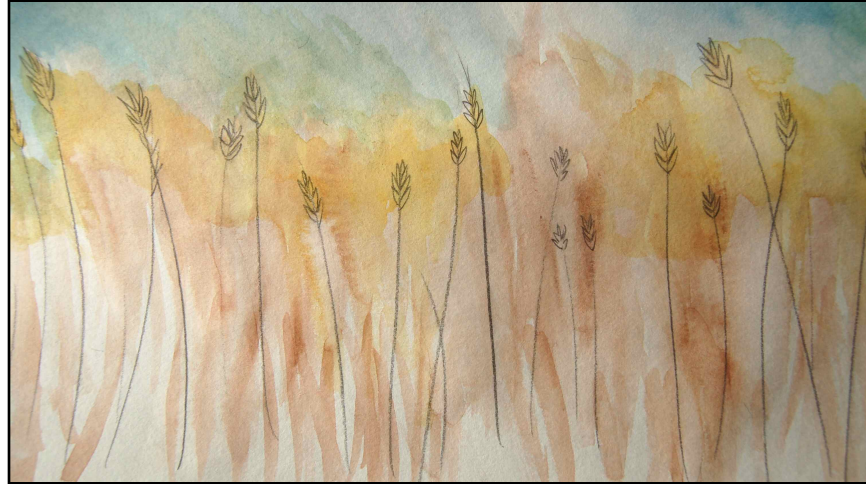


IMAGE 1.3: *Sketch of Wheat Fields*, 2011, pencil & watercolor. 6"x 12"

Helping students develop their interests and talents to pursue lives of happiness seems the ideal goal of education. As Noddings warns, however, happiness, like character, cannot be taught directly, "virtue-to-virtue," (2003/2005, p.96) but must be approached indirectly in all areas of life. This research hopes to address Noddings' aim, as well as Eliot Eisner's question, "What do teachers of the arts do when they teach and what are its consequences?" (2002, p. 215), and Peter Abbs who stated that "we need to know, then, whether in specific contexts of learning and art-making we can actively reclaim the power of the numinous, the power of imagination, the power of those meanings which fulfill and encompass" (2003, p.2). I hope this research forms an evolving portrait of an art curriculum and pedagogy that focuses on developing students' arts of living as well as models a wholeness-in-process as a specific, reflective text (Sameshima, 2007; 2008).

\* \* \* \*

How are you doing this? Everyone keeps asking me. How are you being nice to him, going through counseling, re-living it all, day-after-day? I ask myself these questions each day- all day. Why bother with him now? Hasn't he proved to be untrustworthy, selfish, and manipulative?

The real answer, that I rarely say (but perhaps I should), I have to believe he can become a better person. I have to believe he can be transformed- if anything, for the sake of my boys. They deserve a better man as their father.

And how can I believe in the importance of my own work as a teacher, as a researcher, or simply as a human being faced with suffering, that we can become better people, if I don't believe it in my life? Some beliefs seem insane. All evidence and practical reasoning tell is to face the truth- this or that person is just made like that, they are just wired that way. I can't believe it. My own self-preservation must believe that he can change. Not for me, not with me, not even in a way I will ever see. But I *have* to believe it—

to survive

with hope.

(Journal Entry, March 22, 2011)

\* \* \* \*

### **Study Summary**

In this arts-based educational research (ABER) study, I used a/r/tographic practices to investigate how an art class of middle school aged students in a suburban, private school develop an *arts of living*. I am interested in how students create their own *arts of living*, or how, through the arts, they learn to perceive the

quality and qualities of things, develop practices or habits that help shift their perspective, in order to deepen their understanding of others and create themselves as ethical subjects. To study this, I am interested in curriculum that develops their sensitivity to qualities: qualities in objects, relationships of qualities in works of art (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 1994), and qualities and relationships in each other. Art educator Edmund Feldman even stated. “Is there a radical difference between our coming to know ideas and things and our coming to know persons or each other?” (1970, p. 130). I believe this sensitivity is developed through aesthetic engagement in the art classroom. Specifically, I wanted to address the questions:

- What kinds of art experiences lead to deeper aesthetic engagement with objects, people, and environment?
- How might these experiences encourage students to develop an arts of living, or how, through the arts, they learn to perceive the quality and qualities of things, develop practices or habits that help shift their perspective, in order to deepen their understanding of others and create themselves as ethical subjects.

Through my experience researching as a teacher and artist, I wanted to investigate not only my students and their lives, but my relationship to them as well. In this process, I deconstruct the concept of care and empathy, which is never static, but always relational and dynamic. In order to study it authentically, I need a methodology which “incorporates tools from science and the arts to make insightful sense of data during and beyond the research project”; recognizes the researcher as the “primary instrument for documenting and interpreting knowledge that

ultimately informs researcher about him or herself as well”; and allows me to “present my final work as a blurred genre that can speak to diverse audiences both within and outside the academy” (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008, p.9). A/r/tography is a methodology that is relational and responsive—a living inquiry—that will allow me to research caring in the classroom using art making as the process and product of inquiry (Irwin & Springgay, 2008; La Jevic & Springgay, 2008; Springgay, et al., 2005). A/r/tographic practices attend to “the process of creativity and to the means through which one inquires into an educational phenomena through artistic and aesthetic means” (Springgay, et al., 2005, p. 898). A/r/tography also calls on the researcher to aesthetically create in the process of research as a critical dimension of rigorous inquiry (Irwin & Springgay, 2008; Sameshima, 2007).

\* \* \* \*

crushed

violated

disgusted—

How can I possibly write

possibly create

feeling like this?

there is no creation in this

only destruction

you—

hollow

wreckless

empty

me—

caring

for the boys

the dogs

the house

me—

trying to find meaning

find truth

find inspiration

to teach

to write

to create

while

you—

weigh me down.

(Journal Entry, December 30, 2010)

\* \* \* \*



This study began in my classroom where I taught using an experiential curriculum and pedagogy. An experiential curriculum means focusing on learning through the senses, the experience of every day relationships. For example, when we studied the theme of ritual and repetition in art, we first looked at how artists have expressed forms of ritual, both religious and secular, and examined our own rituals through exercises, visual journaling, and class discussions. I first used student artwork and my own art making as a site for dialogue on our theme, but found this method to be too superficial and direct. It was traditional in the sense that we began with a modern or historical artist and worked from there. We tried to discuss an arts of living without living it—without being artists. I had to rework the research and rework the data.

I came back to the central question Maxine Greene's work speaks so fully to: *What is the capacity to imagine and how to the arts foster this capacity?* Greene (1993/2001) relates much of her own writing on imagination back to her aesthetic experiences with literature, dance, and works of art. The spark lies within, is the phrase that echoes in my head whenever I read Maxine Greene. So what had gone wrong with my first approach to curriculum in developing an arts of living? There was no spark, in myself or the students. There was no personal connection or aesthetic relationship to our artwork. We created for the sake of learning *about* art, rather than creating for the sake of learning *through* art. Greene (1993/2001)

stresses that when we engage fully in the qualities of a work of art<sup>3</sup> we do so not to find the hidden meaning that lies somewhere within the work, but to engage in our own development of meaning as we pull the work into ourselves, living it and reflecting on its impact in our lives. It is why we can revisit a work of art over and over and find our relationship to that work to be altered, transformed, or deepened.

\* \* \* \*

Tucking my son into his crib, I hold the patchwork quilt in my hands. Small and soft, fabrics from the back of a closet in Pennsylvania, where my grandmother sits quietly every day, sewing works of art for us, for strangers, perhaps for herself. Her hands moved across this fabric, as mine do, thinking of the tiny child who would rest peacefully underneath. (Journal entry, November 14, 2010)

\* \* \* \*

A fellow graduate student asked me, sometime shortly before this writing was complete, if I could just summarize a/r/tography for them because she was considering using it as her methodology. I wasn't sure how to respond. How could I tell her what embracing and living an embodied curriculum really meant? How could I summarize in an email how the process of research formed me while I continued to reform it—without it sounding phony or made-up. Research forming me—she would think I was crazy. Yet it helped me realize how and why the examples of a/r/tography I had found were so hard to absorb before I actually

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<sup>3</sup> Work of art here is not specifically visual art, it may also refer to works of literature, music, and dance. Greene's writings are infused with multiple forms of "works of art," but I will, for the sake of my work, simply say work of art. While my teaching has heavy emphasis on the visual arts, I found through this study the depth of experience that can be achieved by combining multiple forms of art in the study of a subject/theme.

entered into it. It can only be explained to a degree, then it must be experienced. So I answered her question with another question: Are you ready to bare your soul? If so, choose a/r/tography.

I did give her some practical advice, about how I used visual journals, artwork, and class discussions as data collection and my own journal and artwork as a part of data analysis. I explained how the methodology allowed me to become much more involved in studying the liminal spaces between being an artist/researcher/teacher. The research became an exploration, where the process and product became messy, lost, and often, at odds with the research questions. I encouraged her to find her spark first, then just begin where you are—the same advice I got on a humid summer afternoon while trembling in a post-modern feminist research methods class.

This work I present as a record of my praxis, the experience shared in the art classroom and my life that embodies the nature of caring, learning to care, and learning to develop our lives artistically. This is the journey I am on.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**Arts of Living.** There are three passages that, together, construct the definition of an arts of living. The initial step in building an *arts of living* is perceiving the quality and qualities of things. The first passage is about a deepening of perception that further develops an appreciation for life:

No man who ever lived liked so many things and disliked so few as Walt Whitman. All natural objects seemed to have a charm for him. All sights and

sounds seemed to please him. (William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, as quoted in Smith, 2008, p.121)

Walt Whitman's ability to perceive the subtle qualities in nature and arrange text in such a way as to bring others to also take notice of those qualities is evident throughout his writings. He is known for his ability to capture the beauty and wonder of everyday objects and events.

This is Dewey's (1934/2005) focus in *Art as Experience* and one of my sources for the term *arts of living*. Dewey uses the phrase "completeness of living" (p.27) in discussing the experience of making and perceiving art. He mourns the fact the society and industry have severed art from everyday aesthetic experiences and art has become tied to artificial objects. He defines aesthetic experiences as activities that bring about a completeness of living, a uniting of the senses in an effort to unite the mind and body, and to reclaim the place of art in everyday life. Dewey understood that it was through the arts that one developed sensitivity to qualities, a sensitivity that was crucial to recognizing the aesthetic of everyday (1934/2005). Yet he also stressed that the only way to have an aesthetic experience was by understanding the relationship that exists between the felt experience, the actions of the experience, and reflecting on the experience. There is a harmony found in aesthetic experience (which might not be happiness) but culminates, as Walt Whitman's writings do, in new understanding. Artists develop sensitivity to qualities through the making and perception of art (Dewey, 1934/2005).

My son wants one of the birds. How could I explain to him what they were? So I found some colorful fabric, along with the hand-me-down jeans both my sons have worn out. The material is soft and plush, faded to a light blue where their knees rubbed the carpet when crawling. These two pieces became the new bird and it lives in his bed, watching over him as he drifts off to sleep. My guardian mother bird. (Journal Entry, February 21, 2011)

\* \* \* \*

The second passage is a part of a list from Keri Smith's *How to be an Explorer of the World* (2008). The list outlines actions or practices that help develop our skills of observation and exploration and includes such things as:

Always be looking (notice the ground beneath your feet). Consider everything alive and animate. Everything is interesting—look closer. Alter your course often. Observe for long durations, and short ones. Notice patterns—make connections. Document your findings (field notes) in a variety of ways. Incorporate indeterminacy. Trace things back to their origins. (Smith, 2008, p. 5)

These practices are meant to shift your perspective, slow you down, and develop a habit of exploring the world at all times. Smith (2008) says that the purpose of this book is to recognize that there is “no correct way of understanding anything” (p.15) and that the “real learning of these methods is to be had in the midst of living” (p.3). An arts of living is developing practices or habits that help shift one's perspective.



IMAGE 1.4: *7 Birds in Process/Landing Bird Detail*, 2011, photographic journal

Developing habits for living for the purpose of shifting one's perspective and self-formation is the focus of Foucault's writings on the theory of care of the self (1985/1986; 1982/1997; 1984/1997). In describing the Greek texts that illuminate the practices of care of the self, Foucault (1985/1986) reveals that the practices begin with a desire for the Greeks to perfect the soul, not in an attempt to reach an afterlife of happiness, but to live in happiness on earth. Such practices included caring for the body, meditation, talks with a confidant or mentor where one would "reveal the state of one's soul" (Foucault, 1985/1986, p. 51). The practices involved in care of the self were small daily things, such as writing, journaling, exercising, and meditating that allowed time and space for self-formation. Smith's instructions on how to be an explorer of the world, along with the contents of the book, illustrate how altering materials or our experience with materials can begin to help us alter our perspectives.

For Foucault, care of the self also meant constituting the self as an ethical subject (1984/1997). Briefly, in order to perfect the soul and live ethically, one would not simply follow moral codes, but rather develop a relationship to the self that was steeped in a vision of the perfect self. This vision of perfection would guide one's code of conduct and one would behave in a moral way and hold the self to this code of conduct (Foucault, 1984/1985; 1984/1997). Practicing care of the self was ethical in and of itself and would also lead to ethical relationships with others (Foucault, 1984/1997). Foucault's writings on care of the self are an attempt to "dismantle the apparatus by which the modern disciplines have constituted the individuals that we are" (Flynn, 2005, p. 620). Here the philosophical activity of self-formation is not seen as an accumulating of knowledge, but "as a kind of exercise- an askesis"<sup>4</sup> (McGushin, 2007, p. xiii).

This is exactly the task for many postmodern artists who believe art can be more than "reified objects," rather it can be "concrete social tasks that need doing" leading to art that takes part in the "moral shaping of culture itself" (Gablik, 1991, p. 142). The ability question and trouble that which we accept to be true is a practice of care of the self; it is also the work of deconstruction (Flax, 1990; St.Pierre, 2000). It is also essential in developing our ability to empathize and imagine (Greene, 1995/2000; Noddings, 1984/2003). In learning to shift our perspective, we begin to

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<sup>4</sup> Askesis is the work of thought upon itself, which is "not meant to pose answers, but to problematize them; it is to respond to a situation not with a solution that might end discussion or action, but with a question that might open up new possibilities" (McGushin, 2007, p.xvii). Care of the self, in Greek culture, was a response to the problem of Athenian democracy, that we might develop ourselves ethically and therefore the good of the city would benefit as well. Askesis seems to be very in line with a/r/tographic renderings.

ask why, to wonder, to explore. We begin to question why things are and how things could be. The theory of care of the self helps us realize that we are creators of our lives rather than consumers (Foucault, 1983/1984; 1984/1997).

The final passage is from the writings of Martin Heidegger (1971) in which he discusses the nature of the aesthetic. Here he is giving an example of how we come to understanding self or other through coming to know a work of art aesthetically:

As long as we only imagine a pair of shoes in general, or simply look at the empty, unused shoes as they merely stand there in the picture, we shall never discover what the equipmental being of the equipment in truth is...and yet... From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth...Under the soles slides the loneliness of the field path...this equipment belongs to the earth and is protected by the world of the peasant woman...perhaps it is only in the picture that we notice all this about the shoes...

[T]he equipmental quality of the equipment was discovered. But how? Not by a description. Not report about process of making shoes...not by observation of the actual shoes...but only by bringing ourselves before Van Gogh's painting. This painting spoke. In the vicinity of the work we were suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be. (Heidegger, 1971, pp. 33-35)

Heidegger (1971) challenges the notion that art doesn't just represent an idea or object symbolically, but it allows us to see something that was hidden before



(Hammermeister, 2002). He says that it is only through an encounter with the work of art do we notice what he refers to as the “thingly in the thing” (Heidegger, 1971, p. 39). He doesn’t use the word aesthetic to describe this quality, but he implies an element of relationship between viewer and object, one that causes the viewer to imagine more than just the thing, “since the art work is something else over and above the thingly element” (Heidegger, 1971, p. 19). The “thingly element” (p. 19) he describes as simply the physical presence of the work of art and the “artistic nature” (p. 19) as something beyond the paint or wood—something more, something felt and imagined. It is an imagined relationship that begins with careful attention to the qualities of color, light, and texture present in the painting (the thingly-ness) and culminates in a deepening of understanding of self or other. A goal of art education is a better understanding of another through our engagement with a work of art (Feldman, 1970). Through practicing an arts of living, we strive to deepen our understanding of others and live empathically.

When we study the arts, we learn about other cultures, other ways of living, and other faiths and values. When we create in the arts, we explore through our senses in a safe environment, learning how to perceive, not merely to recognize things (Eisner, 2002). Therefore, both study and creation involve constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing. These processes build bonds of relationship to the external world. They involve manipulation and shaping. In turn, we come to care for the relationships that we have actively formed. When we study the arts through an aesthetics of caring, we are not learning just to know, we are learning to relate. *This relation cannot be prescribed, it must be discovered.* As Eisner (1992) noted,

“discovery occurs as students learn through adventures in the arts something of the possibilities of human experience... [Through the arts] students can discover their potential to respond. In other words, the arts help students find their individual capacity to feel and imagine” (pp. 134-5). It is in the capacity to feel and imagine that we learn how to empathize and care.

Therefore, I define an arts of living as 1) perceiving the quality and qualities of things, and 2) developing practices or habits that help shift one’s perspective, in order to 3) deepen our understanding of others and encourage empathy. It is the term that I will also relate to developing an ethic of care in the art classroom. We can develop our ability to perceive qualities and shift perspectives with the outcome that we are able to dominate and control others (Arendt, 1961; Noddings, 1984/2003). Learning to create ourselves, our ideal ethical selves, takes being able to envision the kind of person we want to become and realizing how our visions of identity relate to others (Noddings, 1984/2003). We do not develop in isolation of others, rather we develop in relationship to them.

**Experiential Curriculum and Pedagogy.** Inspired by Pauline Sameshima’s model of an embodied aesthetic curriculum, I want to study how curriculum and pedagogy can become more fluid, relational, and reflexive (2007; 2008). Reflexive inquiry involves “question[ing] the context in which reflective experience occurs” and “opens up multiple layers of reflective inquiry” (Siegesmund, 2009, p.165). Sameshima states that the goal of embodied aesthetic wholeness is to “increase receptivity and openness to learning, foster skills of relationality, and model wholeness-in-process in explicit reflexive texts” (2008, p. 30). She believes the

“teacher can address personal wholeness by reconnecting the curriculum with self by connecting the mind and body; and... by integrating self as learner in the teaching process” (Sameshima, 2008, p. 31).

An experiential curriculum would first have emphasis on the shared experience of art making. In order to “increase receptivity and openness to learning” (Sameshima, 2008, p. 30), curriculum should be co-created with the students and the teacher should be an active participant in the learning process. This began when I explored a theme along with my students, creating art with the same criteria I give them (rather than creating an exemplar of that theme). This proved to be an ineffective way to approach teaching experientially: I was not involved in the experience. A shared experience does not mean we have a shared outcome or a shared work of art. This will be explained more in Chapters Three and Four.

The second aspect of an experiential curriculum is what Sameshima calls “relationality” (2008, p. 30), which is very similar to my definition of arts of living. It is an increased awareness of our sensory experiences for the purpose of coming to know the self and others. Rita Irwin (2003) calls for a similar experience in teaching, one with “an attunement to an aesthetic of unfolding in/sights” (p.71). By this, she means understanding the aesthetic qualities of teaching itself and using artistic practices as a way to navigate, re-create, and reflect on teaching practices. It is not only an aesthetic for making art, but one for teaching art as well. Throughout this study, I probed the interconnectedness and embodiment of the renderings of a/r/tography and struggled with how to present the study in a way that was not

summative and linear, but engaging and multilayered. One of my goals is to invite the reader to linger and trouble the nature of caring by engaging with the text and therefore the research as “intercorporeality, relationality, and process” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p.119).

A/r/tography also recognizes ethics as “participating in a network of relations” (La Jevic & Springgay, 2008, p.68). Pulling from various feminist theorists, ethics can be seen as how one encounters others as other, a shift from getting to know the other (knowledge gained through insight leading to understanding), to “an inquiry that creates bodied encounters that are themselves ethical in nature” (LaJevic & Springgay, 2008, p. 69). Ethics then is “not just different forms of knowing, but different forms of being, and it is this complicated and responsive understanding of lived experience that is at the heart of a/r/tographical research” ( p.71).

Likewise, it was the work of ethics in Foucault’s writings to problematize the issue of how society creates itself for the means of “creating new modes of being together” (Rabinow, 1997, p. xxxvii). In this sense, my research takes the position of learning who my students are through our shared experiences in the classroom, the intimacy of learning together through the production of art. Sameshima (2007) states that for feminist and postmodern artists, “the subject of art is human nature and through their combined use of written and visual images runs a common purpose, that is, *to open a conversation* and to pose living possibilities for mutual consideration, understanding, and respect” (p.285). The focus is on developing relationship.

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But there is no way to bring together self creation with justice at the level of theory. The vocabulary of self creation is necessarily private, unshared, and unsuitable to argument. The vocabulary of justice is necessarily public, shared, a medium for argumentative exchange. (Rorty, 1989/1999, p.xiv).

\* \* \* \*

To say “Our Father...deliver us from evil” is to struggle within and around ourselves against that which aims at destroying the faith: indifference, systematic doubt, skepticism, as if happiness and the grandeur of man consisted in his liberating himself from God.

Pope John Paul II, Address to Youth, Brussels, Belgium, 1985

(as cited by Kelly-Gangi, 2005, p.51)

\* \* \* \*

## CHAPTER TWO

### DECONSTRUCTING CARE

I would have thought making a bib was easy. I felt stupid as I looked up interfacing and bias tape because I didn't know what they were. But really, it was easy to take the old bib apart, because it was so frayed anyway, and look at the pieces; trace them, improve them. They needed longer bibs for the older babies, but a neck that would still fit the younger babies, so I put a double snap- one stud and two separate sockets (using my aunt's handy snap pliers that she paid \$4.99 for in like 1969). I sometimes think fabric is sacred, like you can't cut up a "finished" piece, even if it is worn and frayed. I couldn't even throw away the old bib I took apart. My grandmother's voice popped in my head saying "you might use that for something later." I tucked the old, torn, stained tubby bear fabric in my bin, just in case. (Journal Entry, September 15, 2010)

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This study presents deconstruction as a praxis experienced through the process of art making. Deconstruction, first and foremost, "is not an act or operation" (Derrida, 1988, p.3), but it does "take place, it is an event that deconstructs it-self" (p. 4). One cannot point to a moment in a lesson plan when deconstruction happens. Not all art making deconstructs, but I will advocate for an art practice and pedagogy that disrupts. In this sense, I am using the terms similarly to how postmodern and poststructural are often interchanged with each other to

describe research/theory/paradigms that “simultaneously use and call in to question a discourse, to both challenge and describe dominant meaning systems in ways that construct our own categories and frameworks and contingent, positioned, partial (Lather, 1991, p. 1). Citing the work of Lyotard (1984), Patti Lather stresses that postmodern work “puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself...in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable” (p. 81 as cited by Lather, 1991, p. 6). The terms rupture, redoubling, de-centering, and disruption are also used throughout Derrida’s classic writing *Structure, Sign, and Play* (1966/1978) to describe that which begins to open and put into play the structures that seems to anchor our sense of meaning and knowledge. The goal of deconstruction “is to keep things in process” (Lather, 1991), a taking apart in order to re/create, often to re/create the un/imagined.

In this chapter, I deconstruct elements in caring as they relate to developing an arts of living. I list these elements as statements, a way to expose the structure/discourse that exists, but will critique them throughout the chapter as one places pins in fabric. They are essential statements in holding this study together, but can be as illusive and variable as the pin hole left in fabric.

- Caring is an explicit learning objective in the study of art.
- Aesthetics is the study of felt relationships, which are vital experiences/practices in learning to care.
- Developing the self through aesthetic engagement is an ethical practice.



I will look at the philosophical and historical nature of these elements as well as empirical studies that open up these elements through research, through curriculum and pedagogy, and through critique.

### **The Work of Deconstruction**

Deconstruction itself resists definition. As Derrida (1988) tells us if someone says deconstruction is this or deconstruction is not that, then they miss the point (p. 4). There have been some helpful writings that set up what deconstruction, (for lack of better words) does, or can do, or becomes. So I threaten Derrida's rule by saying to deconstruct is "to take apart, to produce a reading, to open the textuality of text" (Spivak, 1974, p. xlix). Spivak (1993) also tells us that "deconstruction is not an essence. It is not a school of thought; it is a way of reading" (p.10) that helps us to continue to critique the structures we inhabit but cannot not live in. Like the process of creating a new bib, I see deconstruction in this study as a way to take apart in order to re/create; disrupt in order to form the imagined. While the original object/text/idea that is deconstructed or participates in the deconstruction will always remain, the idea is that a disruption has occurred that keeps things in process (Lather, 1991). The state of disruption allows for something new to form or begin to form. It is not to create the new, specifically, for then that new object/text/idea would also need to be deconstructed, or deconstruction would happen.

Caring seems to be an essential part of teaching and education (Noddings 1992; 1995; 2003/2005). Teachers are viewed as care-givers, nurturing their students in mind and body. We assume caring in education to be good, wholesome, and nurturing, even necessary for children to learn (Goldstein, 1999; Hankins, 2003;

O'Connor, 2008; Phillips, 2003). Yet if we are to teach caring to students, make it a vital and critical part of the curricular aims of education (Noddings, 2003/2005), then we must carefully consider and critique the authentic nature of caring. If we were to critique caring, we might begin with questions like; what is the opposite of caring—not caring, apathy, distance—or something more malevolent? What are ways we reason ourselves out of caring for or caring about other people or things? What are ways in which caring becomes dangerous? Like love, courage, fear, sorrow, joy, caring must be experienced and felt to be authentically “learned.” I feel it needs to be deconstructed in educational settings in order for us to be prepared to take on its curricular aims.

Derrida (1990) also describes deconstruction as “a principle of dislocation” (p.84), the consequences of which are like a jetty. He then explains the two definitions of *jetty*: the “force of movement forward and backwards at the same time” (p.84) and the pier in the harbor where space is anchored, in a way, for ships and swimmers. Jetty is meant as a metaphor for that which stabilizes and destabilizes at once (although Derrida does not use the word metaphor<sup>5</sup>). He goes on to say, “Deconstruction is neither a theory nor a philosophy. It is neither a school or a method. It is not even a discourse, nor an act, nor a practice. It is what happens...deconstruction is the case,” and he explains that this statement is like the static form of jetty (Derrida, 1990, p.85). Lather (1991) contends there can be

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<sup>5</sup> I use the term here because I believe it connects to the way in which metaphor presents itself and is used in a/r/ography. Metaphor is the “substitutions of signifiers....the two are not equal” (Springgay, et al., 2005, p. 904). Metaphor is seen like a doubling, a constant “turning back and moving forward” where there is “both a loss of meaning and simultaneously a realization of it” (p. 905).

“strategies of displacement” (p.13) in which one might deconstruct by “1)identifying the binaries, the oppositions that structure an argument; 2) reverse/displace the dependent term from its negative position...and 3)create a more fluid and less coercive conceptual organization of the terms which transcend binary logic” (Grosz, 1989, p. xv as cited by Lather, 1991, p. 13)

There is also an element of “the impossibility of closure” (Derrida, 1990, p. 86) in deconstruction. Like the concept of a/r/tography, which is an “unfolding of art and text together (art in the sense could mean poetry, music, or other forms of artist inquiry)...that intentionally unsettles perception and complicates understandings” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p.113), the goal of deconstruction is not to “find” the new thing, but to keep the things in play<sup>6</sup> so that the new may always emerge. The elements presented here are like Derrida’s *jetty*; they are statements which at once are stable and in motion, made so by their direct placement within this work and in the context of deconstruction.

### **Care is an Explicit Learning Objective**

Element: Care is an explicit learning objective in the study of art.

The greatest structural obstacle, however, may be simply legitimizing the inclusion of care in the classroom (Noddings, 1995, p.679).

In 2009, the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) published the new performance standards for the visual arts wherein it states, “Art, when taught

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<sup>6</sup> I use play defined as “the disruption of presence” (Derrida, 1966/1978, p.292). Derrida also describes how play “must be conceived of before the alternative of presence and absence” and that the possibility of play is an “ethic of presence” (p. 292). This is also another reason I use the term disruption for how students interact with art materials; the term play is embodied and disrupted at once and while the actions are occurring.

through a reflective pedagogy of care and responsibility, promotes self-esteem and positive relationships...Art instruction provides opportunities for students to work individually and collaboratively to foster social development and cooperative interaction" (GDOE, 2009, p.11). Throughout the new standards, there is an emphasis on five areas of care: 1) care of materials, 2) care of self and the artwork one makes, 3) care of others in the classroom, 4) care of the school, and 5) care of the larger community (GDOE, 2009). It may seem like basic instruction in the arts to have students learn to care for the materials, use them with care, and learn to take care of the supplies and classroom, but this first form of caring requires great attention. It involves acquiring a skill and developing a practice.

For example, students must be taught how to care for a paintbrush, how to wash it gently and place it upright so the can hairs dry and not become moldy. Students must display this care through repetition. In some cases, they might need to see the outcome of neglect in order to renew their sense of care and their vigilance in caring for the object. If a teacher always follows behind the students, fixing their mistakes of caring for the room or the materials (as in always re-washing students' brushes and putting them away correctly), students may not receive this vital lesson in the outcome of neglect. While it may not be financially responsible for the art teacher to let the students waste materials, as this may be seen as such, it is something to consider when approaching this task of teaching students to care for materials. How do we teach caring without letting students also experience the affects of not caring? It is at the heart of this study, as well as the new Georgia Performance Standards.

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It never occurred to me that my dress might hurt others. My mother came in to help with the boys as I finished writing and saw the dress in the corner of my room. I casually mentioned, "There's the real thing," even though I knew she had seen the pictures I sent. Her body became stiff. She couldn't even approach it. I knew at once she was upset. "I just can't..." she said, and left the room. I innately knew the different ends of the sentence that she was thinking: "I just can't ...believe you cut your dress...believe you ruined it...accept what he did to you... watch you get hurt without it filling me with anger...believe you had to move, support your boys, possibly change jobs...I just can't believe it is all real." I knew these things because I know her heart, but I'm not sure she knows mine.

I had to do it; it was already done. It was already torn and shredded in my heart-how could the physical tearing be any worse? But for her, it was. It was proof that my life was falling apart. But now that I was at the end of creating it, I knew it had changed for me. The cutting of the dress was so much less painful than all of this, and in a way, it helped me accept what was happening. It's not an element of control, that now I could control the artwork, in fact, the whole process was surrender. I gave up my dress, my work, my life- and this beautiful thing formed itself. The birds were no longer attacking, they were nesting. Like the quiet sparks of the Holy Spirit entered into my life in a way I never imagined, and I invited them in. The birds were no longer the enemies, but guises of the Holy Spirit. The work of the dress needed a new title. (Journal entry, March 11, 2011).

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Caring for students, as well as helping them deal with personal issues should not be separate from academic structure, with our emotional and moral states being handled by other experts, it should be a fluid part of education (Noddings, 1995). In order to carry out these new performance standards as outcomes of art education, we need to be receptive of our students, as well as the many negotiations of care in the classroom. Noddings (2003/2005) even noted that “the receptivity characteristic of aesthetic engagement is very like the receptivity of caring” (p.22). When we say we are receptive of a new idea, it means we have an open mind, free of values or preconceptions, ready to approach the idea with fresh insight. Being receptive of an aesthetic experience means we are present in the moment, our senses concentrated and engaged, allowing ourselves to be changed by the experience.

Students could view a work by Alberto Giacometti, discussing in detail the visual qualities, the use of line and texture in portraying the human form. They might describe their feelings as they view the piece, noting the mood of isolation or loneliness. They would be perceiving. In order to convert this perception into a caring relation, they need to receive it. They need to internalize the concept of isolation or loneliness, relate it to their lives, and let it change the way they think or feel; in other words, to care. Dewey (1934/1989) noted this reception as essential to being engaged in the aesthetic: “The esthetic or undergoing phase of experience is receptive. It involves surrender. But the adequate yielding of the self is possible only through a controlled activity that may well be intense” (p. 59). This controlled activity can be the creation of or interaction with art.

The reception to another, through the act of perceiving, can be noted in a simple exercise on drawing a self-portrait and it addresses the second theme in the standards, the care of self and the artwork one makes. When my first grade students draw a self portrait, I guide them through the process. Using mirrors, they take time to look at their features, studying the curve of their lip or the arc of their eyebrow, and I ask them to think about what members of their family shares their features. This engages students in perception and reflection, helping to teach them to “conceive of the world, not merely render those outward properties available to the senses” (Thompson, 2002, p. 187). Students do not simply copy what they see, but reflect on the relationship between their physical features, personality, and talents as they relate to others in their family. They begin to see patterns emerge. They perceive of themselves in relationship to others. Seeing yourself in relationship with others is the first step in learning to care.

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Shaving in the shower, I suddenly think of her. Did she shave her legs for you? What bizarre and sick connections I now share with these women. I cringe to think of what else I share with them. Something I thought was only mine is now out there in the open, free for others to have and to hold. I stand there, with the razor in my hand, hate washing over me like the steaming water. I look at the glass dividing me from my reflection. And I vomit. (Journal Entry, January 18, 2011)

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Yet in this same portrait exercise, a student might begin to use colors and lines in a way that tell more about themselves than simply their facial features. I had

a student, who everyone thought was a mean child, paint himself in exactly that way. He chose to paint dark green eyebrows, furrowed and angry, above three blood red eyes. Yet while I watched him work, there was no anger in the process of painting. He chose his colors carefully and mixed them with purpose. He wanted to paint a “mean” kid. Yet in the corner of his painting, he drew a tiny skateboard with such delicacy, he proved there was more to him than a kid who is hopelessly careless and mean. After speaking with him about his portrait, he told me he had to be mean, because others were mean to him and it is easy to be mean. But when asked about the tiny skateboard which had bright blue wheels and was not crossed out with a bold ‘X’ like all the other objects in the background, he told me his cousin skateboarded with him. In the end, he decided his cousin was his friend.

It was after this portrait lesson that my student began to be a little kinder towards his classmates and worked harder in my class to follow the rules. I believe his change in attitude was due to his own self-discovery that he didn’t have to be the mean kid—it was up to him to create his identity (Riddett-Moore, 2007). He spoke with his painting before he spoke with words. During the process of creating the portrait, he began to perceive of a new version of himself (Riddett-Moore, 2007).

The idea that we can visualize a better life, a better person, through art is not new. It was present in the early writings on aesthetics and in education (see Buber, 1947; Dewey, 1926; Dewey, 1900/1990; Pestalozzi 1801/1898; Read, 1958). Aesthetic education was considered a path to moral goodness because of the felt response of the aesthetic experience, which I will discuss in the next section. Ultimately, we are not good because we are told to be good, or because we follow the



rules that tell us we should be good. I agree with Noddings (2003) that “how good I can be partly depends on how you-the other-receive and respond to me” (p.6).

Likewise, moral decisions are “rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness” (p.2). An ethic of care rejects the notion that there is one universal way to be moral, or that morality is based purely on action (Noddings, 1992).

It is only within the relationship with another, in the perception and reception of them, that we can meet on moral grounds. To learn morality through relationship was also the basis of Pestalozzi’s *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children*, (1801/1898). Moral education for Pestalozzi did not begin with catechisms or dogmas, but began in the home with the relationship of mother with child and extends, by virtue of education, from teacher to student (Hayward, 1904/1979). My student needed the process of art to discover this little truth about himself- that he didn’t have to be mean; it was a choice. He also needed to imagine himself in a new way, as someone who could be good. We are good when we can perceive and receive another in the practice of caring. Perhaps it was the simple act of a teacher taking time to ask him about his work of art that he felt cared for.

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I sold our bed. Our bedroom set. \$800. The exact price for the remaining lawyer fees. Which is fine with me. I felt like it was blood money and couldn’t keep it anyway. I couldn’t sleep there anymore- couldn’t even look at it. How could you look at me? Coming home to our bed after leaving hers? After leaving any of the women? I can’t remember sleeping there-lying next to you and feeling safe. The memory left

with the bed. I've never felt like saying these words, ever, in my life....but-God-damn-you. (Journal Entry, February, 17, 2011).

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Caring as an explicit outcome in the study of art means we must engage in projects of self education (Noddings, 1995). This is an idea at the heart of a/r/tographic research as "a/r/tographic communities create practices that question yet re-imagine how we might live in difference" (Irwin, 2008, p.78). Research and teaching, in this sense, hinges on those moments of instability where we can experience change and learning occurs. It also requires perception. Perception is not just seeing, it is being carefully attuned to the qualities of an object or person so as to see something new, something relational (Siegesmund, 1999; 2005). To perceive, I must feel as I think (Siegesmund, 1999). My feeling and my thinking must be joined in relationship, which Dewey (1934/1989) calls having an aesthetic experience:

[Aesthetic experience] has pattern and structure, because it is not just doing and undergoing an alteration, but consists of them in relationship. To put one's hand in the fire that consumes it is not necessarily to have an experience. The action and its consequence must be joined in perception. This relationship is what gives meaning; to grasp it is the object of all intelligence (p. 51).

When aesthetics is approached from the perspective of learning to perceive, it becomes a philosophy of relation, a way to teach students how to perceive and receive each other and the world in meaningful ways. Yet, for this perception to be

caring, it requires an element of reception, and a focus on developing caring relations.

Yet caring relations may not mean having feelings for one another; rather a true community arises when first we take a stand in living in mutual relation, where feeling exists but are not the place where community begins (Buber, 1937/1950, p. 45). In other words, it is easy to develop caring relations and communities with those we trust, like, and share common interests. It becomes much harder to develop communities with those whom we disagree, or those who stand diametrically opposed to our principles and beliefs. We may let reason dictate our actions and rationalize ourselves into cruel acts in the name of justice, equality, or sovereignty. Yet this is where the study and practice of art can become a site for students to experience differences on a personal and critical level, in order to accept alternate realities and develop ethical choices. Rorty writes that “fiction<sup>7</sup>...gives us details about what sorts of cruelty we ourselves are capable of and thereby lets us re-describe ourselves” (1989/1999, p.xvi) Indeed, if the study and creation of art rests on the premise that the outcome of such a study will be that we develop ourselves ethically, then perhaps we can achieve the solidarity and community we hope for.

**Studies on Caring.** There are few empirical studies done on caring and its relevance as a learning outcome, and even fewer within the field of visual art. Most empirical studies are located in the field of nursing, where researchers address physical and mental caring for patients, or the caring attitude of the nurses/doctors.

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<sup>7</sup> Like my earlier comment on Greene’s writing, fiction here could mean works of art, literature, music, dance, movies, performances, etc.

To understand caring in the field of education, notions of love, empathy, listening, and relationships must also be covered, as they all relate to caring. Many studies within these topics center around two ideas: defining caring or love in the classroom (more philosophical writing than empirical studies) (e.g. Goldstein, 1998; 1999; Heid, 2005; Phillips, 2003; 2004; Stout, 1999), exploring teacher conceptions of caring (e.g. Goldstein & Lake 2000; Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006; Lee & Ravizza, 2008; O'Connor, 2008), or student definitions of what a caring teacher is, and is not (Caldwell & Sholtis, 2008).

The benefits of the array of work done to define caring, love, and empathy in education is that caring is now recognized as a multi-layered, highly influential element in teaching and cognition, which is now validated in the Georgia Performance Standards for the Visual Arts. Goldstein's (1998) definitional work on teacherly love recognizes the dimension of love between one person and a group of people (classroom) is unique and rarely explored as element of teaching, although authors (she refers readers to William Ayers, Phillip Jackson, and Cornel West) acknowledge that love plays role in lives of teachers and students. Echoing the philosophies of Nel Noddings (1984/2003), Goldstein contends that teachers who teach with love model loving relationships for their students, who in turn learn to love in different ways. Goldstein (1999) also addresses in her writing how caring and loving play a role in students' cognitive development. Using Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development, she believes learning happens between people and how we learn affects how we care. In this case, the "interpersonal character of

the co-construction of knowledge closely resembles the caring encounter” (Goldstein, 1999, p.648).

Likewise, art educators like Heid (2005), Phillips (2003, 2004) and Stout (1999) have discussed the importance and relevance of empathy in the development of art curriculum as well as in constructing the learning environment of the classroom. Stout (1999) mentions she reformed her curricula to stimulate empathic awareness and aimed to instill the capacity to care, but neglects to give details to this amazing transformation in the classroom. Like Phillips (2003), she mentions open discussion in the classroom, teacher’s response to attitudes, and setting up situations where students can experience acts of caring. There is no mention from Phillips (2003) or Stout (1999) if caring was assessed as an essential element to the academic goals of the lessons. However, these writings do indicate that caring is becoming a topic more teachers feel the need to address, recognizing the important role caring plays in student and teacher relationships as well as cognitive development.

I found that the common thread in these studies centered around probing the feeling of caring and how it might be manifested either in curriculum or pedagogy. These studies still worked within the framework that caring is good, wholesome, and trustworthy. Yet if we are to set up authentic experiences for students to embody care, empathy, and love in the classroom, we must continue to put care into play, to disrupt it, to not assume it is benign. This concept can be opened up more in the next element: aesthetics is the study of felt relationships.

\* \* \* \*

I confess, to Almighty God  
 and to you, my brothers and sisters,  
 that I have sinned through my own fault  
 in my thoughts and in my words  
 in what I have done, and what I have failed to do;  
 and I ask Blessed Mary, ever virgin,  
 all the angels and saints,  
 and to you, my brothers and sisters,  
 to pray for me to the Lord, Our God.  
 Amen

\* \* \* \*

### **Aesthetics is the Study of Felt Relationships**

Element: Aesthetics is the study of felt relationships, which are vital experiences/practices in learning to care.

**Aesthetics as Perception.** The term aesthetics, widely acknowledged in the field of art as being a philosophy of beauty or the premise on which to define an object as work of art, the philosophy of art itself, originated in the eighteenth century as a term for the ‘science of perception.’ It was the word used in 1735 by Alexander Baumgarten to define his project of sensory perception, dealing with the ways we come to know of something beyond logic as expressed in symbols by words or numbers (Shusterman, 2006; Siegesmund, 1999). The term aesthetics has also been translated into various phrases including ‘sensual

perception' (Hammermeister, 2002), 'sensible cognition' (Nuzzo, 2006), and 'the ability to perceive' (Siegesmund, 1999), but all seem to relate to the relationship between thinking and feeling. Roughly, aesthetics was the word he used to define how we gain important insights through our senses. Shedding light on the intricacy of this meaning, Siegesmund (1999) notes:

The word aesthetics comes from the Greek word *aisthenesthai*, which translates as the ability to perceive. In Greek, verbs are conjugated in three ways: 1) the action an individual initiates, 2) an action done to an individual, or 3) an action that is something in between these two poles. *Aisthenesthia* is conjugated in the third fashion. Baumgarten and his contemporaries interpreted this verb and conjugation as reflecting a dynamic state between subject and object (p.43).

Here, it seems that aesthetics is not just about how I perceive, but the relationship between myself and an object or person. The experience is reciprocal. I may create a work of art, and upon using the media, the work "speaks" to me, or I learn something new from the engagement, aesthetics tries to explain this "back and forth" of learning and experiencing.

Shusterman (2006) gives a nice summary of the three axes for understanding how aesthetics has come to be recognized in modern terms: 1) aesthetics is a philosophy of perception as noted above, based on the writings of Baumgarten; 2) aesthetics is a philosophy of beauty, encompassing the concept of taste, based on the writings of Kant, and 3) aesthetics is a philosophy of the nature of art, notably fine art, based on the writings of Hegel. Whereas Baumgarten believed aesthetics

enabled us to uncover truth, as the senses added to our ability to perceive, Kant pronounced that the senses, i.e. those squishy things called feelings that interplay with our senses, blocked adequate perception and thus had no role in the acquisition of truth or knowledge (Hammermeister, 2002; Shusterman, 2006). For Kant aesthetics lies only within the realm of taste and beauty, which is first and foremost experienced through nature and art.

Yet Baumgarten's writings indicate that aesthetics could mean a type of consciousness, wider than art and nature, applied to daily life, as a way of understanding the world, not simply a quest for beauty or perfection of the senses (Shusterman, 2006), although his term 'perfection in sensible cognition' has been understood to mean 'beauty' for some philosophers (Guyer, 2008; Nuzzo, 2006). While it is not my goal to unpack the term 'beauty' as well as 'aesthetics,' it is important to note that the distinction between Kant's beauty and Baumgarten's beauty that has led to these two very different understandings of aesthetics in art. Baumgarten uses 'beauty' as a way to explain the perfection of the senses, and cites three sources of pleasure, what we call beauty, achieved through art: 1) heuristic perfection, or beauty found in self discovery, 2) methodological perfection, or beauty lying in the process of creating the beautiful, and 3) semiotics, or beauty found in the piece itself, its meaning and representation of that meaning (Guyer, 2008). Kant's use of beauty falls back on the last two sources of pleasure, again, because Kant's theory of aesthetics is based on "dividing knowledge into the sensible and intelligible" (Nuzzo, 2006, p. 583).



It is this first source of pleasure that interests me, the ability of an aesthetic experience to produce heuristic pleasure, which implies a realization of self through the object or person being experienced aesthetically. This brings me back to my original usage of the term in postmodernism, the term that I associated with my students' learning through Empty Bowls and Gablik's (1995) 'connective aesthetics.' According to Shusterman (2006), the "concept of aesthetics as being a distinct mode of perception and dimension of experience is currently experiencing a strong revival in aesthetic theory" (p. 240). To define aesthetics as sensory perception with the goal of *understanding another* through an *understanding of self* relates to developing an ethic of care in the classroom, within and between the teacher and students. Living and teaching in an ethic of care is a sort of perfection of living, what Foucault (1984/1985) calls the "arts of existence" (p.10). Here, Foucault speaks of creating one's life into a work of art, an "oeuvre", by choosing to engage in activities, or perhaps even modes of thought, heightened by perception, in order to transform the self (p.11).

**Perception and Reception.** If we are to understand aesthetics as the ability to perceive, we must first define what we mean by perceiving. Perception is not just seeing, it is being carefully attuned to the qualities of an object or person so as to see something new, something relational (Siegesmund, 1999; 2005). To perceive, I must feel as I think (Siegesmund, 1999). My feeling and my thinking must be joined in relationship, which Dewey (1934/1989) calls having an aesthetic experience. When aesthetics is approached from the perspective of learning to perceive, it becomes a

philosophy of relation, a way to teach students how to perceive and receive each other and the world in meaningful ways.



IMAGE 2.1: *Bibs in Process*, 2010, photographic journal

Attending to the quality and qualities of things is an act of perception—thinking and feeling—it is also an act of the body. Thinking, especially thinking through a material or medium, engages the body; we feel it (Dewey, 1934/2005). We do not impart feeling on the mind, nor can they be separated; feeling is mind (Dewey, 1934/2005; Damasio, 1999). When we speak of qualitative reasoning in art education, we look at developing the skills necessary to “actively explore perceptual detail, attend to emotional reactions from sensory input, and to interpret these qualities of experience in a way that creates meaning” (Siegesmund, 2005, p.19). For example, students may be given the task of creating a paper crane. The art of paper folding requires a familiarity with the weight, size, and proportions of the paper. Origami is precise and exact; there is no room for wrong folds. So students must first attend to the qualities of the thin paper—this takes practice. It also takes hand-eye coordination, which requires them to think with their body.

The process of making a paper crane also requires patience and the ability to see the next step before it happens. It takes an ability to “see” the fold and how one fold relates spatially with another fold. This carries certain emotional weight for a child who struggles with attending to the qualities of origami paper; one child sees the process as challenging and inviting, another becomes frustrated and discouraged. As art teachers, we help students attend to the emotional reactions<sup>8</sup> from the sensory input. We guide them in a correct fold, we hold the paper while they consider the step they missed, we dry their tears of frustration and encourage them to continue on the task. Attending to emotional reactions during the process of making art helps students understand that the final work of art carries a physical presence, a sense of time, and the record of an artist’s blood, sweat, and tears. Art is more than the final product.

When the paper crane is finally folded and complete, we reflect on the experience of making a crane. We interpret the qualities of the experience by asking, what makes a “perfect” paper crane, what challenges did we face while making the crane, what changes about the crane when the paper is torn and wrinkled—is it any less valuable than the pristine one? Suddenly, we are making interpretations about how we judge objects, how we assign value to things based on their appearance or their ability to be perfect. Do we make the same judgments of others? An art teacher may also share the story of *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* (Coerr, 1986), the

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<sup>8</sup> The emotional reaction in qualitative reasoning usually refers to the emotional response to a work of art, but as art educators, emotional reactions and responses are prevalent just as much in making art (if not more) than they are in viewing art. Both need to be attended to in understanding an ethic of care and the philosophy of aesthetics as perception. How we react physically and emotionally to materials does indeed effect how we perceive works of art and their value.

true story of a young Japanese girl who develops leukemia from the radiation effects of the bombing of Hiroshima. The legend of the thousand paper cranes carries the belief that anyone who creates 1,000 paper cranes will have their wish, their deepest heart's desire, granted. Sadako begins this task, folding cranes daily, almost as a way to pray and mediate on her condition. As her body fails, folding the cranes becomes more painful and tedious. She can't see the paper. She can't feel the folds. Her wish no longer becomes for herself, but that no child should have to suffer such pain because of war. She dies before completing the thousand cranes.

Yet another work of art comes of this story. Her friends and fellow students continue folding the paper cranes until they reach the goal. Today in Hiroshima, Japan, there is a *Children's Peace Monument* (see Paper Cranes, 2011). Atop an organic archway is a sculpture of Sadako Sasaki, holding a wire representation of a paper crane. Each year, thousands of paper cranes are left at the memorial site. The tiny act of folding a paper crane has become an act of peace, an act of patience, reflection, and acceptance. By having students create a paper crane, they are not only learning about another form of art and another form of thinking, they are learning about another way of being in relationship. By folding a paper crane, they are connected—in action and presence—to all the other people who have created cranes. Yet they would only come to know this by the guidance of an art teacher who took the time to let them *explore* the material, *attend* to the emotional responses, and *relate* to the work on a personal and global level. Their perception of paper cranes would be altered because of the final element in perception and reception—the joining of these in the context of caring.

**Aesthetics and Moral Goodness.** Art educator Edmund Feldman (1970) believes that aesthetic education encompasses the curiosity that “presides at the birth of new knowledge and feeling” (p. 85). In the art classroom, the freedom to make is emphasized over the freedom to choose, which Feldman agrees is a part of developing a moral child. Rather than selecting values, as a consumer society promotes, the arts encourage a productive or creative orientation, creating an environment where we can influence, shape or invent the values. Thus, children and their art “represent the emerging capacity to imagine relationships: with the self, with others, with nature, and made-made environment, and with the idea of society” (Feldman, 1970, p. 101).

When we talk to children about art, we talk about alternative ways of feeling and doing (Feldman, 1970). The same type of thinking that allows us to simultaneously think of the finished product while in the process of making it in art is the same type of thinking needed to imagine change in the world and bring it to fruition. Dewey (1934/2005) says:

Because perception of relationship between what is done and what is undergone constitutes the work of intelligence, and because the artist is controlled in the process of his work by his grasp of the connection between what he has already done and what he has to do next, the idea that the artist does not think as intently and penetratingly as a scientific inquirer is absurd” (p.47).

This capacity to imagine the other and imagine the ideal is vital in creating caring relations, yet can only happen when the emphasis on caring exists. We can

imagine the other in order to control or abuse. Echoing the thoughts of Hannah Arendt (1958; 1961), Rowling (2008) sums up this point when she says:

Unlike any other creature on this planet, humans can learn and understand, without having experienced. They can think themselves into other people's minds, imagine themselves into other people's places. Of course, this is a power...that is morally neutral. One might use such an ability to manipulate, or control, just as much as to understand or sympathize... What is more, those who choose not to empathize may enable real monsters. For without ever committing an act of outright evil ourselves, we collude with it, through our own apathy.

It is not a new idea that the aim of education is to create students who are moral, productive citizens of a democratic society (see Buber, 1947; Dewey, 1926; Dewey, 1990; Pestalozzi 1801/1898; Read, 1958). We are not just talking about citizens who will do the right thing in small matters, but ones who use their knowledge and talents to bring about social change, or achieve Rorty's vision of solidarity (1989/1999).

Traditionally, moral education follows the Kantian ethic of duty; 1) that an action is moral if it is done for the sake of duty, 2) an action is morally correct if it is equally applicable to everyone, and 3) our actions should always treat humanity with respect, never as a means to an end (Hinman, 2003). All these premises for moral action are based on man's ability to reason, for feelings would inhibit the decision making process. For Kant, emotions blocked reason, rather than help us perceive the world. The ethics of duty neglect the critical role our emotions play in

motivating us to act morally, or to act on our inclination with respect to duty (Hinman, 2003). Since Kant also saw art located within the realm of aesthetics, the realm left to the senses and not logic, art could not play a role moral decision-making. Judgments made on art and beauty were not inferior to our judgments of truth or morality, but were “independent of both” (Hammermeister, 2002, p.23). The disconnection between art and moral obligation lead to a vision of artist as autonomous and free, and a vision of aesthetics as non-relational and non-interactive. Gablik (1995) claims that this has lead to a “deadening of empathy” (p. 80) for modern society.

Yet Section 59 of Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* addresses “beauty as the symbol of morality” (1790/1952, p.221). Here one could assume that Kant did see the value of art in arousing moral inclinations in man, but the relationship was purely symbolic to Kant (Hammermeister, 2002; Tauber, 2006). A symbol is something “that allows for sensory experience of something else that is non-sensory” (Hammermeister, 2002, p. 38). Morality, being located in the realm of thought, is a non-sensory idea, but beauty can be experienced, so it is a sensory idea. Tauber (2006) states this is more akin to an analogous relationship than a direct one. They are different entities, but heterogeneous in principle, like God and man. Man can never fully understand God because they are located within separate realms of existence; man can only know God symbolically (Kant, 1790/1952). Beauty and morality can never exist in the same area of thought for Kant; rather, they mirror each other in opposite realms as representing the universal agreement of duty (on the logical side) and aesthetics (on the sensory side) (Tauber, 2006).

Aesthetic education would therefore, in Kant's mind, be extraneous, for it only serves this separated, value-free realm of art (Nuzzo, 2006).

Ironically, Friedrich Schiller (1801/1967) claiming he was upholding Kant's philosophy on ethics, proposed two very separate theses regarding aesthetic education to achieve a moral society. The first being that a moral and a free society could be achieved through aesthetic education psychologically (here he references Kant's Critiques), i.e. that aesthetic education was not an end in itself, but rather "a means for actualizing an external, heteronomous end: realizing the principles of morality" (Tauber, 2006, p.23). The second being that morality is best served through aesthetic education based on the experience "within social and interpersonal relations" (Tauber, 2006, p.23). While they seem to be contradictory thesis, it seems Schiller's point is that the aesthetic moment is critical to authentic morality because it is not rule driven- it is felt. Yet there also remains a dimension of intellectual engagement. They are not divided in Schiller's concept of aesthetics. It is in this duality of emotional intimacy and intellectual objectivity that we discover our personal interests, our personal point of view and our place as a stakeholder in relationship to others (Schiller, 1801/1967). Schiller believed art, as an aesthetic engagement could also help man visualize a better version of himself.

Schiller's aesthetic "within social and interpersonal relations" (Tauber, 2006, p.23) is closely in tune to Noddings (2003; 1992) ethic of relation. Noddings (2003) believes moral decisions are "rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness" (p.2). An ethic of care rejects the notion that there is one universal way to be moral, or that morality is based purely on action (Noddings, 1992). It is



only within the relationship with another, in the perception and reception of them, that we can meet on moral grounds. To learn morality through relationship was also the basis of Pestalozzi's *How Gertude Teaches Her Children*, (1801/1898). Moral education for Pestalozzi did not begin with catechisms or dogmas, but began in the home with the relationship of mother with child and extends, by virtue of education, from teacher to student (Hayward, 1904/1979).

Pestalozzi sought to develop a new way of approaching moral education because he saw faults in teaching through indoctrination. He believed ideas like virtue or duty (I would add caring and compassion) were too abstract for students. The students needed to experience these ideas before they could be understood, applied, and lived (Hayward, 1904). Pestalozzi believed the way to escape moral decline was to center education on *Anschauung*, or 'sense-impressions' (Efland, 1990; Hayward; 1904). Like the word aesthetics, *Anschauung* carries a layered meaning that has been translated several ways. 'Observation', 'intuition', 'sense-expressions', and 'sense perception,' have all be acceptable ways to translate the word, the latter being the most widely accepted version (Hayward, 1904). While *Anschauung* has lead to some discussion on spirituality in education, I am interested in the connection between the concept of *Anschauung* and aesthetics, for the definitions I am using point to both words signifying a relationship between the senses, understanding, and experience, which I feel are vital to the development of caring relations and morality.

To get a better grasp of the depth of *Anschauung*, there are four statements at the beginning of Gertrude (1801/1898) to explain the use of the word throughout

the book. The first statement defines *Anschauung* as knowledge directly attained from an object (perception); the second, a mental image, that would be produced in the presence of the object (qualities of memory); the third, a type of direct consciousness (alludes to intuition); and the fourth is best kept in the full text, “you must grasp it not in thought, but in vivid *Anschauung*” (Pestalozzi, 1801/1898, p. 8-9). All of these seem to encapsulate the essence of a thing, a feeling of the whole, one that unites object and perceiver in relationship. It is through this wholeness of being that we best attend to our world, to explore it, reflect on it, and gain knowledge about it.

Moral goodness is thinking beyond yourself. This takes imagination and an element of opinion. In discussing issues of political nature and representative government, rather than education, Hannah Arendt makes the point that standards of truth or cognition mean that individuals do not need to exercise judgment, develop their imagination, or cultivate an enlarged mentality (d’Entreves, 2006). What happens when man does not develop this ‘enlarged mentality’ and sticks to ‘standards of truth’ conceived on pure reason? Arendt (1961) says the atom is divided:

The simple fact that physicists split the atom without any hesitations... although they realized full well the enormous destructive potentials of their operation, demonstrates that scientist qua scientist does not even care about the survival of the human race on earth (p.276).

For it is out of Kant’s ‘pure reason’, devoid of feeling and imagining the other, that scientists hurled into the task of splitting the atom which Arendt argues has

caused a decrease in man's stature, his ability to think beyond own pride and glory in discovery and pursuit of knowledge. He has ceased to care. However, this type of detached thinking can be overcome by representative thinking. When Arendt (1961) describes representative thinking in political thought, she says:

[T]he more people's standpoints I have present in my mind while I am pondering a given issue, the better I can imagine how I would feel or think if I were in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking and the more valid my final conclusion, my opinion ( p.241).

While she is careful not to call this empathy, the ability to imagine another in order to influence or change one's own perspective is precisely the empathetic skill we want students to have in order to make moral decisions; it is caring for others, even beyond one's own ambition. For Schiller and Heidegger, this skill was best learned through aesthetic education based in the creation and understanding of art.

Therefore, we must approach imagination and the aesthetic experience with an ethic of care. Arendt (1958) believes art does this as a process of reification, turning the abstract into the concrete, but for her, reification is "more than mere transformation; it is transfiguration, a veritable metamorphosis in which it is as though the course of nature that wills that all fire burn to ashes is reverted and even dust can burst into flames" (p.168). Thus we must allow ourselves to be transfigured into something new through our experiences with art. This is the type of change that comes through experience with the aesthetic.

**Researching the Embodied Aesthetic.** This type of research into the aesthetic, the felt relationships of our lives, the embodiment of meaning, is best

exemplified in other a/r/tographic studies (Bickel, 2008; Kind, 2008; Leggo, 2008; Sameshima, 2007; 2008; Springgay, 2008). All of these studies recognize “the relational act is the discovery of the intersections of recognition and acknowledges a creative site of learning which rests between the various roles, actions, and activities lived through and in by a/r/tographers” (Sameshima, 2008a, p.49). I see them as important studies in recognizing the complex relationships that occur throughout teaching, a topic Sameshima breathes life into in her book *Seeing Red* (2007). Based on theory as practice, Sameshima’s book is written in the form of love letters; letters that are the intended “teacher” and “walk[s] the reader through a year of learning in love” is curriculum itself ( 2007, p. xxxvii). *Seeing Red* recognizes the complexity behind love and education, while Sameshima is an “an artist [who] knows that the point of disjuncture is a point of learning” (deCosson, 2004, p.xiv).

When it comes to the experience of art in the classroom, or in the lives of students, studies tend to be lacking the complexity of a work like Sameshima’s (2007). Mostly interviews, these studies just give a summary of student attitudes toward art class, what might be considered good teaching in the arts, or how teachers might be more in touch with popular culture (Gibson, 2008; Hanes & Wiesman, 2008; Young, 1985). These studies might be helpful for new teachers wanting to know what their students are like on the surface, but other studies in ABER I feel delve deeper into the questions of how do we come to know our students and how do we encourage them to develop themselves ethically and with an arts of living? For example, Saresma’s (2003) study of the meaning of art in every day life reflects what Rader (1973) calls the living presence in a work of art through

which we enter into a conversation about life. Saresma uses her data to create poems about her participants use of the arts to help deal with grieving of a close loved one. The poems join herself and the subject, the author and the reader, and even though they/we might never meet, there is a true empathic response to her writings, one that is deep and touching.

Like deconstruction, there is not one way to “do a/r/tography.” Like deconstruction, it happens. However, there are renderings that guide a/r/tographic practices, which I will discuss in chapter three. These studies recognize that learning is complex and multilayered, taking place both in the mind and body. The role of the researcher is to engage and trouble the concepts studied in artistic, embodied ways. The troublesome part of reading and synthesizing other a/r/tographic studies is that the one trying to learn “how to do a/r/tography” may be left confused by all the theoretical shiftiness contained in a/r/tography. It is dense and wordy, confusing and nonlinear. But that is exactly what it intends to do. Like deconstruction, it presents a problem only to rupture it/disrupt it for the purpose of exploring it deeper and opening up a definition.

\* \* \* \*

Will I ever be done with this, with you? As I sit and write and write and write, I am distracted by the thought that everything never was or never will be. It is a lonely place. But I am not lonely, not for you. I do not feel alone. I long for what is true, and that is also not you. It is as if I have to rebuild who I am. Who I am without you. (Journal Entry, January 21, 2011)

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## Developing the Self through Aesthetic Engagement

Element: Developing the self through aesthetic engagement is an ethical practice.

This last element of care centers mostly around my previous definition of an arts of living, or developing habits for living for the purpose of shifting one's perspective and self-formation, is the focus of Foucault's writings on the theory of care of the self (1985/1986; 1982/1997; 1984/1997). Upon focusing on the Greek theme of care of the self, Foucault abandoned his first project of writing the history of sexuality of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and focused on how the Greeks were able to transform their lives as a work of art. Yet like his earlier projects on governmentality, care of the self explores how individuals are governed, how they control, restrict, and regulate their bodies, minds, and relationships to others (St.Pierre, 2004). Care of the self however is not about how outside forces control and form the self, but rather how one governs oneself and develops a "permanent critique and an understanding of relation between systems of truth and modalities of power" (Ambrosio, 2008, p. 256).

Ambrosio (2008) comments that we misunderstand Foucault because we immediately take concepts like madness and sexuality as natural facts, *subjects* of inquiry rather than the *object* of inquiry. In the care of the self, the object of inquiry is the relation of oneself to oneself, which Foucault could not account for in "power relations or relations between forms of knowledge" (St.Pierre, 2004, pp.336-7). In other words, Foucault was interested in how we decide who we are, how we make the choices we do, and how we act upon our own values and ethics. It is an exercise

in freedom (St. Pierre, 2004). While social interactions, moral codes, and social institutions like government, school, and family will always influence formation of the self, care of the self looks at how we develop ourselves in relation to ourselves, to our perfect mode of living, to an art. This subject of self is, for Foucault, nominal (Ambrosio, 2008). It will always be changing, working on itself. It is always an action, not an end result.

‘Cultivating the self’ was for the purpose of perfecting the soul (Foucault, 1985/1986). Yet how we cultivate ourselves is not to adhere to rules of government or religion, the

‘[C]ultivation of the self’ can be briefly characterized by the fact that in this case the art of existence- the *techne tou biou* in its different forms- is dominated by the principle that says one must “take care of oneself.” It is this principle of the care of the self that establishes its necessity, presides over the development, and organizes its practice (Foucault, 1985/1986, p.43).

The focus of taking care of oneself came prior to the Greek notion of *know thyself*, which in Western philosophy has, since Plato, preceded *take care of thyself* (St. Pierre, 2004). For the Greeks, however, care of the self was essential first before knowing the self, as care of the self was more about learning how to live, transforming oneself (Foucault, 1985/1986). Only if you practiced care of the self would you then ‘know thyself.’

Before I delve into the practices around care of the self, I must first pause to repeat the purpose of cultivating oneself. Foucault (1986) states, “the common goal of these practices of the self...can be characterized by the entirely general principle

of conversion to self—of *epistrophe eis heauton*. It is to be understood first of all as a change of activity...[it] implies a shift of one's attention" (p.64-5). It seems that the shift in one's attention here is not entirely inward, it is not a selfish act, which Foucault clarifies later. Care of the self immediately exists in relationship to others, one who cares for himself would "be able to conduct himself properly in relation to others and for others" (Foucault, 1997c, p. 287). Likewise, one who took proper care of himself would not become a tyrant or abuse his power because such a person has become "a slave of his own desires" (Foucault, 1997c, p. 288). It is the 'shift in one's attention' that opens up a space for transformation, for I interpret Foucault's writing here to be not just a shift from analyzing other to analyzing self, but a shift in how one looks at the self as something to develop. It is very much like how an artist shifts attention in producing a work of art.

Most artists begin their careers in formal art schools, creating work to satisfy stylistic criteria of professors, to 'master' the media in which they work. When they prove their expertise of the material, then they are invited to explore the media in alternative ways. They are given permission to 'shift their attention' to the broader implications, values, and meanings of their work. Yet along the way, the media might change the artist. Such an example can be found in the work of Andy Goldsworthy, who works in collaboration with nature to create ephemeral sculptures. Some of his work exemplifies his artistry directly on the material, such as building arches from rock or digging trenches in sand. Yet some of Goldsworthy's work is the result of nature's impression on him, such as the dry outline of his body having let rain fall around him (see Goldsworthy, 1990; Goldsworthy, 2000). Goldsworthy must also



pay close attention to the changing elements around him: the wind, the cold, the direction of a whispering brook, the sodden earth beneath his feet. These things affect decisions he will make about his structures but they also effect how the structures exist within the environment. The partnership between man and his artwork, here between man and nature, is intense. It is only when Goldsworthy 'listens' to nature—experiences the material—does it transform his thinking and feeling and *being with* nature will the outcome be pleasing to him.

This is, I think, what Foucault addresses in his review of care of the self. It is a collaboration with self, to self, that results in a perfection of the soul, as one "perfects" a work of art. Yet like Goldsworthy's sculptures, this self is ephemeral, always changing and being worked on again and again. It is always an incomplete project. The cultivation of the self is not just a mental exercise in reflection, like critical thinking, it is a whole body exercise, a practice, a labor. Foucault reminds us that, "very term *epimeleia* does not merely designate an attitude of awareness or a form of attention that one would focus on oneself; it designates a regulated occupation, a work with its methods and objectives" (Foucault, 1997, p. 95). Some of the practices of care of the self included caring for the body, meditation, talks with a confidant or mentor where one would engage in "correspondence in which one reveals the state of one's soul, solicits advice, gives advice to anyone who needs it" (Foucault, 1985/1986, p. 51). The practices are also meant to be a social experience in that they were shared with others, developed and taught through relationships: "the care of the self- or the attention one devotes to the care that

others should take of themselves- appears then as an intensification of social relations” (Foucault, 1985/1986, p. 53).

Yet what does it mean to ‘perfect oneself’ as the ancient Greeks sought through practices of care of the self? For Foucault, it was constituting the self as an ethical subject. Ethics, from the Greek ethos, is a mode of being for the subject, where the ethos that was admirable and attainable would be one of beauty, honor, and goodness (Foucault, 1983/1997). Foucault’s ethical self is not a search for a hidden self, but of a transformation, a becoming (Flynn, 2005). The aim of ethics, in care of the self, is self-invention that requires a freedom of becoming, “Freedom is the ontological condition of ethics. But ethics is the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection” (Foucault, 1984/1997, p. 284). Ambrosio (2008) gives a nice summary of this when he states that “freedom is both the precondition and goal of ethical work, the object and end of ethical behavior” (p. 258). Also, he tells us:

[w]e cannot transform ourselves through the simple act of knowing, through critical reason or reflection alone, but only by risking who we are, by voluntarily seeking out and testing ourselves in situations that illuminate the contours of our subjectivity, that destabilize our certainties (Ambrosio, 2008, p. 255).

Likewise, St.Pierre (2004) notes that this is “ontological and not psychological, ethics involves activities and social practice more than contemplation” (p.340).

Foucault’s ethics is not based on a moral code, but rather the conditions by which one sets up one’s own mode of living. In order to form oneself into the ethical

subject of one's actions, one would attend to the four parts of care of the self: the ethical substance, the mode of subjection, the self forming activity, and the telos (Foucault, 1985, p.26-27) . The ethical substance is the "way in which the individual has to constitute this or that part of himself as the prime material of for his moral conduct" (Foucault, 1985, p. 26) or more simply, the "feelings, desires, or behaviors that are the locus of moral concern and the object of personal transformation" (Ambrosio, 2008, p. 257). The mode of subjection is the "way in which individual establishes his relation to the rule and recognizes himself as obliged to put it into practice" or "the way in which people are invited or incited to recognize their moral obligations" (Foucault, 1985, p. 27). The self-forming activity "one performs on oneself, not only to bring one's conduct into compliance with a given rule, but to attempt to transform oneself into an ethical subject of one's behavior" (Foucault, 1985, p.27). In performing these activities, we do not invent new technologies, but base our aesthetic practice on models that are developed by our culture or social group (Ambrosio, 2008). Finally, the telos is the "the kind of being to which we aspire when we behave in a moral way" (Foucault, 1985, p.27).

Foucault does not offer a solution or prescription for how to change or create the self, nor does he think care of the self can be uplifted from Greek text and inserted into daily life (Foucault, 1997). However, his writings are an attempt to "dismantle the apparatus by which the modern disciplines have constituted the individuals that we are" (Flynn, 2005, p.620). This is exactly the task for many postmodern artists who believe art can be more than "reified objects," rather art can be "concrete social tasks that need doing" leading to art that takes part in the "moral

shaping of culture itself” (Gablik, 1991, p.142). Postmodern artists recognize that facts are interpretation, truth is not absolute, and all knowledge is mediate by culture and language (Barrett, 1997). It is the task of the postmodern artist (and in relation, poststructural research and deconstruction is it is seen here) to give a persistent critique of what’s out there, to constantly challenge notions of truth, beauty, and self (St. Pierre, 2000).

Artists such as Mierle Laderman Ukeles embrace transformation of the self and turn it into a mentoring act, demonstrating how artwork can effect or disturb the social structure in which we live. One of her first performance pieces was a practice in Maintenance Art, where she performed the tasks needed to run a household, traditionally labeled in our society as “housewife” work (Morgan, 1982/2009, ¶ 1). Morgan (1982/2009) summarizes:

[b]y accepting the reality of her situation as a necessary role in maintaining the household, she discovered the reality of maintenance as a means to the survival of personal freedom, art and all other social institutions...Her mode of "doing" art became a series of actions that acknowledged the basic human operations that supported various institutions and perpetuated the idea of culture (¶ 3).

Ukeles took her concept of maintenance art into the public arena with the performance piece called Touch Sanitation, where she shook hands of all the sanitation workers in New York City, listening to their stories, learning about their lives (Gablik, 1991; Morgan 1982/2009).

These works of art sought to bring to the public sphere the “human side of the operation” of trash removal, notably how this job is for those who dispose of trash (us) not those whose job it is to remove that trash (Morgan, 1982/2009, ¶ 5).

This work of art also affected Ukeles physically as:

[T]he proposition of shaking hands with 8,500 workers throughout each of the five boroughs was one thing as an idea, and something else as an actual experience...Her performance also consisted of beating fatigue and depression, fighting off illness, nausea, discomfort, toxic odors and body aches. At one point, bronchitis landed her in bed for two weeks (¶ 10).

This piece sought not only social transformations of stereotypes, but “given the perspective of a simple action, Ukeles has performed a subtle transformation upon the psychology of doing an otherwise humdrum routine” (Morgan, 1982/2009, ¶ 8). Likewise, Ukeles was transformed in the action, not only physically, but in her own development of the self.

Artists like Ukeles present art educators with a unique challenge. The principles and ideas that guide performance art are largely abstract while the form and media are based on very physical interactions, in this case hand-shaking and housework. Also art educators would be wise to take into account how these pieces are not merely performance pieces to make a social statement, but the location and interaction with audience completely shifts the precepts of where art can be found and presented. They are presentations of the care of the self, of living transformation, where the outcome of the piece is not contained within an object of art, but rather in the people and the action. Gablik (1995) challenges us that

accepting art that is based on “aspects of integration and relationship rather than on art objects calls for a radical rearrangement in our expectations of what an artist does” (p.83).

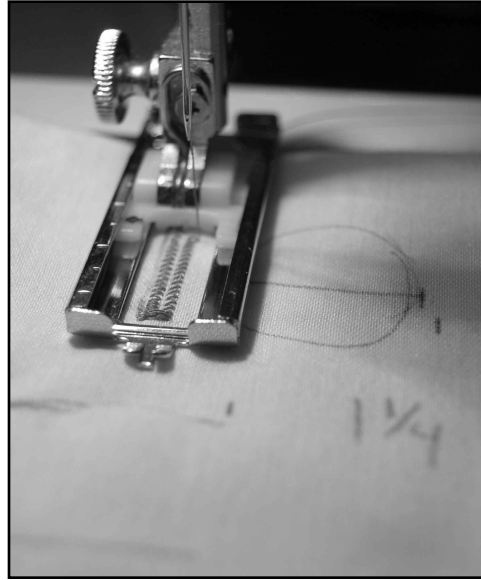


IMAGE 2.2: *Learning a Buttonhole*, 2010, photographic journal.

However, I don't value the totality of the image on these abstract or aesthetic points. For me, it...ah...the total image that has to do with, with ah...me... and...and life. It can't be [devoid] because either idea or composition or form, I...I don't believe art can be based on that.

–Eva Hesse, excerpt from *Four Artists*, (found on the site for *The Estate of Eva Hesse*)

I could listen to this clip over and over. Intoxicating and calming, she moves over her work of art with delicate precision as her words echo through space and time to my studio bedroom, where I sit, pondering all things new. I don't think I ever would have found her work so inviting if I hadn't had to explore the remains of my own loss. For really, as much as critics want to speak of the gender issues or allusions to sexuality in her work, to me, it is all about making something with the empty spaces. Creating from nothing. (Journal entry, March 24, 2011).

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**Writing the Self.** Foucault looks back to the Greek culture and the practices concerning care of the self, “not to return to some archaic mode of social order, but rather, to make visible a bygone way of approaching the self and others which might suggest possibilities for the present” (Rabinow, 1997, xxvii). Care of the self is not intended to replace one's way of living, but again, it is that ‘shift of perspective’ that allows one to approach formation of the self differently. There are two aspects of art curriculum in which the theory of care of the self might be useful: a focus on writing the self and exploring *new modes of being together*.

The idea of writing the self is a direct practice of care of the self, taken from Greek antiquity which served the purpose “to collect and reassemble what one hears or reads for the purpose of shaping the self,” type of “memory aides” and “guides for conduct” (Foucault, as cited by Ambrosio, 2008, p. 264). In the form of journals or letters to mentors, these were not narratives or accounts of introspection, but were exercises in shaping the self. Ambrosio (2008) looks at how such reflexive writing for teachers today can be an “ascetic practice in the constitution of moral agency” (Ambrosio, 2008, p. 252). As an art educator, I believe that through writing and/or the creation of reflexive works of art can the constitution of moral agency be explored. The practice of creation in the arts is very much a way to collect and assemble what one hears, sees, feels, and knows for the purpose of shaping the self. The arts do this in the very nature of what they are: a process of creation. Again, the focus must be on shaping the self, not just the study of art. It does not mean the whole of art curricula needs to be re-written, but using care of the self in writing curricula means that the focus is always on the ethical formation of the student.

Rabinow (1997) comments that Foucault’s ethics through care of the self is not about making everyone the same, as under a moral code, but seeks to create “new modes of being together” (p. xxxvii). The idea that engaging in an art critique can open up a space for new modes of being together is not something new in art education, but the shift in attention—from discovering the meaning of the art to engaging in the formation of the self—is something new.



For example, in art criticism, a student begins to emerge on one side of the “polarization of style” (Feldman, 1970, p.109) in art (i.e. classic/Romantic; visual/haptic; perceptual/conceptual). Students then begin to develop their own style of artistic expression, to which all other opposing styles are “wrong”. A student will “exhibit [his] stylistic affinity in every dimension of [his] personality” (Feldman, 1970, p. 109). Feldman (1970) says we are observing children’s ethical development in their aesthetic behavior. When they make choices about their own art making or judgments about works of art, they are making ethical choices about what they deem ‘good’ or ‘bad,’ ‘right’ or ‘wrong.’ I’ve observed this in my students as they begin to study works of art. If they accept the style of realism as “good” art because of the way it imitates nature realistically, they are less likely to accept abstract art as also “good” art. They enter discussion about abstract art skeptically and often with an attitude of indifference.

It is then the role of the art teacher to help children learn how to accept others whose views and ethics are different even opposing from their own. This can begin with learning how to accept works of art they do not understand. Yet the goal should not just be an appreciation for that which is different, but an understanding of what can be learned from viewing things from a different perspective. In the example of a child who cannot accept abstract art as art of value, I would make it my goal as an art teacher to help the student understand how abstract things can help us *question and trouble that which we accept to be true*. This is a practice of care of the self.

Other poststructural and deconstructive studies outside of a/r/tography helped frame this research and relate to this notion of shifting perspectives/developing the self. Some used poststructural theory as an analytical tool (Sandretto, 2009) or poststructural critique to re/form a problem (Somerville, 2004). Both of these studies troubled the notion of experience (Scott, 1992) and found poststructural theory helpful in “explor[ing] the simultaneous connection and separation of experiencing the body in place and observing itself in/through writing (Somerville, 2004, p.52).

I found exemplars in my research methodology of photographic journaling in a/r/tography as well as Johnson’s teacher reflection narratives (2001) and in an interesting study on the concept of space and drawing in Knight’s (2009) study of children’s drawings. In this study, Knight uses poststructural theories to Deleuze and Guattari, in dreaming and becoming, along with Foucault’s concept of heterotopic space to analyze the drawings of young children (2009). A heterotopic space is “a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is portioned, as still more illusory” (Foucault, 1986, p.27). Knight (2009) refers to young students begin able to work in a state of chaos and explore material completely with their mind and body, the children “became as [they] drew” (p.14). The study illuminated ways in which adults working with children need to join children in drawing, not as teachers of drawing, but as partners to encounter the imaginative space, to enter into an “unknowable, unpredictable event” (p.16).

These three elements: caring as a learning objective, aesthetics as the study and embodiment of felt relationships, and developing the self as an ethical practice have been the structures with which I write, but also those I hope to deconstruct through this work of a/r/tography. As I stated in my introduction, this work attempts to be a record of praxis, “the self creative activity through which we make the world” (Lather, 1991, p.11) and transverse the liminal space of pedagogy and curriculum (Sameshima, 2008a). While keeping within the basic framework for a dissertation, I am also trying to disrupt the text with insights into my own process and embodiment of the research. Research doesn’t happen separate from life, and a/r/tography recognizes the intricate nature of life, experience, research, pedagogy curriculum, and developing the self.

\* \* \* \*



IMAGE 2.3: *Apron*, 2010, fabric. 29" x 26".

This [dress] is a big jump from the bibs and the apron. In considering the function of these works of art, I began the bibs out of necessity- the daycare needed bibs and I needed to try a new media to relate to my students and their approach to

art. The apron came out of another functionality, I enjoyed the apron I had for teaching art class, but needed a new, longer one. I also wanted my students to see that one art form can influence another [we had been doing product design]. My apron was a part of their curriculum, but creating it was a part of my research with them. The dress is something totally different. But it is ultimately where I want my students to go with their art making- it should be personal, relational- it should come from a need and desire to create. Yet it petrifies me to think of creating something personal and reflective in this material I just learned how to use. Will it really speak? Will it say what I can't? I can see how self-portraits scare my students- it is a lot to ask of someone- to reveal themselves. Reveal their secrets. (Journal Entry, January, 7, 2011).

\* \* \* \*

Prayer of St. Gertrude

Eternal Father, I offer Thee

the Most Precious Blood of Thy Divine Son, Jesus,

in union with the masses said throughout the world today,

for all the holy souls in purgatory.

for sinners everywhere,

for sinners in the universal church,

those in my own home

and within my family.

Amen.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PRACTICING A/R/TOGRAPHY

#### Fabric/Laying Out Research

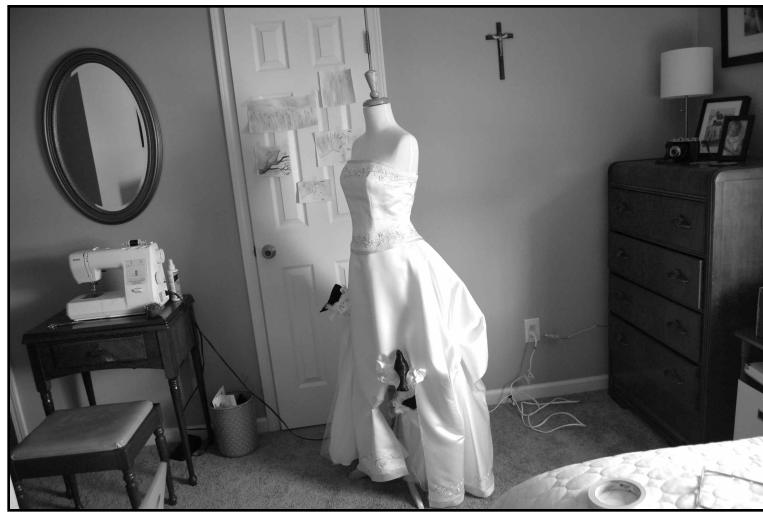


IMAGE 3.1: *Bedroom Studio, 2011*, photographic journal

There is something peaceful and exciting about opening up/laying out a new piece of fabric. Pristine, yet frayed from the cut off the bolt. My mind begins to envision what this fabric will become, to lay out the steps in my head. Once I begin cutting, my mind opens up to other possibilities, other fabrics that match, other patterns that will work; the cutting is the first step in the physical creation. Then there is the task of making- pinning, stitching, sewing, pinning again, which is not always peaceful. (Journal entry, September 25, 2010).

\* \* \* \*

The first cut was the hardest.

I sat there, scissors in hand

staring up at my beautiful dress.

Each bead has its place, tiny and sparkling

delicate-

silvery stitches embroider each flower with a glimmer-

and I am going to cut it.

Destroy it.

Impale this thing of beauty.

*Is your place in heaven worth giving up these kisses?*

*This is cooling*

*faster than I can.*<sup>9</sup>

But you already ruined my thing of beauty,

so what am I to do

but make the most of it.

So I cut it

and once I did, I remembered how

cutting is the first step.

Suddenly, my dress was no longer my dress

it was my work

and it had to be done.

(Journal Entry, February 21, 2011)

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<sup>9</sup> (Amos, 1999)

\* \* \* \*

**Arts-Based Educational Research.** The work of arts-based educational research (ABER) recognizes that there are ways of knowing and being known in the world that cannot be expressed by language alone (Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008; Eisner, 2008; Springgay, et al., 2005; Rolling, 2010). Work situated in an arts-based research paradigm are reviewed “out of the recognition that we negotiate bodies of knowledge in a complex world where human beings learn and acquire life practices enacted along a spectrum of both scientific and artistic ways of comprehending the human experience and doing productive cultural work” (Rolling, 2010, p.102). A/r/tography focuses on the process of creativity to inquire into an educational phenomenon through artistic and aesthetic means (Springgay, et al., 2005, Irwin & Springgay, 2008). My process began with using a combination of case study, narrative inquiry, and educational criticism, which heavily influenced my approach to engaging in a/r/tographic practices.

In order to explain my methods (what did I actually *do*?), I need to first explain my background as a researcher/teacher. Then I will review the renderings of a/r/tography and how I came to live in the spaces of artist/researcher/teacher. Renderings are not methods, but “theoretical spaces through which to explore artistic ways of knowing and being” (Springgay, et al., 2005, p.899). At first, I wasn’t sure what this meant or how to go about exploring a theoretical space without a method. So as I go through the six renderings-*contiguity, living inquiry, metaphor and metonymy, openings, reverberations*, and *excess*- (Springgay, et al, 2005) I will also talk about how I entered into/explored this rendering during the study. It

may not be linear, as living inquiry is fluid and relational and research in a/r/tography should open up spaces to re/write and re/view concepts and questions. Like pins holding fabric, they are temporary places of order from which to begin. After reviewing the renderings, I summarize my study in the following sections as concisely as I can while still working within the renderings of a/r/tography. I hope it gives a clear picture of what I did as well as *how it happened* and *why it is valid*.<sup>10</sup>

**Early Studies.** When I first began my research as a masters' student, I was comfortable with combining two methodologies: teacher research, in the form of a case study (Carson & Sumara, 1997; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Sumara, 1998), and narrative inquiry (Barone, 2001; Hankins, 2003). Case study methodology allowed me to use many tools from classroom teaching as ways to record and analyze data, such as personal journals, assessments, student reflections, photographs of students, and student artwork (Hays, 2004), while narrative inquiry opened up a space for more reflexive, creative representation. Narrative inquiry filled the space between what happened and what it means (Didion, 1961 as cited by Kramp, 2004). I was drawn to narrative inquiry based on Barone's (2001) narrative storytelling and Hankins' (2003) reflective journaling when I researched ways art

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<sup>10</sup> Eisner (2008) warns us that as a result of working imaginatively in ABER may result in creating works that do not communicate, works that do not exhibit "referential clarity" (p. 19). This seems at odds with outcome of a/r/tography that works to intentionally unsettle perception (Irwin & Springgay, 2008). This brings up questions of clarity and communication. This research, in residing within a poststructural framework, does not work toward the question of "what it means" (an issue of clarity), but rather "how it works" (an issue of communication). I am not trying to set up a binary here, but to emphasize a difference in theoretical questioning. A/r/tography is a methodology to disrupt; educational criticism is a methodology to illuminate. I am combining these with the hope that this work will do both at once. I hope it provides an inviting way for the reader to trouble the nature of caring, while still communicating its relevance in education.

We also need to consider how we work between the tension of focusing on the particular conditions within educational research and how it might relate to generalizations. Eisner discusses this and offers the argument that "the general resides in the particular and that making general observations from particular circumstances is precisely what we do in life" (p. 20).



curriculum might encourage empathy in the classroom (Riddett-Moore, 2009). It allowed me to re-present the data as a story, a sort of virtual reality. I wrote an art lesson that embraced an ethic of care as a central learning outcome (Riddett-Moore, 2009) and used a hybrid form of ABER to study my curriculum and pedagogy.

Unlike my masters thesis, where I remained faithful to my own observations, journals, and student writing (i.e. nothing altered, as the mark of “good” qualitative research), the students in my empathy study (Riddett-Moore, 2009) were fabrications<sup>11</sup>, threaded and woven from students in my classroom, altered to retain anonymity. Like Hankins’ (2003) narratives about her students and practice, I used the data and wrote a narrative as a “mode of inquiry” to “answer questions about the relations of thought to action” (p. 12). In what Sullivan (2006) would classify as “interpretive acts in art practice” (p. 31), I designed the story to explore the space between visual arts and literacy, between fiction and reality, and between teaching and research in order to explore how we teach with an ethic of care and encourage empathy in the classroom (Riddett-Moore, 2009).

At this point in my research, I was also a confident educational critic. Like narrative inquiry, educational criticism is both a product and the process of

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<sup>11</sup> Fabrication in this sense does not mean complete fiction, but rather, developing a type of refined character, as one trims away excess in fabric to refine a shape. In this research study on developing an arts of living, I pull from both types of writing: narrative inquiry and educational criticism, as well as incorporate the a/r/tographic element of writing (with artwork and text) to “intentionally unsettle perception” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p.113). The students, their work and reflections presented in Chapter Four and Five are altered slightly to retain anonymity, are composite characters, and often created from types of memory data (St. Pierre, 1997). In a sense, they are fabrications, yet not fabrications in the sense that they are completely fictional and imagined. They are not fantasy. They are more likened to the work of fiction Geertz (1973) refers to when he writes that “anthropological writings are themselves interpretations, and second and third order ones to boot. (By definition, only a ‘native’ makes first order ones: it’s his culture). They are, thus, fictions; fictions, in the sense that they are ‘something made,’ ‘something fashioned’...” (p.15).

researching (Eisner, 1991) and it is already steeped in art education (see Eisner, 1991; Barone, 2001a). Unlike case studies that can be in any number of settings, educational criticism is rooted in classroom experience and privileges teacher knowledge. Educational criticism “calls on the researcher to function as a connoisseur to see deeply into a situation and to reveal details that the casual observer would miss” (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008, p.6). Yet this role of connoisseur is primarily one of the detached observer (Bresler, 2006), mirroring the process of modernist art criticism. Despite this one fault, educational criticism combined with narrative storytelling (see Barone, 2001) is able to utilize the artistic concepts of imagined worlds and alternative realities in order to pull us into a heightened awareness that can cause us to question our values. These forms allow researchers to express meaning without directly stating it, encouraging the audience to share in the construction of knowledge (Barone, 2001).

Yet my work on empathy through aesthetic engagement can be seen as more arts-informed research, where the study was rooted in more qualitative research methods (case study, narrative inquiry, and educational criticism), and was inspired by works of art or methods of art making (Rolling, 2010). It was missing the “art for scholarship’s sake” (Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008, p.1). I have always been intrigued at how art educators negotiate their own artistic careers while teaching—we seem to earnestly divide them. We teach art making, yet often do not credit the art we make for/with our students as art that is of value. Somehow, we must justify or prove ourselves as artists outside the classroom, or our art is diminished and we stop creating. The key element in our careers is lost.

So when I came across the term a/r/tography in an arts and literacy class, the concept intrigued me. My first attempt at a/r/tographic research came when I took an arts-based research methodology class and I wanted to explore the felt experience of pregnancy in the academic setting, as I was pregnant for the first time while being a scholar at a university campus. I interviewed two women, one professor and one undergraduate student who had both been pregnant on a college campus. I wanted to represent these women's narratives in a visual and written form, believing that using diverse forms of writing and representing data "evoke textually the often disjunctive and paradoxical nature of the human experience" (Dunlop, 1998, p.103). I wanted to create portraits of these women and myself, showing the physicality of the pregnant body overlaid with the textuality of our academic lives, exploring the concept that women in academic settings learn to hide the text of their bodies (Dunlop, 1998). I also felt that using an artistic representation would help evoke meaning and the felt experience of the participants (Richardson, 2002).

When I began working on my own portrait as a part of the study I quickly discovered that the process of creating a portrait was a process of invention, rather than interpretation (Irwin & Springgay, 2008). Working as a visual artist/researcher, I support the notion that portraits can capture the probing and layering essence of qualitative research, rather than represent a literal interpretation of the data (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). I began to see the portrait as a method of qualitative research that "blurs the boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism in an effort to capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human

experience” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. xv). I was engaged in the methodology of a/r/tography (Springgay et al., 2005; Irwin & Springgay, 2008), utilizing my visual exploration of data as a way of opening and reverberating the text of the interviews. The final product, the portrait, rather than be a representation of the words of the women, the text of the research, or my own physical body, became a way for me to explore and question, put into play, the theories and discourses of mind/body, mother/scholar, art/research, narrative/image, and exposure/privacy. The portrait became a space of living inquiry. This was a methodology that would allow me to study caring in a dynamic, intimate, personal, social, and reflective way.

### **Renderings of A/r/tography**

A/r/tography is research that is “attentive to the sensual, tactile, and unsaid aspects of artist/researcher/teacher lives” (Springgay, et al., 2005, p.899).



IMAGE 3.2: *Animal Print Bib*, 2010, fabric. 9½ “ x 12” x 1/8”

\* \* \* \*

You have to be patient to sew...now I know how my grandmother did it and raised 5 kids. It makes you patient. Just the steps- planning the pieces, organizing your threads and bobbins, pinning patterns, cutting, pinning again, thinking about what needs to be inside out or backwards to end up the right way. The whole thing is maddening sometimes. But as I work, there feeling of comfort, maybe it is in the repetition, where you just run the fabric through the machine like it is a part of you. You aren't even thinking, just sewing. And suddenly I am connected to my grandmother and I remember hearing the hum of the sewing machine from her room in the summer. I would always be drawn to that sound, wondering what she was making. And I would come back to her room and sit on the bed, breathing in the smells of the fabric and her laundry detergent. And she would talk to me with pins in her mouth, never needing to spit them out (Journal Entry, October 10, 2010).

\* \* \* \*



IMAGE 3.3: *My Son with Wedding Dress, Pre-Cut*, 2011, photographic journal

Here is a review of the six renderings of a/r/ography-contiguity, living inquiry, metaphor and metonymy, openings, reverberations, and excess-and how they entered into/moved throughout this study.

**Contiguity.** Contiguity is the coming together of art and graphy, “a doubling of visual and textual wherein the two compliment, extend, refute, and/or subvert one another” (Springgay, et al., 2005, p.900). It is also about recognizing the roles of the artists/researcher/teacher as well as the spaces in between these identities. For me, this meant a return and reinvention of myself as artist. I feel as art educators we often lose the sense of being artists when we commit to a K-12 lifestyle and our time becomes filled with lesson plans, exemplars, meetings, and grading. We forget art is a vital way to stay in touch with our students and ourselves. For me, I had to find value in the art of daily life; I had to reinvent who an artist is in my world.

I was forced to explore the space in between artist and teacher. If this art was valueless for me, what was that showing my students? Was I modeling an arts of living, or just having them reflect on their lives then create artwork? It was a key moment in my research design, as I began the study with this format: we would both create work around a theme in art, with the same criteria, and our artwork would become a dialogue on this theme. We would relate to each other through our artwork and this would be my entrée into discussion how to create their arts of living. But this approach was not authentic or curious or passionate. It was forced. I will discuss more of this failure of methods in chapter four, but I wanted to stress here how the renderings of a/r/tography affected and altered what I did and

ultimately how I researched. I didn't understand the concept of an in between until I was forced there by my failed artwork and curriculum.



IMAGE 3.4: *Back View of Dress, Pre-Cut*, 2011, photographic journal

\* \* \* \*

This day I had to create. There is no other way to work through the pain, the dwelling on thoughts, then to just keep my hands busy (Journal Entry, February 14, 2010).

\* \* \* \*

**Living Inquiry.** Living inquiry is described as the “embodied encounter constituted through visual and textual understandings and experiences rather than mere visual and textural representations (Springgay, et al., 2005, p.902). It is also the “continual process of not knowing” (Springgay, et al., 2005, p.902). Throughout this writing, I hope to convey how I entered into the living inquiry of care and re/create it by the constant inter/weaving of image, writing, and reflections. There is also an element of curiosity and desire in the living inquiry. When I tried to create artwork

specifically about an arts of living, rather than through an arts of living, there was not a sense of need, or passion, or even that personal connection that makes artwork feel relevant and relational. Many artists speak of an inner need to create, as if their very being called out for the breathe of art, of life. This is ultimately when we create ourselves, when we have to out of desire. It might begin out of a desire for perfection, for purpose, for expression, for simply the physicality of creation; but we create to find.



IMAGE 3.5: *Birds in Process*, 2010, photographic journal

**Metaphor and Metonymy.** Metonymy is the “word-to-word relationship which emphasizes a displacement in the subject/object relation” (Springgay, et al., 2005, p.904). Using the slash mark is not meant to be one term or the other, but both or neither, creating a tension between the terms. I use this rendering here to outline my methodology sections, using a fabric term slashed with a theoretical term. It is not meant to divide the words, but to create the space in which I worked, where I constantly traversed the boundaries between art and theory, physical and theoretical, process and product. It truly was a play of in between. The use of



metaphor is meant to imply that even though a signifier may take place of another, they are not equal. The doubling of word to word, or word to image, or image to image, is meant to increase a consideration of each other, doubling and un-doubling. For me, it was also a process of loss and realization of meaning at the same time. Again, throughout this writing, down to the format and placement of images, I was constantly thinking of this rendering and how to create those tensions that existed for me in the research.

**Openings.** Openings in a/r/tography are probably the most complex renderings, the most elusive, yet the easiest to picture through metaphor. I was drawn to this rendering immediately as is “requires attentiveness to what is seen and known and to what lies beneath the surface” (Springgay, et al., 2005, p. 905). Openings relate to my concept of lingering, of knowing that is “situated within the midst and on the edges” (Springgay, et al., 2005, p.905). Descriptions of this rendering use fabric as a metaphor and discuss the importance of the holes, ruptures, and tears as not being holes through which we might see clearly, but rather, spaces that exist as invitations to possibility and the “interplay of elements” (Springgay, et al., 2005, p.906). I feel this was an ultimate goal of my research; to open up the definition and experience of care in the art classroom.



IMAGE 3.6: *Sketch of Bird*, 2010, pencil & watercolor. 6"x 6"

**Reverberations.** Reverberations are the “attention to movement” that “shift other meanings” or “excite possible slippages of meaning” (Springgay, et al., 2005, p. 906-7). This rendering I felt presented itself best though the work with my students. When the attempt at creating artwork with my students failed to open up a space for relationship, I considered where I was in my research with attempting to open up definitions of words. Why not have the students do the same thing and see where it leads? We began to explore how words have multiple meanings: personal, social, cultural, stereotypical, emotional meanings and create artwork based on the felt response to words. As we worked this lesson, which is described later in chapter four, I began to notice what I called moments of disruption.

My first encounter with disruption with the students happened one day as I sat watching the latest small group discussions. A student who I had known the past three years said something about the project that caught my attention. “It doesn’t matter, really....that things are perfect. With this [lesson], it was important to make

your lines like, erased...with a shadow...interesting. *Perfection didn't matter.* You aren't supposed to be perfect and that is O.K." The statement "perfection didn't matter," was a huge statement for this young lady. She was currently being treated for anxiety issues and feels the pressure daily to achieve top grades. Being at a private school, it is not unusual to have students who dwell on being the best, work hard to make straight 'A's, or live with the philosophy that perfection is to be sought in all areas. I realized at this student's words that she had begun to deconstruct perfection; her definition of perfection had been disrupted.

What a/r/tography considers a reverberation, I started to call disruptions in my journaling. A disruption was a moment, either through material or through language, where a student would enter into a space that was open to transition and reinvention. I do not call it deconstruction, although the terms could be slashed: disruption/deconstruction. As I discussed earlier in chapter two, deconstruction is not a method (Derrida, 1988), it takes place. While students were not deconstructing the words in a poststructural sense, they were disrupting their notions of what was "real" and "true" in a way that might invite them to continue to question, challenge, or linger.

**Excess.** Excess is the rendering that deals with the "space where knowledge is negotiated as intimate and sensuous" (Springgay, et al., 2005, p.907). "Excess may deal with the monstrous, the wasteful, the left over, the unseen, as well as the magnificent and the sublime" (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. 119). I first related this rendering more with the art making process, as I dealt with the excess of fabric in the re/construction of the dress. But as I worked, I began to see how excess is a

deeper part of research, perhaps the most complex to arrange, discard, or re/create. Excess provides “opportunities for complexifying the simple and simplifying the complex” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. 119). I had an excess of data, (which I will discuss next), I had an excess of emotional baggage, an excess of grief, an excess of loss, and an excessive desire to relate it all back to my study. Excessive pressure to meet deadlines, to provide for my sons, to re/create my own sense of stability; these were all essential excesses in the study, excesses that shaped and reformed how I looked at research, data, and the problem.

Excess is also about removing the unnecessary, or cutting out the rough edges in order to present the neat and orderly. Excess is usually hidden, covered up, or removed, yet there are always traces of where it existed. In writing this work, excess journal entries, images, student stories were all parts of an excess of the story. Yet the fact that a/r/tography recognizes the placement (or removing) of excess speaks to another aspect of deconstruction—the place for the unknown to be known. Excess parts of this story might find resurrection in other writing.



IMAGE 3.7: *Pinned Bird*, 2011, photographic journal (left)

IMAGE 3.8: *Flying Bird, Beginning of Nest Detail*, 2011, photographic journal  
(right)

It was hard at first to research using renderings. My first research design was very tightly aligned with teacher research practices: taking field notes in the classroom, keeping a journal, taking photographs of student work, having students write reflections. I was constantly collecting data I thought I would need. I also began this study thinking that the best way to study an arts of living in the classroom was to write curriculum specifically about an arts of living, turning habits into inspiration for artwork and working with my students to create that artwork. It proved to be superficial and summative, not an opening or reverberation at all. In this next section, I will describe the way I began fully using the renderings as data, analysis, and validity and how the artwork affected my methods and my form of writing.

## Bibs/Data

\* \* \* \*

How can I get to know them, truly? Of all the classes they take, mine is probably the most interactive and dynamic, but do I really know them? Am I writing curriculum for me, or them? (Journal entry, September 24, 2010).

\* \* \* \*

The students for this study were my middle school intro and advanced drawing and painting students (a mix of 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders, aged 11-14yrs old). I have known most of them for the past three years, being their only art teacher at a private, Catholic school in a suburban area. I teach these classes two times a week for one hour long sessions, but I also interact with these students at morning assembly, the lunchroom, and hallways. I felt like I knew them, and knew them well. But as I probed into the research, wanting to know how they developed their own arts of living, what kinds of experiences lead to a deeper aesthetic engagement with objects, people, and environment, and how can the arts encourage empathy and caring in the classroom, I felt at a loss. These kids struggled with simple drawing exercises, how was I ever going to explore an arts of living when they resisited<sup>12</sup> art making?!

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<sup>12</sup> I say resisted, not refused. They would attempt the drawing warm-ups, but were not exploring the medium or the topic, just completing the criteria. They became frustrated easily with drawing from life or trying to convey their emotion in the piece. This seems to be traditional of adolescent art making; they focus too much on making their art “look real” and so give up any other art making endeavors (Feldman, 1970, Graham & Zwirn, 2010; Amorino, 2009).

I decided to begin where they were, to empathize in my own art making. I would try a new art form that was unfamiliar to me, something I was not confident in as an artist. I would reflect on the process of learning something new as I working in this medium and use my findings to help alter the curriculum for my students. I chose fabric arts because it was my least familiar art form. My grandmother had taught me how to sew when I was young, but I never made it past simple hand stitching and making pillows. My knowledge in fabric arts, sewing techniques, even terminology, was minimal.

My first project was making a bib. It came out of necessity and interest in the simple design. My youngest son's daycare needed new bibs, the old ones were extremely frayed and threadbare; the seams opening up and the inside interfacing showing through. Just my selection of a project helped me reposition my curriculum. It came from necessity and interest. It also came from my interactions and relationship with my son's caregivers at school. I took time to get to know them, ask about their day, and take note of the daily environment of my son. It was only through those interactions did I come to notice the need for new bibs. My students did not see drawing their habits a necessity, or an interest. I needed to begin there. I also had to physically take apart the bib in order to create a new one-I had to deconstruct to re/create. I also had to copy something to feel confident in it. I could look at a bib and think, yes, I can make this. It is flat and simple, with only bias tape as an obstacle. I can do it. As an art teacher, I think I overlooked the importance of simple exercises in art making to help students feel confident in their abilities.

Perhaps there is a place for copying, not as an end, but as a means to develop a craft, a technique. Copying was a step to something else.

The process of making the bibs was also an act of caring. I had to be delicate with the fabric, precise and gentle. I was also creating them out of care for my son and his nursery mates. I wanted to improve their daily life, just by having a clean, sturdy bib, with colorful patterns to delight their eyes. There was an artistic decision in each step of making the bibs, all related to the children and their caregivers. What patterns might they like to see each day? How big does the bib need to be to fit the infants and crawling babies? Just as I cut away from a pattern to make a clear shape of the bib, I needed to cut away my curriculum to make the clear shape of what my students needed from me as their art teacher. My question shifted: what causes students to have moments of disruption/deconstruction? The first part in answering this came with another question: how are they first comfortable in the art classroom?

### **Aprons/Analysis**

Some of my data analysis was modeled after narrative analysis (Hankins, 2003; Mertens, 2010), however, working in a/r/tography means analysis will also be renderings of the research (Irwin & Springgay, 2008). Renderings are “imbedded in the process artful inquiry” and are not illustrative, but “interconnected processes” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p.115). I wish share the arts of living of/with my students while creating a work of art that is both reflexive and relational. Without simplifying their experiences or documenting them as occurrences, the body of this research was a constant creation/analysis that happened



simultaneously. While collecting data, (in the classroom as observations, journaling, and student work and out of the classroom as art making and reflection), I would note/draw lines of topics, events, plots, beginnings, middles, and ends in order to shape/form the story/picture (Hankins, 2003). What you are reading, for a while, felt like a never-ending process of pinning and re-pinning of fabric, theory, examples, photographs, in order to tell the story right.

Through a/r/tography, the practices of making art serve as forms of analysis and living inquiry (Irwin, 2003; Springgay, et al, 2005). Even though I am influenced by Lightfoot's (1983) data analysis in portraiture, which intends to "capture essence of subject through interpretive descriptions" (p.16) yet also "admit[s] the shaping hand of the artist" (p.14), a/r/tography calls on a more disruptive and intertextual mode of analysis. There is a sense of dwelling in the difficult, the ambiguous, the unknown to allow ourselves to live a life of awareness (Carson& Sumara, 1997; Sumara, 1998). This process involved looking into how I was helping my students create "studio habits of mind" (Graham& Zwirn, 2010, p.219), or developing their craft, attending to relationship, and developing the ability to observe, envision, express, reflect, and explore. At the same time, I was in the process of re/developing these for myself. My analysis of curriculum came when I was working as an artist, deconstructing my dress.

Often, there was a physical manipulation of data, when I frequently revised the conversations, notes, and memories of the lessons through my own visual journaling, sometimes taking text or images from my students' work and reflecting on it through photography or pencil and watercolor. This allowed me to dwell with

the data---to layer it, to smudge it, to tear it, to alter the physical nature of it in order to construct meaning. This became an even deeper exploration as I continued in my study of empathy through fabric design.

Once I finished the bibs, I started writing lessons with more concrete activities that allowed for exploration within criteria (See “Happy isn’t a smiley face” in chapter four for details on this lesson). I decided I needed to challenge myself as I challenged my students. I wanted them to think about the context around their artistic choices and perspectives. To analyze concepts using a/r/tography is to unsettle them once they remain stable. I felt comfortable with bibs, now I moved on to aprons. An apron has certain social and historical contexts, even personal context as an art teacher. We must protect our clothing from the hazards of our job. But does an apron really protect? Is it decorative or functional or both? While I worked on the apron, the renderings became more fluid and embodied in my students’ work as well as our interactions in the classroom.

I continued to use the renderings to analyze my journals, student work, and my own work. I was living them, they were embedded in the work. Even here, as I tried to separate the areas, it was hard not to just write/create the whole story as it happened. I decided this work needed a final piece, a work of fabric design that performed what I ultimately ask of my students: to create artwork that is personal and reflective. How could I ask them to share their lives with me if I wasn’t willing to do the same with them? And as this final goal/rendering of the research was forming and I was making sketches of what this personal/relational work would be for me,

my life imploded. I was forced to experience a rupture and probe the depths of caring in ways I had never imagined at the start of this study.

### **Birds/Disruption/Subjectivity**

“Deep inquiry into our lives requires a/r/ographers to make meaning through their senses, bodies, minds, and emotions. It is a research process that is fluid, uncertain, and temporal” (Springgay, et al., 2005, p.908). To be an a/r/ographers is to model “personal wholeness by reconnecting the curriculum with self by connecting mind and body, and by integrating self as learner in the teaching process” (Sameshima, 2008, p.31). This final, integral part of my study came as I completed my last work of fabric arts (or is it the first?). I truth, I cannot divide the process of creating the work of art that I at first called 7 Birds, now Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, with the process of writing this research, writing curriculum, teaching art, or living my daily life. It might seem simple and obvious, yet it seems the simple and obvious still needed to be troubled and explored, opened up.



IMAGE 3.9: *Nesting Bird Detail*, 2011, photographic journal

\* \* \* \*

Caring is a reconstruction. It is a reordering of priorities to account for another's needs. How do you do this when you have been hurt? How do you do this when you feel alone or unwanted? How do you care in the face of apathy and rationalism to the extent of destruction? How do we prepare our students to be disrupted and torn in their lives without losing hope that there will be a new life that can be created from the collapse? If we can't, what are we preparing them for? (Journal Entry, February 28, 2011).

\* \* \* \*

My oldest son sits on the bed, the new bed (or really, it is my aunt's old bed) singing along to Rufus Wainwright, as he sings the classic Across the Universe by the Beatles. "Na-fing's gonna change my world..." His little voice is so pure and sweet, his eyes shine like crisp blue water in the sunlight. My heart aches while it glows for him. He doesn't know how much his future has changed, but then again, neither do I. We can only live in hope together. (Journal Entry, March 14, 2011)

\* \* \* \*



IMAGE 3.10: *Breast Bird Detail*, 2011, photographic journal

This artwork, as a part of a/r/tographic research, helped open up a space in curriculum that allowed me to re/enter as an artist. However, I am at a dilemma whether or not to share it with my students. It would mean crossing a certain barrier I have with my students right now. Now, I am only Ms. Riddett, the art teacher. I would become Ms. Riddett, the artist, the woman, the betrayed wife, the mother, the person who weeps and mourns, runs while standing strong...am I ready to let this part of me become a part of them? It is a risk in caring I must face, trouble, and ultimately, accept. Accept the risk of caring.

\* \* \* \*

I dreamed I walking through campus

on a damp spring evening

everything so crisp

and clear

from the cool rain.

You are at my side

but somehow I cannot see you.

I hear your movement

but cannot feel your warmth.

I reach out for your hand

and grab only mist.

The bridge, the tracks, lay ahead-

the musty timbers

rusty nails  
the smell of oil on water  
worn from time  
and the weight of freight

there will be nights I will miss you  
and the talks over this place  
and the feeling all things are fresh  
and clean  
and new  
but somehow, I knew  
I could move on, over the bridge  
without you  
and you could not cross  
could not follow  
could not be there to find the world  
on the other side.

and its not sadness  
just the thought  
that you are caught  
in the mist  
that I cannot dissipate.

(Journal Entry, April 2, 2011)



IMAGE 3.11: *Ecclesiastes 3:1-8/Field View, Back Detail*, 2011,  
altered fabric. 33" x 27" x 44" x 50" (left)

IMAGE 3.12: *Ecclesiastes 3:1-8/Field View, Side Nesting Bird*, 2011,  
altered fabric. 33" x 27" x 44" x 50" (right)



IMAGE 3.13: *Ecclesiastes 3:1-8/Field View, Landing Bird Detail*, 2011, altered  
fabric. 33" x 27" x 44" x 50"

Suggested titles for 7 Birds, invited by the artist from family and friends who first viewed the work:

*The Harvest; Hidden Harvest; Captured Harvest; Season of Harvest; Nesting; Flight; Transform; Contrast; Stability; Calm; A Sweet Serenity; Bitter Serenity; Contemplations; Flocks; Seasons of Change; Coming Home; New Home; All Things Become Beautiful; Your Bird Dress, Mommy; Time for Change; Time for Reflection; Seasons of Change; I Can't; Rapture* (Journal Entry, March 24, 2011)



IMAGE 3.14: *Ecclesiastes 3:1-8/7 Birds, Front View, Bedroom Studio, 2011,*  
altered fabric. 33" x 27" x 44" x 50"



\* \* \* \*

Forgiveness demonstrates the presence in the world of the love which is more powerful than sin. Forgiveness is also the fundamental condition for reconciliation, not only in the relationship of God with man, but also in relationships between people.

Pope John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, 1980

(Kelly-Gangi, 2005, p.81)

\* \* \* \*

Can I say, with all sincerity of heart, that I forgive him?

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EXPERIENTIAL CURRICULUM

#### **Pins in Practice**

In discussing the validity of ABER methods, Rollings (2010) says that they require a type of interpretive validity, because unlike scientific inquiry, where a cause can be inferred be a preceded effect, in arts-based inquiry there are multiple causes and multiple effects which cannot be isolated from each other. There are many factors which contribute to the outcome or unfolding of this research, perhaps too many to comment on and critique in depth. In order to filter them, trim the excess (to once again engage in the renderings of a/r/tography), I revisited my original research questions:

- What kinds of art experiences lead to deeper aesthetic engagement with objects, people, and environment?
- How might these experiences encourage students to develop an arts of living, or how, through the arts, they learn to perceive the quality and qualities of things, develop practices or habits that help shift their perspective, in order to deepen their understanding of others and create themselves as ethical subjects.

More simply put, how do we learn to care for others in the process of making art? I discovered that as this study progressed, I was more interested in the moments when students were able to broaden their definitions of concepts, which

seemed to occur when they were presented with a concept or idea that contradicted their way of thinking, or perhaps was just a new way of approaching a concept they had not considered. This seems to me one of the strongest elements in learning to care: being able to imagine another way of being. This is, perhaps, the greatest connection between caring and deconstruction.

Developing an arts of living began when students felt comfortable enough to put into question that which they believed to be true, when they began to deconstruct their lives. I believe this occurred through two important elements in the art curriculum: 1) opportunities were provided<sup>13</sup> for students to experience moments of disruption, either by working with materials or engaging in reflective practices (writings and discussions), and 2) art making was approached from the perspective of exploring a theme, not merely representing objects or ideas through media, which allowed for more relational, reflective art making. While I began to see disruptive moments happening all over the art room once I started looking for them, there were certain moments that seemed more pivotal than others, by way of knowing the student or recognizing the art form to be specifically poignant. In this chapter, I will discuss some of these moments and how they in turn affected my work as an artist and researcher or my writing/teaching/altering the curriculum.

These works of art and reflections by the students were like pins holding the edges of what I thought was a rapidly unraveling curriculum. These moments seemed to guide the study as they each reflected something more pivotal within arts education as well as my own journey through caring. These were the students who

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<sup>13</sup> This also involves allotting time in the class period for playing with materials and discussing the discoveries in that play.

engaged in moments of disruption and in turn, altered the fabric around themselves. The shifts are, from the perspective of a/r/tography, ethical in themselves and a step into practicing caring in the classroom. A/r/tography recognizes ethics as “participating in a network of relations” (La Jevic & Springgay, 2008, p.68). Pulling from various feminist theorists, ethics can be seen as how one encounters others as other, a shift from getting to know the other (knowledge gained through insight leading to understanding), to “an inquiry that creates bodied encounters that are themselves ethical in nature” (LaJevic & Springgay, 2008, p. 69). Ethics then is “not just different forms of knowing, but different forms of being, and it is this complicated and responsive understanding of lived experience that is at the heart of a/r/tographical research”( p.71). Likewise, it was the work of ethics in Foucault’s writings to problematize the issue of how society creates itself for the means of “creating new modes of being together” (Rabinow, 1997, p. xxxvii). I believe these moments of disruption were students entering into new modes of being together.

\* \* \* \*

Meeting with the priest to discuss annulment was harder then telling my grandparents I was getting a divorce. There is an awful finality to annulment. I was suddenly like a child again, nervous to enter the confessional, worrying what I would say, what the priest would think of me and my sins. Yet this was not my sin. Still, I can’t ignore the feeling of shame and failure. My hands sweat, my stomach lurches.

But after talking with the Father, he gave me some words of comfort something new to consider when I go to mass. He said one of his favorite prayers in the Eucharistic celebration is, *On the night He was betrayed, He took bread and gave*

*You thanks, broke the bread, gave it to His disciples and said, “Take this all of you and eat it. This is my body, which will be given up for you.”* It brings together two very different states of being: betrayal and sacrifice. To say in the same breath he was betrayed while he was giving thanks to God, is a remarkable feat for any human being. Our goal, your spiritual goal, he told me, is to lessen that gap, the gap between *On the night he was betrayed* and *He took bread and gave you thanks*. (Journal entry, April 5, 2011).

\* \* \* \*

### **Moments of Disruption**

**Doodles Can Mean Something.** This first moment came from a lesson I wrote at the beginning of the study when I was still directly incorporating themes of care as learning objectives. In this project, we were trying to create a work of art that might help other teens empathize with the citizens of Haiti who had recently experienced a devastating earthquake (January, 2010). The students came up with the idea to create a portrait of an American teenager in their daily life, hung opposite from another portrait of a Haitian teenager in their daily life. It was a great idea, until the students admitted they did not want to draw people; people were much too hard. So we worked through other ideas, all of which still included people and portraits. In their frustration for “do-able” ideas and my disappointment at their lack of confidence and enthusiasm in carrying out their ideas, I suggested we go back to

our “manual” that semester, which was the book, *How to be an Explorer of the World* (Smith, 2008), and do an activity to get our brains “rebooted.”<sup>14</sup>

While they were drawing, I found an activity in the book that dealt with the theme of consumption. It challenged the explorer to document everything they used in one day, just as a record of consumption. Our ideas met, finally, as I suggested this activity to my students. We decided to document what we used for an entire day in the form of our journals (words or pictures) and turn those doodles into portraits.

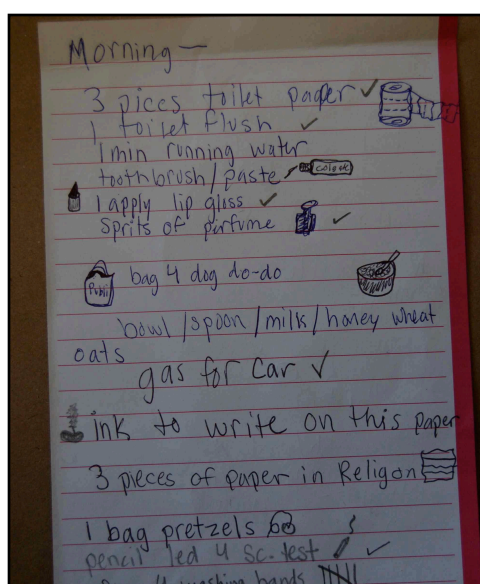


IMAGE 4.1: Student Work: *Consumption Journal Entry*, 2009.

They kept their original concept of comparing a U.S. teen with a Haitian teen and created a “shadow portrait” by tracing a projected image of a Haitian teenager walking from the rubble of one of the buildings. This gave them the idea to also trace themselves and use the doodles of the objects to fill in their body. There was a strong

<sup>14</sup> All words in quotation marks are either directly from my classroom field notes, teaching journal, or were re-written in a narrative format based on recorded classroom discussions. Some are parts of student journals. I do not delineate between where the words came from because I am still presenting this study as a record of my praxis and as a work of embodied aesthetic wholeness. It is also based on my earlier practices with narrative inquiry and educational criticism (see Chapter Three).

presence of emptiness and fullness in the finished drawings, which I believe came from the students' strong sense of theme in this project. They wanted to show how "we have so much, and they have so little...but it isn't about that [the material possessions], the art is about making sure we know what we should do next."



IMAGE 4.2: 7<sup>th</sup> grader *Working on Consumption Portrait*, 2009, photographic journal

During the critique of this project, I asked the students to each share something they learned, something they would change, and what they felt was the strongest part of this work of art (together as a group or as an individual creating their own portrait of consumption). One student who had a reputation for being the artist in her class (because of her ability to draw realistically) said in the critique, "I learned how to doodle with this project. [long pause-with quirky smirk] I don't doodle...cause I want everything to be finished and complete...like shaded and stuff." I asked her what was different about her doodles in her sketchbook and her final

piece, she said “Well...the doodle means something more like that [pointed to everyone’s portraits together]. The ones in my sketchbook are just what I did that day, what I ate or whatever. But when you see them all together, and just in everyone’s...sketch style, like handwriting, the doodle means something. It works better than if everything was shaded.”

I interpreted this as a moment of disruption for this student because it was the first time she was willing to accept a new version of drawing as valid drawing. In her world, valid drawing (and I could go on to say drawings of value) is realistic drawing. Realistic drawing wins her praise and admiration; it is what makes her an artist. To challenge the value of realistic ways of drawing is to challenge her identity as an artist. Yet she was willing to admit this new way of drawing (for her), the doodle, has its place in conveying meaning, perhaps in a more powerful way than if we had drawn realistic portraits. There was something raw and natural, fresh and alive about the repetition of the doodle in these portraits. Seeing everyone’s drawings of napkins and toilet paper, toothpaste and crackers, soap, toast, gum, water bottles, even their doodles how electricity (usually in the form of lightning bolts or power cords) was captivating and reflective. When displayed, the life size portraits were simple and powerful. They were pencil and chalk doodles on brown butcher paper, the doodles filling up the body outlines of my students, hung in a row down the hall. Across the hall hung the single portrait of the Haitian teen, wherein the students drew a simple bowl of rice right in the belly. They wrote and doodled in small print around the body what relief efforts were happening in Haiti and how



much food and water might be getting to the general population. It was all very moving.

I had not given much thought to the power of doodling over sketching as a teaching tool. When I give drawing warm ups, I am constantly pushing the students to draw more and add value. I usually encourage them to complete the sketch. Yet there is something to be valued in the aimless marks we make on the edges of paper or in the margins of our history notes. If art is to be a part of our daily lives, we must not sever it from our daily lives. It may seem a simple statement, but placing value in a doodle and where it might take us (into realms of thinking or dreaming or valuing) perhaps is something that needs a place in art curriculum. A doodle can be a record of boredom or an abstracted image of a phone conversation. A doodle can be a tool for helping students grasp the abstract or make record of the present moment. A doodle can mean something.

**Happy Isn't a Smiley Face.** This study into curriculum took place throughout 3 semesters of teaching. The first semester acted as a pilot study, which helped me test the curriculum and research design and make the adjustments I needed in my data collection methods as well as curriculum and pedagogical structure. I felt the Consumption project was successful in the fact that it was able to create this moment of disruption, and this moment, along with the one I mentioned in chapter three, the “perfection” moment, helped me realign my study. I also felt that every art lesson can't directly be about empathy- it would become likened to character education methods where the students might begin to think “if I do this, I

will be empathetic.” Again, it is not about teaching empathy directly as a one-to-one correlation, but in setting up experiences.

This next project came out of my interest in opening up definitions, a result of the first two students’ disruptive moments. The project was based on a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1837/1901):

Life is our dictionary. Years are well spent in country labors; in town...in frank intercourse with many men and women; in science; in art; to the end of mastering in all their facts a language by which to illustrate and embody our perceptions. (p. 30)

In its simplest form, life is a dictionary. In this project, I wanted to students to better understand conceptual works of art, but I didn’t want to approach it directly and begin with conceptual works. Inspired by my readings on deconstruction, I decided to have the students start with words and work from there. Students began the lesson by making a list of words that might appear in a dictionary entry of that day: any word, noun, verb, adjective, that would describe that day from when they woke up to when they entered my room.

The next exercise was to explore the multiple social and personal definitions of words, helping students reflect deeper on how we construct meaning using words and how words are also constructed. Students chose one word from their “dictionary” list and write a “real” definition of that word. They passed their words around the table, each person adding to the definition. The new definitions had to also be “real,” but I encouraged them to use this exercise to write or draw a more personal or social definition. I used a student’s dictionary entry to give an example.

They wrote 'Spanish' as a dictionary word to describe their day. I said the "real" definition might be 'Spanish- a language that originated in the country of Spain;' then suggested a personal definition for that student could be, 'Spanish- the class I am most likely to sleep through,' and for his neighbor, 'Spanish- the class I am currently failing.' We discussed how almost everyone associated Spanish class in a negative context. How had this become a social definition? What would happen to the student who said "Spanish-my native language" or "Spanish- the class I look forward to most." We talked as a class how Spanish now has a negative social definition in this group of students (even though three out of twenty students speak Spanish at home). How did this definition come to be?

The next exercise was practicing how we might represent words using only color, line, and shape, with no symbols or images. I gave them a list of words to choose from, specifically choosing words that could be interpreted similarly, like alone and peaceful. While they are different words, the ways in which they might be represented in color could be similar, yet vary in their subtle qualities. This opens up discussion for how "alone" looks and feels-is there something about paintings that feel "alone" that might also feel peaceful? Does alone necessarily mean lonely? While some of the student paintings were pretty obvious in their word choice (warm colors for the word "warm"), others required deeper probing to discover what word they were trying to represent.



IMAGE 4.3: Student Work: *Crazy/Alone Journal Entry*, 2010.

The final project was a combination of all these practice exercises and an additional challenge of incorporating the text into the painting. Students had to choose a word that had a personal or social definition that they felt drawn to re/create. Using only watercolors, pencil, and sharpie marker, they had to represent their word using color, line, and shape, but with no symbols or recognizable images. Students then had to write a reflection on why they chose that word and how the definition of that word changed as they created the artwork. A very quiet 6<sup>th</sup> grade student who is not especially drawn to the arts had multiple disruptive moments throughout this project.

He chose the word “happy,” something I discouraged them to do, only because we tend to automatically think of symbolic images of “happy.” I also considered it not a very complex word; almost as if the students who chose words like “happy” or “angry” were skimping out on the project. This 6<sup>th</sup> grader had trouble with the exercise of painting the word from the list without pictures, the concept seemed to be incomprehensible to him. “How do you paint ‘warm’ without drawing a fire?” he asked me. “Maybe choose a different word that doesn’t have an image that you can’t

get around,” I suggested. “But they all do!” He was blocked, stuck with only the imagery available to him. He seemed to not be able to get over thinking in symbols or portraying words through symbols.

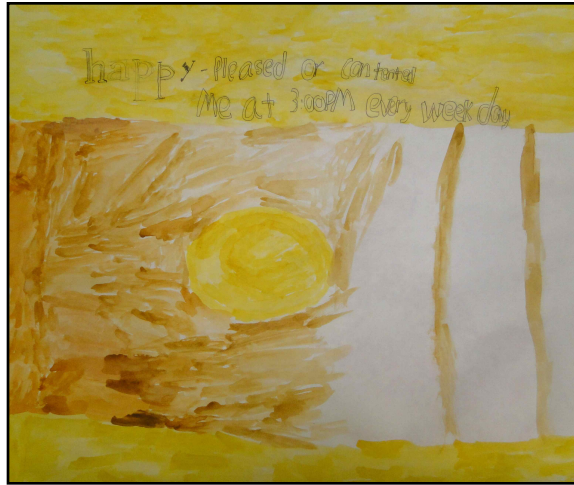


IMAGE 4.4: Student Work: *Happy*, 2010. 24" x 36"

Image 4.4 is this 6<sup>th</sup> grader's final work. While it may appear unfinished, this was actually his compositional choice. I was surprised as I watched him paint, because he began with the horizontal lines, not the circle. Then he worked right to left, starting with the vertical lines, so at first the image was very structured and geometric- horizontal and vertical, boxed in. Then he worked back and forth between the circle and the golden textured painting lines. His process moved from a rigid, methodical way of painting to a more fluid, organic style. This was the first moment of disruption I noticed in him. Since he was been my student for four years already (3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade), I recognized the way this was important for him. In art class, he is traditionally the student who must follow the steps of the lesson exactly, double-checking between each step to make sure he is “getting it right.” His artwork also rarely had any personal or emotional value to it. He is one of the students who

might toss the artwork in the trash on the way out the art room door. The text here says “Happy- please or contented; me at 3:00pm every weekday”.

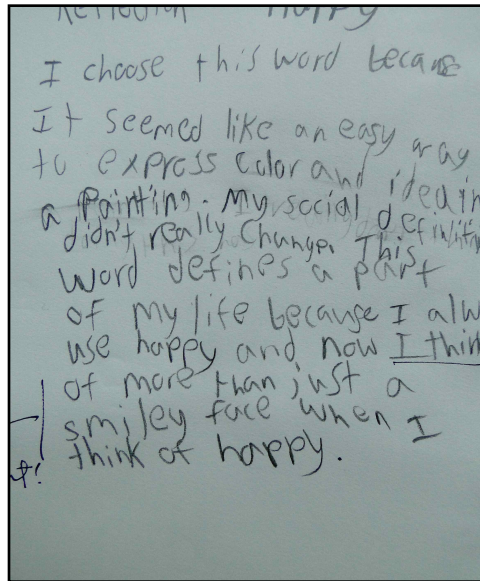


IMAGE 4.5: *Student Reflection on Happy*, 2010.

“Now I think of more than just a smiley face when I think of happy.” It is hard to tell in this image, but the horizontal mark on the left side of the page is my note back to him during my sketchbook check. I just wrote to him “Excellent!” and we discussed this reflection later in class. He admitted that sometimes he thinks we are supposed to be happy, even when things are “so-so,” and being happy isn’t as simple as smiling. I asked about his definition, being happy when he leaves school, and he commented that he does enjoy school, but he likes “doing other things better.”

This moment of disruption enters into a key element in this study, unraveling the complex nature of those things that seem simple and stable. Here my 6<sup>th</sup> grade student was starting to experience different forms of happiness and trying to grapple with those experiences. While he may not have been that articulate with his verbal expression or written expression, the process he went through of exploring it

through painting demonstrated his ability to think through the material about a new kind of happiness.

It was only after I began to work on the dress did I fully relate to this student and his process. I was ready to dismiss his journal entry as someone who was just completing the assignment in the easiest way possible, but as I worked with my project and the fabric, I revisited his work and my field notes from class while he worked. There were times when I was making the birds, birds that were originally going to be symbolic of the women who had helped tear apart my marriage without my knowledge. Yet the physicality of sewing, in this case, hand-stitching the tails closed, took patience and a peaceful presence with each one. I worked on them as I stayed up late talking with my aunt and uncle at my new home with them. The birds couldn't be symbolic of the women anymore. I took too much care in creating them. I didn't hate them. I didn't blame them anymore. I couldn't sew in anger, I had to let my idea go and let the birds become something else. The material changed me, changed my perspective of this event in my life, yet how still remained an open question. As my student created "happiness" from somewhere he couldn't explain, I continued on the project of the birds, not knowing how they might manifest themselves in the end, but trusting that I still needed to create them.



IMAGE 4.6: Student Work: *Fire Portrait*, 2010. 24\" x 36\"

**Give Yourself Through the Project.** Self-portraits, I have discovered, are always a delicate subject matter for middle school aged students. They are extremely self-conscious of their bodies, their faces, and any type of portrayal of themselves “realistically”. Influenced by my own dilemma in sharing my different “sides” with the students, I decided this self-portrait project would focus on the theme of “Two sides of me.” Different from the other projects where I ended the assignment with viewing works of historical and contemporary artists, we began this assignment viewing Frida Kahlo’s portrait *The Two Fridas*. We discussed her dramatic symbolism and the parts of her life that were divided. I asked students to reflect on their own identities as students, friends, brothers and sisters, children, aunts and uncles, cousins, athletes, musicians, any roles they perceived themselves to be in and how they might change their behavior or attitude in those roles.

Like the “Life is a Dictionary” painting, students had time to participate in guided explorations of materials. The final project was a collaged self portrait that incorporated a printed photograph of the student and two layered materials that represented the theme “Two Sides of Me.” For this critique, I let the students conduct



video interviews of each other. I asked them to begin the discussion with a couple questions: How do you feel about this project? How did this portrait relate to your life? Then I told them to just discuss how they thought the semester was going in class, to give me some constructive feedback about the lessons and projects. In a conversation between three 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls, some of the following phrases stuck with me as moments of disruption for these students:

“We do these things that relate to your life...but sometimes you don’t know it till you do it.”

“Art is the only class I am not lectured, I’m not told exactly what to do...”

“I like that there is room for creativity, like we have no directions...well, not that we don’t have directions, but Ms. Riddett keeps it, like way open. But then it makes me not be such a rule follower.”

“Sometimes I really don’t know who I am....it sounds cheesey, but true...this project (self portrait) shows who I want to be.”

“[the projects we’ve done]...go deep. It is me thinking about the project and reflect on me...well...it’s like you *give yourself through the project.*”

I emphasize this last statement because two of these students really struggled with how to represent themselves. Their sketches and their final piece were not compatible, but when I asked them about it, they admitted to a release, a sort of willingness to let the project “take over itself,” as if the art making was out of their hands. Even though one student’s work was still precise in detail and symbols (below), she opened her work up to text, something she admitted she goes not like

to do, and felt that this was “too personal.” I told her that if it wasn’t personal and hard to share, then it wasn’t an authentic self-portrait.



IMAGE 4.7: Student Work: *2 Sides of Me*, 2010. 24 “ x 36”

\* \* \* \*



IMAGE 4.8: Student Work: *Suppress*, 2010. 24“ x 36”

Suppress: forcibly put to an end; to hold back...love  
to make this yours  
is to make it mine.  
I will love you

even if you can't believe it  
 even if I can't remember it  
 because living between us  
 will always be  
 this love

neither of us can have (Journal Entry, March 7, 2011)

\* \* \* \*

This student work, *Suppress* (Image 4.8), embodied the disruption of giving yourself through the project. I've coupled it with my journal entry for many reasons. First, I have never felt an emotional connection with a student through their work before. This is a hard statement and realization after almost nine years of teaching. I have, perhaps, understood more about a student through their work, when the work spoke or the student explained. I have, perhaps, felt compassion for a student when hearing a story of loss, fear, or anger that the child was attempting to work through and struggled to represent. Until this student painted her definition of the word *Suppress*, I had not felt an embodied, deeply seeded connection with a student. The work reached out to me, even as I watched her paint the blurred black line that attempts to divide crimson from violet; it was my world turned to color and motion. It was riveting to behold.

The second reason I've coupled my work with hers is an attempt to bring closer the parallels in our lives with those of our students. Often we dismiss the ways students view things like love. How can they possibly know of "real" love as we do? Aren't they too young? We right off their tears in the bathroom to the hopeless

pangs of young love, offering a comforting yet belittling arm to them. We roll our eyes, and give the sympathetic smile that means to say “if only you knew, young child,” and laugh about their over dramatic views of the world in our faculty meetings. Yet they do know. They do feel it. It is real to them at that moment, and it is their experience of love (or hate, or fear, or desire, or longing). It is all they know of that experience. How we react to their emotional needs, to their views of life and its problems tells them something of how we value them. Perhaps this is why we as art teachers owe it to our curriculum and to our students to make a space for art that is personal and reflective. It is easier said than done. Of course we want our students to make art that is expressive and relational, but actually doing this requires that we be present to our students and their needs, however insignificant they may seem from our perspective. This is the ultimate challenge in teaching with an ethic of care: caring when we really don’t.

The third reason these works appear together is to illustrate how image and word may not be illustrative, but complimentary, contradictory, and relational at once. There is a natural desire for explanation when we teach and research. We automatically see similarities in images or writings and want to place them together, to categorize and order. But presenting a work of ABER in a/r/tography is about opening up the space, rather than making it smaller and tighter. Image and word exist to trouble, probe, and question. In arranging this work of research, art, and curriculum, there were times when I resisted moving things into their “proper” categories. Dates are not linear and themes do not begin and end. It is a part of working in excess and within a reverberation.

**Student Withdrawn.** This school year I am the lead chaperone for our 8<sup>th</sup> grade international trip. They are going to Rome, Italy, and it was decided over the summer that I would teach an art history class to prepare them for the work they would see/experience in Rome. I was thrilled at the challenging curricular opportunity this provided. The subject matter of the curriculum was set: the art of Rome (more specifically, the art we would see in our planned itinerary), yet I wanted this curriculum to also be embodied, relational, and interactive. It would seem appropriate to help students find modern connections to these ancient works as well as embrace the religious fervor of much of the work without it feeling like religion class.

Their first work of art was the Sistine Chapel ceiling frescos. We began the study by going outside on a chilly January day. Students spread out on the grass and picnic tables, getting a clear view of the sky. I walked them through a guided mediation to relax their bodies and minds, then read them a descriptive passage about dwelling in total darkness: What does darkness smell like? Is it vast and cold, or does it smother you, intense and condensing? This continued into a descriptive passage of a new light entering into the darkness: Is the light small and fleeting, or an explosion of color and sound, blinding you as you encounter it? In concluding the meditation, I read from the *Book of Genesis*, the story of creation and God creating light from darkness.

After this exercise, we discussed our visions and feelings during the meditation. The next class period, students had to paint their vision, lying on their backs under the table, while I introduced the section of the Sistine Chapel ceiling in

which Michelangelo depicts God separating light from dark. Forty minutes the students remained on their backs while we discussed the differences in Michelangelo's work and their own. It was an exercise in the physicality, spirituality, and presence of art. They were each assigned a separate section of the Sistine Chapel ceiling frescoes and instructed to create a postcard with information on the fresco, Biblical references to the fresco, and a modern reflection (like the one we did with the *Separation of Light from Dark*) that would help their fellow classmates relate to the fresco.

When it came time to present and share the postcards, most of the students surprised me with their insight and the unique perspectives they took on their modern quotes. One girl had the fresco with Judith and Holofernes, a little known story in the Bible. It turns out that Judith used her beauty to seduce Holofernes, the leader of the enemy army, in order to get close to him and murder him for the sake of saving her people, the Jews. This student chose a quote on perseverance, which seemed of little relevance at first. But as she explained, she found the story, supported by the image of the fresco, to be dark and intimidating. Mystery, fear, and judgment clouded the silhouette of Judith, who was often seen as nothing but her beauty. Hidden beneath was this powerful woman, with the ferocity to slay an army general. "To persevere is to walk through the darkness and fear with faith," my 8th grade student shared.

Yet this young student of mine who related to Judith in an insightful way is not the one who warrants the disruptive story. In choosing and writing these stories of disruption, I had to also consider how to truly write a "deconstructivists tale,"

which makes the focus on the unsaid, and “moves against stories that appear to tell themselves” (Lather, 1991, p.129). On the other side of art history class, another student failed to turn in anything at all. No printed postcard, no digital postcard, and when I questioned him in order to see the work on his computer, he failed to produce any work at all. I wondered what he had been doing on the computer in my class for the past month if he hadn’t been creating a postcard.

I had planned just four major projects for this class, so the result of not turning in one would be a zero counting for 25% of the final grade. I wanted to be considerate of the crazy schedule we had during the month of January, which was disrupted with an ice storm, science fair, and a week when 30% of the middle school students were out sick. I allowed this student and four others who did not meet the deadline to turn in the assignment late, meaning they were allowed to work on it at home. He showed up two weeks later with a postcard, that met none of the criteria for the assignment. There was no image of the section of the Sistine Chapel Ceiling that I assigned him, no information, no Bible reference, and no quote. It simply said “To” and “From.” “What is this?!” I asked him. Silence. “Is this supposed to be the assignment?!” I asked him. Silence. “What have you been doing in class that you don’t even have the right image I assigned you?” Suddenly, he spoke up. “Well...the computer software was hard because it’s a Mac and....” I interrupted, “This has *nothing* to do with the computer type or programs. You have had plenty of time to learn, and I demonstrated step-by-step how to create your postcard. This is absurd!”

I was so angry with this student, I could have smacked him. He continued with an array of excuses as to why he couldn’t create this simple postcard during

class or at home. It reached the point where he became defiant with me, which caused me to email his parents not only about the failing grade he would receive, but his overall attitude and lack of ownership for his actions. This concerned me most as I would be the chaperone in Rome. He couldn't give me an honest answer as to what he had been doing on the computer if not working on the postcard (for I saw him working in class on a computer, quiet and focused, I just assumed he was on task). If I couldn't trust him to follow my instructions in class, how could I trust him behind closed doors of a hotel room in Italy?

I expressed my concern for this student, a concern shared with the other middle school teachers, of his lack of cooperation, blatant defiance, and overall bad attitude in an email, and suggested to the parents we meet to discuss how this could be worked on before the trip, if he is to go on the trip. I get a nasty email back blaming me for being "un-Christian" and "how dare I threaten to remove her son from the trip" and "we aren't sure we trust you as the chaperone", etc. Irrate and exhausted from this exchange, I let the weekend pass before I reply back. Monday morning comes and I open my grade book to find: '*Student withdrawn from class*'. There was no conference, no exchange of understanding, not even an explanation. Student withdrawn, period.

This trip with my 8th grade class became a particularly complex space for opening in the research. Suddenly, I am no longer just Ms. Riddett the art teacher, I am now guardian to these students in another country; I have a paper stating it so. I am in charge of their medicines and their protection; I will watch over their well-being and deliver them safely home to their parents. It is an entirely new aspect of



caring for students I never dreamed would weigh on me. And this student who withdrew, who is no longer a part of the class or the group, is in some ways, the part I want to hide and forget. Did I fail him as a teacher, to push him away and make him feel unsafe? Did I speak the truth to his parents, who in turn denied it of their son and feel they are protecting him by letting him once again avert failure? He should have failed my class, he should have accepted the consequences of his actions, but instead, he was shepherded into another class with evil eyes and snared fingers pointed at me—me the art teacher who asked too much of him. Could he have changed his attitude and bucked up in order to get the work done to enjoy this opportunity with his friends? Perhaps he could have. Again, I want to believe he could have, had he stayed in my class. But we let go of much when we teach. We let go of students, of time constraints, of objectives. We let go of ideals and truisms. We let go of stability and routine. When we do let go, either by choice or by force, what do we do with the empty space that remains?

### **At the Limits of Caring**

At the end of the day  
 when all is said and done  
 (yet some things are unsaid and undone)  
 what was it that made me know-  
 I am done?

How many times can whisper to someone's back  
*-I love you-*

and they don't turn their head on the pillow  
to whisper to you?

How many times can you say

come back to me

come back to me

come back to me

before you stop crying out

stop crying

stop trying

stop dying

stop looking into eyes that no longer glow for you?

How long do you stand on the alter

waiting for your love

to come out of the darkness?

There is a moment

between loss and desire

between past and future

between alone and lonely

that is just a place to be.

To be.

To be and know that

desire is not loss

future is not past  
 and alone is not lonely.  
 All that is real  
 is here and now.

Because you were never you  
 and I am no longer me  
 what else am I to do-  
 but believe?

(Journal Entry, April 25, 2011)

There is an unsaid theme in this body of research, and that is the limit of caring. It warrants its own dissertation. Throughout these journals, works of art, and student stories, there lingers the feeling, perhaps the question, of what it takes for a teacher, a student, a wife (anyone in-relationship to others) to limit what we call caring. It is at once a personal and public decision. As women and teachers, it is assumed we should care to be successful, to be ethical, and to be good teachers. A teacher that doesn't care seems to be viewed as bad, apathetic, or disconnected from her students. It is hardly an issue that is black and white. At what point do we accept that perhaps caring deeply for each student has its limits? At what point do we trouble the notion that caring is always good and positive? Is the option to simply "not care?" When faced with these questions, it is easy to begin to rationalize reasons for not caring or to create a laundry list of reasons "I care because I..." We revisit the same problems again and again. Perhaps it is time to take care out of the dialogue and re-create a new concept of being-in-relation. Like, what does it mean to

have a *fruitful* relationship? Should care be put under erasure (as Derrida, 1978 challenges of our sense of language and word)? How can we open up caring as well as learn its limits, its darkness, its subtle intricacies and vulnerabilities? Can we know our limits before we've experienced them?

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DEVELOPING AN ARTS OF LIVING

We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep. I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor. It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look, which morally we can do. To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts.

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. (Thoreau, 1854/1987, p.60, emphasis added).



IMAGE 5.1: *Sketch for 7 Birds*, 2010, pencil and watercolor. 6" x 9"

\* \* \* \*

Reflection on a Rome Binder

Their names organized  
 in smooth plastic film  
 protected  
 from the elements.  
 seeing their names  
 their Full Given Names  
 somehow I feel closer to them

Can I see them  
 as children?  
 Children whose parents might still crack their door  
 and peek on them while they sleep  
 making sure bodies are covered, lights are out

kissing their forehead while they dream.

Children whose parents still see in their face  
the traces of the infant  
they held in their arms.

Can I see them  
as adults?

Adults who will live without me  
perhaps without even the memory of me  
except for one day in class  
or one week in Rome.

Adults who were formed now  
even as I ignore them  
worrying about my life

Adults who we shook our heads at in meetings  
wondering how they would survive  
if they don't just grow up.

Can I see them  
as they are  
now  
in my room

in my space

in my life?

Students who daily wonder what this means

to be in/between

child/adult

school/life

lessons/lessons

Who am I to them?

Who are they to me?

And yet this binder

like the ones from trips years ago

Will remain a record

of these seven day together

I hope it is more

than names

in smooth plastic film.

(Journal entry, March 22, 2011)

\* \* \* \*

### **Curriculum in Flux**

I've attempted in this study to create a space of transfiguration for my students. The research became—because of events in my own life—a personal transfiguration, which in turn, gave new insights into teaching in the arts. I did not



set out into the woods to live deliberately; the woods came to me. To be in a state of flux is to be in constant change, transformative movement. It differs from the a/r/tographic concept of reverberations, which are attentions to the movement. Flux begins; reverberations remain and linger. To be in a state of flux does not ensure transformation. We can be living in a state of change and simply remove ourselves, going back to what was stable and comfortable. We see students do this when given a new art material or tool, like charcoal. With no instruction, students will generally try to use charcoal like pencil, drawing precisely and trying to contain its dusty effects. Yet when we force them to use charcoal in a new way, say by making them color the entire page and then erase the drawing into the vast blackness, they might enter into the state of flux, or disruption, that challenges their notion of how drawings can be formed. How do we think differently about a material when we must remove the excess in order to bring our visions to life? Yet the outcome may also be that they despise charcoal for its messy nature and revert back to using the clean line of a pencil. Did they resist a disruption or simply have an adverse reaction the feeling of chalk residue on their hands? The point here is that small activities may open spaces for transformation and new ways of thinking for some students and may be insignificant tasks to others. The trick, then, is finding what makes a curriculum remain in a state of flux so that eventually we are all caught in the movement—in the process that shifts our thinking and ways of being in the world.

In a study of how her painting practices can be metaphorically used to reconsider aesthetic inquiry, Rita Irwin (2003) discusses two kinds of curriculum, the enacted curriculum and the embodied curriculum. Like the process of under-

painting, the embodied curriculum is formed by the enacted curriculum, but isn't bound to it. What I would call a play in curriculum writing, Irwin (2003) calls "an attunement to an aesthetic unfolding of in/sights" where "the slash within in/sight embellishes the unperceived help within the perceived...[and] attends to the tacit knowledge that remains unspoken yet recognizable" (p.77). The process of a/r/tography helped me enter into a space where I was aesthetically attuned to the activities, art making, and discussions of my students, as well as to my own life as an artist. It is a space that, through the process, is messy, uncomfortable, and complicated (La Jevic & Springgay, 2008). Aesthetic attunement also relates to the concept of personal wholeness, which can be addressed by "reconnecting the curriculum and self by connecting the mind and body [and] by integrating self as learner in the teaching process" (Sameshima, 2008).

\* \* \* \*

The piece called *Sans...*'Without'....is a haunting, beautiful piece...You sense a preciseness of decision making in her work; that its very calibrated. On the other hand, it is very vulnerable, fragile, and.... forthright. You sense the physical, emotional presence of the artist; you sense the risk she was taking in her art.

–Curator Gary Garrels speaking about Eva Hesse's work,  
*Sans II*, 1968 (SFMOMA, 2002).

\* \* \* \*

I discovered some exercises, I might even refer to them as practices, in teaching that allowed for the curriculum to exist in a state of flux. This state of flux,

or play, or disruption, allowed for my students and I to experience art making as a fluid, relational part of our daily lives. I hesitated in listing them, because I do not feel they can be prescribed into curriculum like the task of creating a coil pot or learning contour line drawing. Rather, they are ways of teaching, *modes of being* in the classroom, as renderings of a/r/tography are not methods, per se, but ways to explore the theoretical spaces created in art making, research, and teaching.

**Time to Explore.** We took time to explore materials. This seems a simple element of art making and should be present in an art curriculum, but one that frequently is sacrificed to meeting project standards, to learning the correct way to use a material, and to time constraints in the schedules. At the middle school level, certain elements of art curriculum hinge on mastery (if anyone can ever really master a material), or at least on becoming confident users of a material. Kids don't want to mess up. They don't want to get it wrong. Allowing for material exploration afforded them the opportunity layer chinks and watercolors just to see what happens, without worrying about "ruining" their final paper. It invited play. It gave them the opportunity to turn their mistakes into discoveries and their hesitation into decisiveness.



IMAGE 5.2: Student Work: *Sketching in Clay*, 2011, photographic journal

I also found that students needed structured explorations. What I mean by this is activities with parameters that have the explicit outcome of exploring. For example, in the exercise above, *Sketching in Clay* (Image 5.2), the assignment was to create a “sketch” in clay inspired by something outdoors (I did not specify nature). The parameters were that it had to have at least two layers, show some kind of texture in the clay, and use two tools. Students were allowed to bring one clay tool outdoors with them. These parameters forced them to rethink the meaning of the word “tool,” as they were allowed one official art tool and needed to find another. It also forced them to find something worth sketching. It forced them to take time to observe their surroundings “outdoors” and even think beyond nature. Some students found a brick structure that fascinated them and asked if that “counted” for the project. I simply recited the parameters to them, “Is it outdoors? Does it inspire you to sketch? Then it counts.”



IMAGE 5.3: Student Work: *80s Me*, 2011, digital print. 8" x 10"

**Working in Themes.** We began lessons with themes in mind, but recognized that our work into that theme may alter the theme completely. Sometimes we viewed artists' work first, sometimes at the conclusion of the assignment; usually the choice was made by how the students reacted to the theme. For example, in the "Life is a Dictionary" project, I made the decision to show the artwork last, partially because I wanted to present conceptual artists whose work related to the students' work, so the student work needed to be created first. I had to find a way to make conceptual art approachable for my students, but the theme was not conceptual art. Conceptual art is a category, a subject matter. The theme was "Life is a Dictionary." It was about what defines us and how we define ourselves. It began with listing words, expanded to non-symbolic representation, and concluded in conceptual pieces personal and relational. It was only after the work was done was I able to go through the body of conceptual work in modern art and select pieces that might communicate with the student work.

In photography class, we explored minimalism in a project called "Interesting Photos of Boring Objects." Minimalism was again, the category, the theme was about

exploring the question, “Why take photographs of objects, or things that appear boring?” In this case, I began with photographs of Imogene Cunningham’s flowers and Edward Weston’s Pepper. We discussed the merit and value of such photographs and I challenged students to list as many boring objects as they could. When I sent them out to shoot their boring objects, they quickly discovered their perceptions of what was boring changed. In the actual search for the boring, they found that boring was really a perception of time and place. Suddenly, boring became fascinating. Boring became a challenge and a site for disruption. How could we make our viewers stop and re/view photographs in order to shift their perspectives? What relationships could be seen between these objects and other things we chose to photograph? Who chooses what has value?

In both of these practices, making time for exploration and working from themes, there were more opportunities for students to become invested in their work. I was able to listen to my students from earlier in the study and incorporate their feedback. There was a balance to be found between giving direction and criteria and allowing students to tap into their own passions, humor, and insight. It doesn’t mean all the students found personal connections, or created meaningful works of art, but it does give space for the play, the comfort, the security of knowing you can explore and trouble without being belittled.

### **Lingering**

In an intellectual experience, the conclusion has value on its own account. It can be extracted as a formula or as a “truth,” and can be used in its independent entirety as factor and guide in other inquiries. In a work of art there is no such single

self-sufficient deposit. The end, the terminus, is significant not by itself, but as the integration of the parts. It has no other existence. (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 57).

Maxine Greene believes the power of the transformative comes from attending (1997/2001). She does not mean simply showing up and being present to class, or to a lecture, or play, or whatever sort of artistic encounter. She writes about being present, being completely absorbed in the moment of relation with that work. You attend. She claims this is the power of the aesthetic, to situate us in the present, in order to imagine our future. In an aesthetic experience, conclusion does not come to an end; it is anticipated and savored. Dewey speaks of “reconstructive doing,” when “consciousness becomes fresh and alive” (1934/3005, p. 64). The aesthetic, in this sense, brings us out of recognition, which arrests reception, and engages us with the presence of feeling, of lingering.

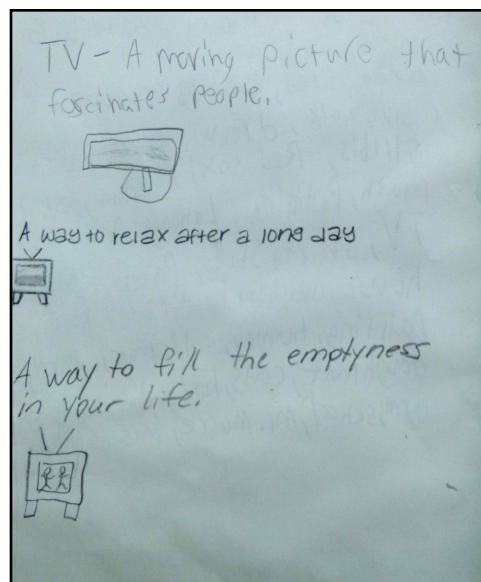


IMAGE 5.4: Student Work: *Social Definition of TV, Group Reflection, 2010.*

To linger with the aesthetic, with a work of art or its material, is not to remain idle. Linger makes us feel there is time to be had to enjoying, reflecting,

remaining present, with no worry about what is to come next. I linger at the counter when my tea steeps, watching dark leaves infuse the water, feeling the steam sooth my face. This moment, the thoughts of my day are only on experiencing the warm touch of the mug and the first sip of that freshly brewed cup. It is lingering in comfort. It is true that we cannot linger over everything, as I cannot ignore the demands of my day as they tug on my shirt and ask me for breakfast. The moment of comfort in my cup of tea is gone as the bustle of the morning rushes in, lunches need to be packed, children need to be dressed, teeth need to be brushed. But there seems to be a place in art curriculum where learning how to linger and on what to linger is important. Feldman's method in *Practical Art Criticism* (1994) is often used as standard steps for talking about art, following the linear outline of describe, analyze, interpret, and judge. Criticism is the search for meaning not a prescribed way of looking at art. His method is meant to be a tool to help use take time to really look at the piece, to linger, invest ourselves into the work by responding to the qualities of the work, and delay the moment in which we make a judgment. It becomes the job of the art teacher to moderate the dialogue and inquiry, directing students toward discovering meaning and backing up their discoveries with visual facts.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> This is also the goal of *Visual Thinking Strategies* (VTS, 2011) curriculum and method, which uses art to foster students' capacity to observe, think, listen, and communicate. Discussions of works of art are focused on keeping students attentive to the image, its complementary and contrasting points, and to back up their ideas with visual evidence. It is truly an exercise in purposeful lingering (See also Housen, 2001).





IMAGE 5.5: Student Work: *Stapler*, digital print. 8" x 10"



IMAGE 5.6 Student Work: *Poptops*, digital print. 8" x 10"

The art classroom needs to be a place where students can learn purposeful lingering, the type of lingering that draws them into presence with an experience or work of art and allows them time to explore, attend, reflect, and relate. To be an artist is not the mastery of skills, per se, but the “capacity to work a vague idea and emotion over into terms of some definitive medium” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 78).

The artist does not communicate; the artist shares (Dewey, 1934/2005). In lingering with this work, I have come to a place where teaching art is more about teaching ways of being together than teaching artistic skills. I linger with my students to more fully understand the beauty of their steeping, the traces of where their work will seep into mine and will become a moment of comfort and caring.



IMAGE 5.7: *Students working on Sistine Chapel Ceiling exercise, 2011, photographic journal*

\* \* \* \*

Love between persons is the best available model for unity we seek between learners and knowledge, between artists and art, between individual and the materials of his self. We have to think about schooling as an enterprise established for the purpose of seeking culminations in manifold forms of love...If love embarrasses us, then our work as teachers or students will inevitably be inauthentic and artificial; we shall find ourselves in the position of trying to bring about

enthusiasm for learning and commitment for values without possessing and motive force that can effectively manage the task. (Feldman, 1970, p.128)

\* \* \* \*

I forgive you.

now and always

but I must also say goodbye

to move on

\* \* \* \*

**The End is Where We Start From**

What we call the beginning is often the end  
And to make an end is to make a beginning.  
The end is where we start from. And every phrase  
And sentence that is right (where every word is at home,  
Taking its place to support the others,  
The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,  
An easy commerce of the old and the new,  
The common word exact without vulgarity,  
The formal word precise but not pedantic,  
The complete consort dancing together)  
Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,  
Every poem and epitaph...

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

(Eliot, 1943/1971, p.58-59)



IMAGE 5.8: *Ecclesiastes 3:1-8/Field View, Back*, 2011, altered fabric. 33" x 27" x 44" x 50"

## AFTERWARD

There is an appointed time for everything,  
and a time for every affair under the heavens.

A time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant;  
a time to kill, and a time to heal;  
a time to tear down, and a time to build;  
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn and a time to dance;  
a time to scatter stones, and a time to gather them;  
a time to embrace, and a time to be far from embracing;  
a time to seek, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;  
a time of love, and a time of hate;  
a time of war, and a time of peace.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

\* \* \* \*

Many of those who speak for imagination, possibility, the kindling of hope... remind us of the need to acknowledge the darkness and, working against that darkness, to conjecture, to design, to protest, to imagine, to transform (Greene, 1997/2001, p.120)

### **Collapsing**

There is an understating element of deconstruction that destruction leaves ruins. After all, poststructural work troubles all that we assume to be true and stable (St.Pierre & Pillow, 2000). As I stated earlier in chapter two, this type of theory is meant to put things into play, to resist creating a new definition that might simply replace the old one what was dominant, which would then of course need to be deconstructed. Poststructuralism, by its very nature of critiquing the structures, has had and should have an effect on every day life, as it seeps into the nature of our thinking and being (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000). During the time was engaged in researching, my world was collapsing around me. All that I knew to be true and real, collapsed. I was left in a ruin. Curriculum can do the same thing. So can art. Collapsing exposes us, our fear is made visible, our place of support and comfort is gone. The question I hope this research opens up is, what do we do with a collapse? How do we shift our perspective in order to not only survive the collapse, but endure?

### **Ending Reflections**

**Practice and Living Inquiry.** This study is, in all aspects, a form of living inquiry. Coming to understand a/r/tography, its methodology and theoretical basis, was a practice that had to be lived. I learned how to be attentive to the renderings,

often having to experience them first before being able to use/apply/trouble them. They became a sort of daily exercise in artful living. It is hard to demonstrate through writing alone how you come to live a theory, how theory and practice become embodied. Much like the process of working in fabric, I needed to take time to pull thread through fabric to refine the precision of hand stitching. I needed to cut away the excess in order to form the shapes needed for making the birds. I needed to reform the crinoline in order to make the smooth folds of the dress appear as tied and twisted nests. All of it took practicing wholeness-in-process. Without directly stating it, I tried to convey how wholeness-in-process also means being attentive to the parts that are not whole. One never knows if completion or closure occurs. The research does not answer a question, it does not present. It is meant to invite; invite discussion, invite troubling, invite another perspective on the intricacies of caring, specifically of caring in art education.

**How I Wrote/Validity.** I began writing with the basic structure of a formal dissertation, as well as in the same voice as I wrote in my published article, *Encouraging Empathy Through Aesthetic Engagement* (Riddett-Moore, 2009). I also wanted to include how the research began with trying to teach caring directly, as the article did, making empathy, care, and aesthetics a direct outcome or subject matter. Yet with the Giacometti lesson in the article, and some of the lessons in the early stages of the research design, there was no art making of my own other than the art I made as exemplars. Even when I attempted to create artwork with the students, my own art-making did not influence the research or my perspectives on teaching. My research felt more arts-informed. The students' artwork and proceeding critiques



and discussions were helpful in gaining perspective on the students, but not on the topic. I was not researching caring in my own art making or within my own life.

Here, life influenced, and I listened. I could have ignored the deeply personal things going on in my life, trying to continue to write about caring in an idealistic way. But instead, I began to create artwork (in the form of the dress, the photographic journals, and the writing itself) that I felt the need to create. There was no other way through the experience then to create. I could have shut down, listened to the valid reasons in my head for “not caring,” and indeed, that might have been easier. But in working through the art, in thinking through the art, in all the time spent writing, sewing, photographing, there emerged a new idea, a new belief, perhaps it wasn't even new, but came back to me in a transformed way: caring is a belief. It is a belief that things can be other than they are. It is a belief that things can change, can transform. It was only through the transformation of the artwork, of the birds changing from symbols of anger and destruction to symbols of hope and the Holy Spirit, that I was able to imagine a new way to care.

This, I think, is the vital part in addressing care as a teaching outcome. For who would really argue against teaching “how to care”? Seemingly, you can't disagree with wanting students to be caring people. Through the writing, I tried to show who might disagree with this-me. It would have been easier to not care, to forget about this person who hurt me and simply say “I don't care.” My burdens might have been lifted. But instead, I embraced the pain of caring. I worked the experience of caring into every corner of my daily life until it seeped through every aspect of what I was living and doing. It had to be done. It was necessary work.

**Artwork with/in the Study.** There are three main forms of artwork in this study: fabric arts, photography, and writing. When composing the final dissertation, I looked at it as a work of art, wanting to place the elements strategically so they would work in unity and contrast at the same time. I had to continue to revisit my data in order to find and arrange the right tone and hue in the piece. Just as I selected textures and shades of black fabric for the birds, I selected journal entries, student work, student reflections, and photographs to tell the story in a way that might encourage audience reflection and participation. I wanted the reader to feel the tension that existed, to see the change in curriculum and pedagogy that happened as a result of this research into caring. This is probably the area I felt needed more explanation, or perhaps just more “shots” of the relationship. I wanted to avoid spelling things out clearly, which typically happens when I lower my “teacher/researcher” mask and write with authority. I wanted to tap into the fact that I was letting go of the authority in my classroom in order to listen to my students and relate to them as artists in the midst of their own development of living.

**Format of Writing.** Set within a traditional five chapters of writing are what I refer to as “disruptions,” the images and journal entries that contrast and compliment the journey through caring. I was trying to hold onto order amidst personal collapse; I was trying to create meaning from the meaningless. It is a difficult thing to know you will never be able to understand reasons to actions or answers to questions. Sometimes we are caught in the trap of how the question “Why?” can fail us. Instead of dwelling on the “why”, I chose to image the “What

now?" What happens when caring seems impossible? What happens when you feel the urge to give up and move on? Is this our failure in education, our overwhelming desire to rationalize students' behaviors as having nothing to do with us? We wash our hands of them as they move out of our classes. It is easier to not care. How do we address this as teachers, specifically as art teachers? Is it even a realistic goal to try and embrace each student as our own? Are we setting ourselves up for failure, or an emotional heartache we won't be able to handle? What does it really take to believe a person can change? What does it take to really imagine a different world can exist? These are some questions I was left with at the conclusion of the study, which really will be the spark of the next set of artwork and writing.

The ability to image is often idealized as always positive, always easy, always leading to invention and discovery. Imagination is exciting. But imagining a new life, or a new way of being, can be filled with fear, anxiety, doubt. Imagination is risky and perhaps even dreadful. Yet I feel I have lived an experience wherein my ability to imagine has helped me grasp the unanswered questions of *why*. I can sit with *why* and be content to never have the answer. I can just be-in-relation to the questions, and know I can practice my own arts of living that will help bring peace and solace to the *why*. I can teach in order to help trouble, question, and live-in-being with my students and hopefully, at the end, help them realize their own beginnings and their own peace in *why*.

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