

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES:

“divining INTOXICATION”

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TO INQUIRE, A/R/TOGRAPHICALLY

Arts-based inquiry offers a range of methods to engage in the process of questioning, reflecting, and doing. *A/r/tography*, an emerging school of thought based in Art Education/Curriculum Studies at the University of British Columbia, is one such dynamic approach to qualitative research that challenges our notions and helps move our thinking forward as artists, researchers, and teachers. *A/r/tography* is defined as:

To be engaged in the practice of *a/r/tography* means to inquire in the world through an ongoing process of art making and writing not separate or illustrative of each other but interconnected and woven through each other to create additional and/or enhanced meanings. *A/r/tographical* work is rendered through the methodological concepts of contiguity, living inquiry, openings, metaphor/metonymy, reverberations and excess which are enacted and presented/performed when a relational aesthetic inquiry approach is envisioned as embodied understandings and exchanges between art and text, and between and among the broadly conceived identities of artist/researcher/teacher. *A/r/tography* is inherently about self as artist/researcher/teacher yet it is also social when groups or communities of *a/r/tographers* come together to engage in shared inquiries, act as critical friends, articulate an evolution of research questions, and present their collective evocative/provocative works to others. (R. Irwin, personal communication, June 12, 2004)

By placing creativity in the forefront, *a/r/tography* may generate innovative and unexpected insights by encouraging new ways of thinking, engaging, and interpreting theoretical questions as a researcher, and new ways of thinking, engaging and interpreting practice as a teacher. How we develop interrelationships between our art-making and our understanding of knowing becomes a critical question for *a/r/tography*, which “is about each of us living a life of deep meaning enhanced through perceptual practices that reveal what was once hidden, create what has never been known, and imagine what we hope to achieve” (Irwin, in press). As an aesthetic way of being, *a/r/tography* is living practice:

To live the life of an artist who is also a researcher and teacher, is to live a life of awareness,

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a life that permits openness to the complexity around us, a life that intentionally sets out to perceive things differently. Those living in the borderlands of A/r/tography recognize the vitality of living in an in-between space. They recognize that art, research, and teaching are not done, but lived. The lived experiences and practices are inherent in the production of works of A/r/tography created by individuals creating and recreating their lives. (Irwin, in press)

EMBODYING A/R/TOGRAPHIC PRACTICE

To position myself a/r/tographically, I search to unveil that which I may not be conscious of, to understand where my tensions dwell. As living between spaces is a key underpinning of a/r/tography, this video is structured to enact the tensions of in/between. I demonstrate how a/r/tography is a continuum without a given start and end point. Indeed, not all questions posed during this a/r/tographic process are answered. Some are left uncomfortably undone. Rather than reaching a conclusion, this example of a/r/tography in action highlights gaps and discomforts that demonstrate living practice. This journey will continue to unfold as I move beyond the known to the unknown, in an ongoing exploration of thinking, acting, creating, and being, in a praxis rooted in a/r/tography.

Placing the artist at the centre of educational inquiry is a task seldom asked of students, teachers, or researchers. I privilege the role of artist throughout this video as the roles of researcher-teacher have been the focus of my reflection and action many times in the past. By enacting a/r/tography, I document the process and trouble many questions to arrive at a realization that for me, my artist/researcher/teacher roles are colliding. I continue to grapple with how these three roles are coming together, and I anticipate this will likely be a life-long process as I oscillate through each space, living these three roles, sometimes singularly and sometimes concurrently.

The video "divining INTOXICATION" is my starting point. I adopt this methodological lens as I pose questions, consider directions, imagine possibilities and meditate on a research area of ongoing interest, women's transformational experiences of private and public shifts. This interest underlies my inquiry; it is at the back of everything and resonates in all action and reflection.

At the same time, a/r/tographic inquiry draws me into a metamorphosis of my states of being as an artist/researcher/teacher, denoting a shift, a "dynamic movement within the form we call pedagogy" (Grumet, 1988, p. 121). My initial response was to resist the transformative process, a

resistance that reflects the opening of "a revised understanding of identity" (Rogoff, 2000, p. 123). But I soon began to recognize that my artistic practice overlaps and intersects with my approach to research and teaching. In essence, as a researcher, I seek to divine an understanding of women's lived experiences. Much like divining images in landscapes, there are no steps, fixed methods or procedures laid out in advance of a research study about lived experiences. Each study has its own sequence based on interpreting data and exploring issues that influence the research. Like artistic intoxication, research is defined by inherent tensions of uncertainty, questioning, disharmony, and problematising the known. As a woman who is engaged in educational inquiry, I consider how being an artist and researcher informs my day-to-day practice. In teaching, elements of my artistic practice emerge, particularly the divining of knowledge from a social constructionist point of view. There are teachable moments and dynamic exchanges, yet this inquiry reveals to me that my site of teaching remains a contentious realm with/in.

To teach as an art would require us to study the transferences we bring to the world we know, to build our pedagogies not only around our feeling for what we know but also around our knowledge of why and how we have come to feel the way we do about what we teach. (Grumet, 1988, p.128)

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REFLECTING ON THE PROCESS

If all art is an unfinished event, then there is always something more to be said, and it is through the process of a/r/tographic inquiry that we may generate better curriculum by developing a deeper and more meaningful understanding of living our practice (Davey, 1999). A/r/tographic inquiry

brings an appreciation of the layering of artist/researcher/teacher. I move from a personal perspective of separation to a more universal understanding of congruency in these roles. I recognize that viewers may consider and reconsider elements of this a/r/tographic process in ways I cannot conceive and would not want to delimit. Such openings facilitate movement towards divergent perspectives and ways of being, leading to questions that may include: "What would we notice if we allowed ourselves to stop and attend to the aesthetic qualities in our lives, work, surroundings and relationships? How might our interactions with others change if we contemplated the aesthetic qualities embedded within our collegial discussions, our lessons, or our decisions? How might we open ourselves up to appreciating the aesthetic qualities of experience before acting upon those we want to change?" (Irwin, 2003, p. 74).

If witnessing this a/r/tographic performance prompts viewers to reflect on their own meaning-making as artists and/or researchers and/or teachers, then I suggest a/r/tography is an entry point to exploring our worlds and ourselves, individually and collectively. Perhaps it is from within our creative cores that we each gain a true sense of how we, as artists / researchers / teachers, truly be and become.

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