

The Body Knowing: A Visual Art Installation as Educational Research

by

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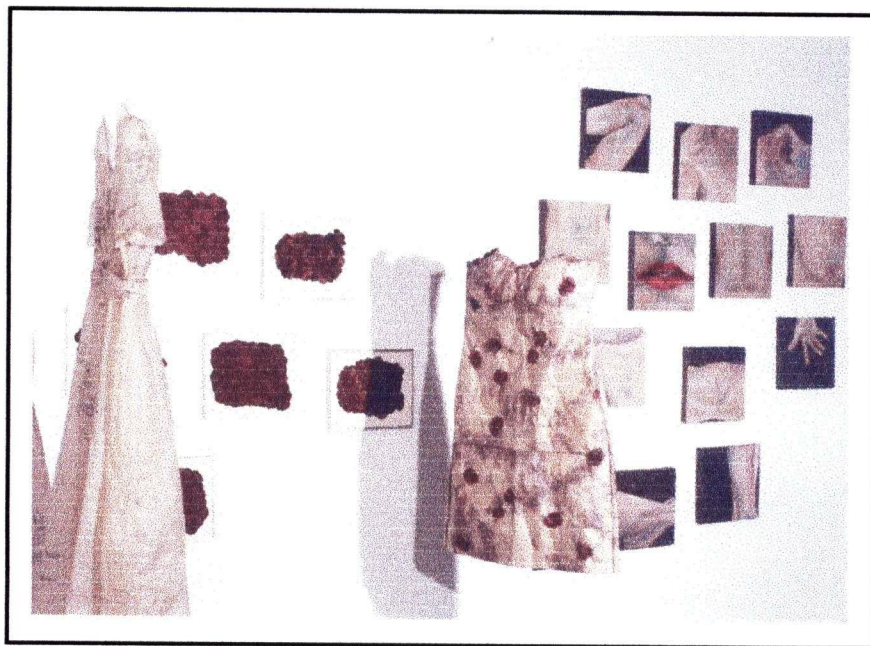
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Abstract

The Body Knowing: A Visual Art Installation as Educational Research brings together theory, written text and artwork, as *reticule*. The network of intricately woven fragments between the visual art representation and the written artifact provide multiple opportunities to understand new insights and interpret ideas that are often in conflict with each other, creating a place of tension and disorientation. The visual artwork illuminates through absence, what could not be represented through traditional modes of scholarship and the written form.

As an artist and a scholar my thesis inquiry addresses two distinct but related research areas: 1) It creates a theoretical framework for the enactment of visual art as a scholarly way of knowing and the representation of educational research as an art form; and 2) It examines the body and art making as sites of agency and social change. The artwork and text presented in this thesis intend to challenge presumptions and methodological criteria governing knowledges, by examining the body and the role the body plays in the production and evaluation of knowledge.



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Acknowledgments

It is early fall and I have just begun my first term as a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia. Sitting in an introductory research methods course I am struck by the pages of text that fall open before me. Participant observation, unstructured data, case size, and interpretation. But, where is the text of the artist, of the body, of silence and fragments? Where am I? The professor, aware of my unspoken agony, hands me a small, bound chapbook of poetry. The poet was a graduate student of his. Her dissertation was a novel. The gesture unsettled me. I began to paint. I handed in a box of oil on canvas paintings-a non/paper of sorts. The chapbook of poetry got lost in a stack of library books, xerox copied journal articles and coffee stains¹.

I came to the academe believing that my artist self was disconnected and alienated from scholarship. My brushes, oil paints and hand made papers were part of a separate life, one that existed outside of the academe. I was introduced to arts-based educational research, autobiography, visual ethnography and artist/ researcher/ teacher/ scholar collectives. I began to gather fragments. There are many scholarly and fictional texts, numerous artworks, exhibitions and artists, whose words and images have helped shape my research endeavor. There are many professors both past and present who have believed in the power of my paint brush, who have called to me from the boundaries, and allowed me the space to take risks, to be courageous, to bring sensuousness and the body to my scholarship. Your bodies and stories are tangled in the limbs and whisper in the caresses of my art installation.

I would like to acknowledge the contributions of my thesis committee who graciously guided me through this project. A very special recognition and appreciation to Dr. Rita Irwin, my supervisor, whose own artistic endeavors and embodied vision of

¹ Dunlop, R. & Springgay, S. (2001; in press). This is how she wants the story to be: Women arts education and the Ivory tower. In Stokrocki, M. & Clark, R. (Eds.). New waves in art education. 39 pages

scholarship has made this research inquiry possible. I wish to express my gratitude for her mentorship, commitment to reading drafts, assisting with the logistics of a visual art installation, and for providing support during the research and writing/ art making of this thesis. I would also like to thank Dr. Carl Leggo, with whom my poetic and narrative writing flourished and Dr. Shauna Butterwick for her enthusiasm and poignant questions that helped move this research project forward.

I would like to also thank Anna Kindler, Graeme Chalmers, Kit Grauer, Linda Peterat, Steven Carey, Gaalen Erickson, and Tony Clarke who provided me with the academic space to create art throughout my course work.

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A special note to: Alex, Bryn, Gailene , Kathleen, Kelly, Kent, Lara, Paras, Sonja, Sophie, Sylvia, and my family. I could not have done this without you.

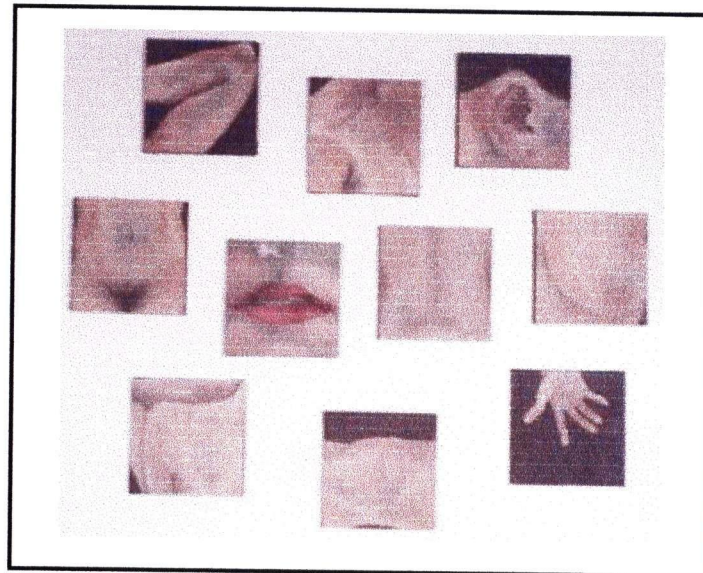
Rita, the installation is for you! Thank you for believing in the strength of my art.

The Body Knowing artwork

As a form of arts-based educational research it is imperative that the artwork be viewed in tandem with the written artifact. The artwork and subsequent art installation offer the viewer an opportunity to construct his/her own stories and theories, and to recognize that there are fragments left untold in the written thesis. Scholars have asked how a visual art installation would manifest and what role a written artifact would embody. The artworks support, contest or reveal additional concepts not possible through the written form, while the written document locates the art installation within a critical theoretical space; it does not describe a linear or singular interpretation of the artworks on display.

Photo documented images have been placed strategically throughout the written thesis, and I ask the viewer/ reader to explore these visual images, to step into the seam of experience, to engage in issues of reciprocity.

As of January 2002, the images and installation will be accessible on the web: www.springgay.com.



A Piece of Red Thread: Introduction

*Patiently
Making
Small stitches
Joining the edges of lives
For strength that works
Both ways¹*

The Body Knowing: A Visual Art Installation as Educational Research brings together pieces of theory, written text and artwork, as *reticule*. The network of intricately woven fragments between the visual art representation and the written artifact provide multiple opportunities to understand new insights and interpret ideas that are often in conflict with each other, creating a place of tension and disorientation. Throughout the inquiry I use a metaphor of stitching red thread, and the visual artwork is punctuated by splashes of alizarin crimson, linking the text and the art objects together. However, as Susan Griffin (1995) notes, the red thread cast between artifacts is itself an object, a trace, an outline, which enables one to discover new meanings and new understandings. Thus, the red thread doesn't just hold together fragments it becomes part of the text, an integral component of the story. The visual art installation illuminates through absence, *what could not be represented through the written form*. There is no singular interpretation. I cannot describe a story or an event that these art forms represent. They are fragments of theories, pieces of autobiography, gathered and collected evidence; they are multiple beings and evocations. Each viewer is called alongside the artwork, invited into the installation to reflect on their own bodies, on the bodies of their students and to create

¹ As cited in Kelly, C. (1995). Creating memory, contesting history. Matriart, 5 (3), 6-11.

new meanings. *But as I gaze at the chain of red painted from a memory that is not my own, I do not need to know this story* (Griffin, 1995, 240).

Artists who engage in installation art and/ or art as social activism, have found asking questions about the process in which they are engaged to be a necessary part of the work. Their continuing re-evaluation not only of art forms and content but also of art's relationship to the wider social and political realm has become an established strand of contemporary cultural discourse. In turn, art installation places a shared responsibility between artist and audience. The audience-witness distinction remains vital and provocative since it reminds us to ask again the questions about where art matters and where it leaves its mark. It seems that arts-based educational research is both the memory and the chronicler of what might otherwise pass unrecorded or unnoticed. It is a site where the connections between personal history and cultural identity can be reinvented.

As an artist and a scholar my thesis inquiry addresses two distinct but related research areas: 1) It creates a theoretical framework for the enactment of visual art as a scholarly way of knowing and the representation of educational research as an art form; and 2) It examines the body and art making as sites of agency and social change. The artwork and text presented in this thesis intend to challenge presumptions and methodological criteria governing knowledges, by examining the body and the role the body plays in the production and evaluation of knowledge.

The impact of my research inquiry aims to disorient and re-define epistemological and empirical claims in the academy. The body in education has been understood as a fixed system carefully managed for the enhancement of mental effort, envisioned as experiential, or repressed altogether (Grosz, 1995). My research project departs from these understandings of the body as a passive ground in which knowledge is enacted upon, and re-conceives bodies as agents of change. Likewise as scholars recognize the importance of our living aesthetic environment and the impact of everyday visual stimuli on the curriculum (Duncum, 2001; Garoian & Gaudelius, 2001) students require tools to re-construct the meaning of such imagery, and to understand how this interaction is performed, inscribed and resisted through their bodies. Art enacted as a form of critical literacy thus becomes a mode of communication and representation that combines personal and social agency, implications of which reach beyond art education to other curriculum areas. Re-conceptualizing how students (and teachers) come to know in, with and through their bodies, critiques the way in which the body is implicated and bound up in our understandings of curriculum, pedagogy and schooling.

Chapter One explores issues surrounding the debate on arts-based educational research, focusing on the *art product* created in an arts-based inquiry. The chapter assumes current debates on *why* scholars should embrace arts-based inquiry, and offers as extension an analysis of the representational form and methodology. Expanding on criteria set forth by Elliot Eisner (2001) and Laurel Richardson (2000) I establish a new set of criteria with which to evaluate and assess the art product of arts-based educational research. This move positions the art as a catalytic agent of change and calls attention to

issues of reciprocity and audience. Further discussions evolve around the role of Artist/ Researcher/ Teacher/ Scholar recognizing that identities are not subsumed or blurred, but that the different roles exist in tension with each other, creating a space for scholarship, which entertains uncertainty and remains incomplete.

Chapter Two offers a space in which the art installation, The Body Knowing, is contextualized, proposing art as theory as fragment. Using psychoanalysis, feminist art criticism, feminist theory and critical theory I deconstruct the visual imagery and locate the methodology of my art practices within the broader context of contemporary art and feminist art theory, a position which advocates and introduces art as social action. Throughout the chapter I use a boundary metaphor to bring a critique of my art into a discursive space about teaching and learning.

Manipulating elements of abjection, interior and exterior body spaces, and the dismantling of a mind/ body split, Chapter Three positions an argument for the inclusion of the body in the construction of knowledge. Using poetry, narrative inquiry, and feminist and critical theory, the chapter examines conditions of tacit knowing, feminist theory of self as other, and as bodied pedagogy. The chapter re-circles to suggest that the academe find space for the inclusion of sensuous and bodied scholarship.

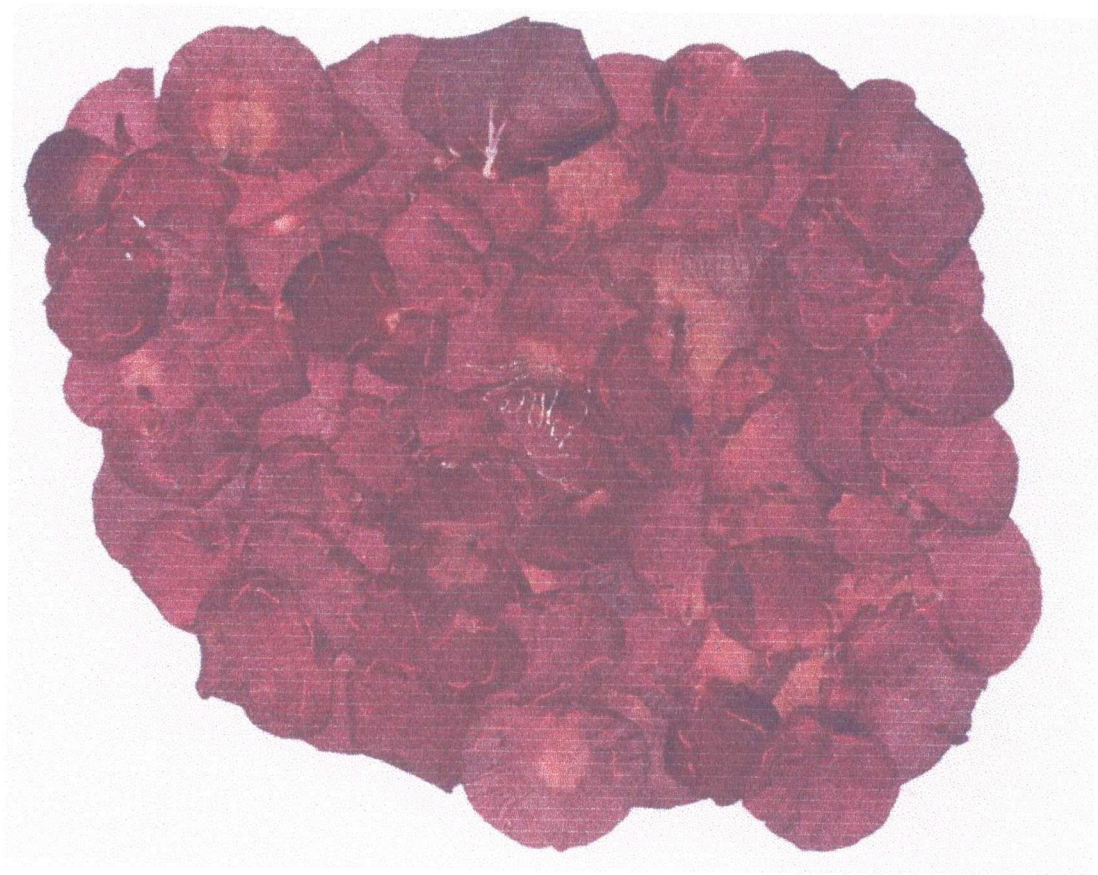
While writing this thesis, it was presented to me that perhaps I needed to reassess the term arts-based educational research, because my own research inquiry focuses on one form of the arts, visual art. I re-thought using the term art-based educational research

and came to the conclusion that I wanted to continue using the word *arts*. There is a considerable amount of scholarship on arts-based educational research, and many differing opinions as to what labels and terminology should be employed. One argument I make in this thesis is to distinguish between two types of arts-based educational research, a position that needs clarification because of the multiple forms arts-based inquiry at present, and because the quality and power of the art product has yet to be addressed. Secondly, I decided to adhere to the term arts, as I believe that although my own inquiry is visual art based, it does provide a space to consider qualities of form, bodies, and art making as sites of agency that have the potential to extend beyond the visual realm. I wanted to leave open the possibility for further boundary shifts.

A note to the reader on the use of multiple fonts in the written artifact: I have adhered to Times Roman font for most of the document, however, personal narrative inquiry is interjected (sometimes without warning, in the form of headings) as *italicized font*. In addition, there are moments in the text, where another scholars' words seemed to overlap with my own thoughts, and I found the use of a traditional citation format intrusive. I therefore chose to *italicize the citation* within the body of text and the correct APA style format follows the *italicized quote*. Third in font choice is the use of a poetic narrative, which is transcribed using the *Lucida Sans Font*.

A word of warning to the viewer/ reader: You may find yourself lost amidst these stage directions, there may be times you struggle to distinguish whose voice is speaking, and you may be startled to find your own body reflected back in the images and in the

words. I invite you into the seam, to gaze not at me the artist-scholar but to return the act of viewing and reading to your own body, to the bodies of your students. Art as witness provides gaps or fragments, spaces through which the reader/ viewer asserts their own body and it's capacity for reception, creation, appreciation and evocation. I expect and encourage you to react. It may be violent. Find value in the struggle with, in, and through incongruencies, contradictions and questions left unanswered. Become a piece of red thread.



Arts-based educational research: A reconsideration of art

Art is intimacy, lover's talk, and yet it is a public declaration.

Jeanette Winterson, *Art Objects*ⁱ.

This art, these wings- they're mine.

Brenda Brown, *Lost Bodies and Wild Imagination*ⁱⁱ.

Arts-based educational research: A reconsideration of art

The true artist is interested in the art object as an art process, the thing in being, the being of the thing, the struggle, the excitement, the energy, that have found expression in a particular way.

Jeanette Winterson, *Art Objects*ⁱⁱⁱ.

And the novel unfolds, written in the gaps between reading, teaching and the imagination, the fashioning of art and of inquiry not as reproduction furniture, but as an extension of the notion of literary anthropology. The nature of the discourse is not to replicate art but to imply, through language, qualities of life that are often ineffable, what cannot be said, particularly in conventional perceptions of schooling and educational life.

Rishma Dunlop, *Boundary Bay*^{iv}.

Positionings

Creating art is the rewriting of what is private and what is public, the reversal and displacement of these realms and their opposition in order to actively assert, displace and assemble new ways of knowing and being. Artist as witness is someone who sees and knows by personal and aesthetic experiences, as well as through the act of giving evidence (Dunlop, 2001a). As an artist and a scholar I am interested in two distinct but related aspects of arts-based educational research. 1) The role of visual art as a scholarly way of knowing (and as representation of that knowledge). 2) The role of visual art (the final product) in arts-based research as a catalytic agent for social change.

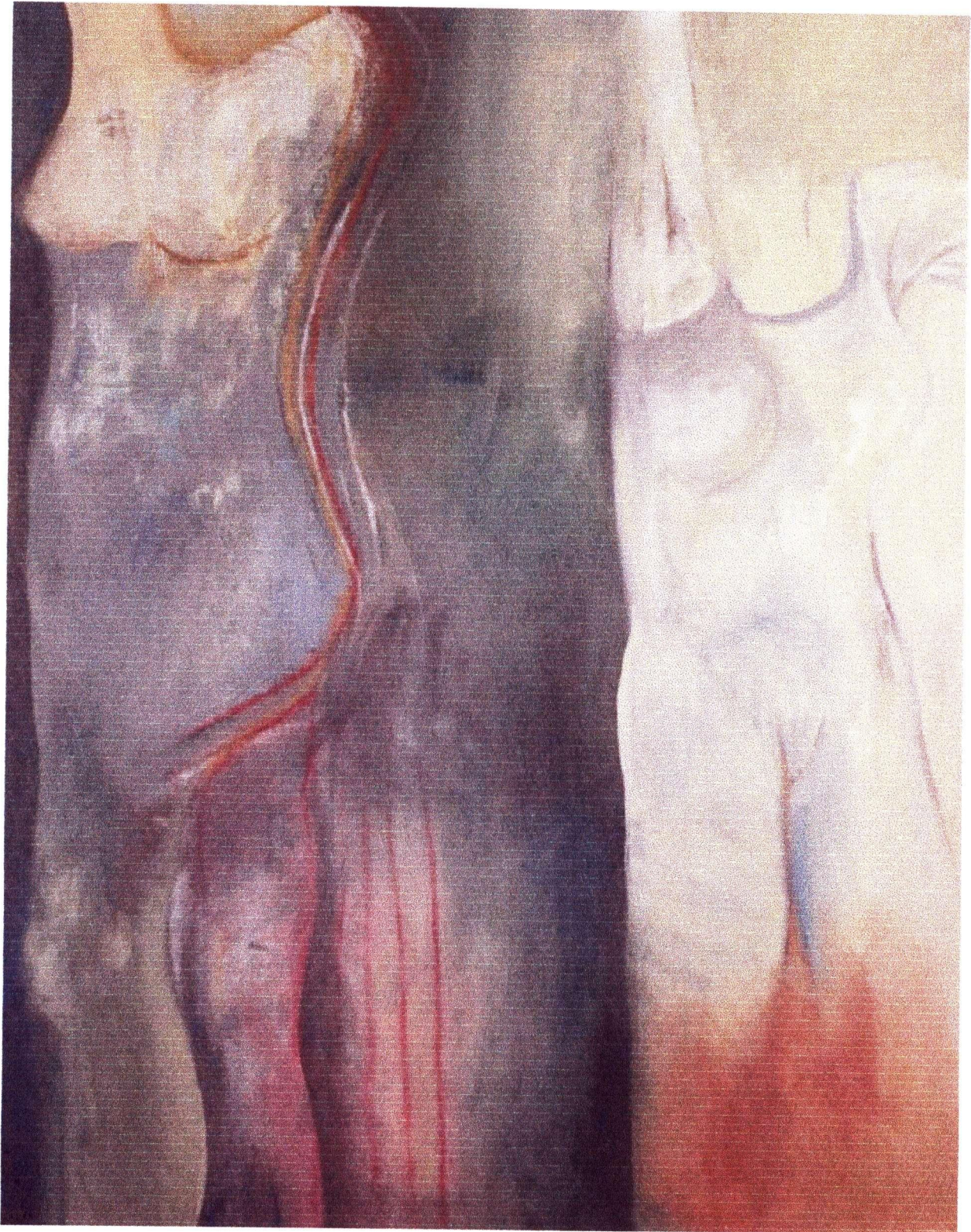
There has been a considerable amount of scholarly writing on the rationale for arts-based educational research, creating a demand for an exploration of artistic genres and their effects on and value within educational research. Arts-based educational

research has been linked to such research methods as hermeneutics, phenomenology, action research, and autobiography (Cole & Knowles, 2000; Dunlop, 1999; Eisner, 1995; Irwin, 1997; Watrin, 1999; Wilson, 2000), and their interwoven relationships have provided extensive debates on issues of validity and value (Dunlop, 2001b; Eisner, 2001). The majority of such discussions disclose similarities between the process of artistic creation and teaching and learning, and/ or report research findings in an aesthetically informed manner. Yet, there exists an absence in arts-based educational research on the importance of the art product; the residue of the research inquiry. I maintain that the art in arts-based research (visual art in particular) needs to be examined as an ongoing site, where artistic processes (viewing and making) enact personal and social agency.

Reflecting on the burgeoning role of artistic and alternative research practices, this chapter will address issues of validity and value in arts-based educational research, and argue for a distinction to be made between artwork employed as decorative or aesthetically pleasing elements of a research text, and one that is arts-based in its inquiry. A further section will provide a brief literature review of artist/ researcher/ teacher/ scholar roles in arts-based educational research, deliberating and analyzing the art product created from two such research inquiries. I advocate and investigate the purpose and potential of art as a catalyst for social change, proposing new directions for the use of artistic genres in educational research. In addition, I argue that arts-based educational research needs to find value in the academy contributing to important debates in scholarly inquiry about epistemological and empirical claims. The artworks that form the basis of my thesis The Body Knowing should be viewed and interpreted as theory that informs

and disrupts issues presented in this chapter, after all, it is art-based educational research.

Research as art.



Epilogue: September 17, 2001

I find the act of writing about my art making practices to be a curious adventure. My thesis has taken many turns in the past few months, as I endeavor to gather, collect, document and theorize my artist and scholarly selves. I intended months ago, to keep a journal of my studio practices, and I managed to extract a few initial weeks out of this reflective process. I found this type of note taking forced and unnatural, and it unsettled me to bring the research side of my inquiry into the studio. In fact on June 17th, I made note of this uneasiness, and it was my last attempt at documenting my daily art practice. I do continue to keep a journal, a visual journal of sorts, complete with theoretical note taking from books read, word groupings, quotations, sketches, collaged material, shopping and "to do" lists. Curiously enough I also have more than one journal in use at a time, mark making on any page that I turn to, avoiding a page-by page linear account of daily routine. The journals' sometimes contain reflections on both my teaching life and my artistic practices. Mostly the studio centred reflections are in the form of sketches, as I push my artwork forward, re-designing the installation, drawing concepts, planning scale. There are very few notes on what the artistic process means, what I did that day in the studio, and what it might mean for my researching-teaching life. My uneasiness in analyzing my art practice, resides in trying to define this process, in words, what is lived and felt through my body. The artistic process is hesitant. My own method in my "sketchbook", reflected in the sewn and designed conceptual garments, and contained within the painting surfaces, is a series of building layers, wiping and scraping away, leaving tracks and residues of previous imagery, ghost-like

shapes and figures. As the final works emerge (and when are they final?), I am unsure of their becoming, I sense and feel the process in my limbs, but I struggle to articulate in words what I have constructed in my studio space. I know that making art is unknowable, I resist the temptation to categorize and order the process. I contend that the final product, the artwork, is also in process. It too is never complete, a dialogue that continues between viewer, exhibition site, artist and artwork. Thus, as I begin to take the fragments of my research; the artworks, the visual journals, the cited references and scholarly excerpts that will form the basis of my thesis, I return to a question recently articulated by Elliot Eisner (2001): What is the difference between art and arts-based educational research? I further ask: Is the art that I have created for this thesis any different than the art I would have continued to envision and create had I not brought my studio practice into the academe? What are my reasons, my rationales for pursuing arts-based educational research as methodology?



What is arts-based educational research?

The silence in poetry, that which could not be expressed in words drew me to art.

Cecilia Vicuna in *Voicing Today's Visions*^y.

Arts-based educational research is not a methodology that is determined by a singular and identifiable form. It defies objectivity, celebrates multiplicity and generates in diverse artistic genres. In light of these differences, there has been a considerable amount of scholarship on the *why* of arts-based educational research, arguing for space and inclusion in educational research. Most often this type of scholarship draws on other qualitative methodologies for support, and/ or uses theoretical metaphors to exemplify arts-based research's multi-modal, multilectic and ambiguous personification. Very few published articles actually employ arts-based educational research, which leaves the question, "*what does arts-based educational research look like?*," unanswered. Similarly, at national and international conferences I have been witness to paper presentations that embody a performative genre and label themselves as arts-based educational research. Still, I often leave these presentations questioning the relationship between artistically crafted research and art as research.

Re-circling I ask, "*what is research*"? Elliot Eisner (2001) states that the aim of educational research is to enlighten, improving the conditions for students we teach. Rita Irwin furthers this position with "research is the enhancement of meaning revealed through ongoing interpretations of complex relationships that

are continually recreated and transformed” (manuscript under review, np), while Lorri Neilson claims that “research means to effect change” (2001, np). Rishma Dunlop (1999) framing her research inquiry with an entomological investigation, reminds us that research is to “search a new” and Laurel Richardson (2000), Ardra Cole and Gary Knowles (2001, course conversations) offer “that research is a version of a story” and “that research is about slicing up lives.”²

In the past year, I have been privileged to attend the American Educational Research Association’s (AERA) Winter Institute (2001) on arts-based educational research, directed by Eliot Eisner, Tom Barone, and Rishma Dunlop. At this three day workshop, and re-iterated in Eliot Eisner’s symposium presentation at the 2001 AERA annual conference in Seattle, Eisner (2001, np) identifies eight key features of arts-based research. Artistically rendered research can be defined as arts-based educational research if:

- 1) The research is about an educational phenomenon.
- 2) Expressive forms are used to convey meaning.
- 3) The research displays both in its language and level of conceptualization a familiarity with theoretical and conceptual resources including other research relevant to the problem or issue being addressed.
- 4) Illuminating effects are used to reveal what had not been noticed before.
- 5) It is generative, promoting new questions.

² I would like to thank Ardra Cole and Gary Knowles who graciously extended an invitation to me during the writing of this thesis, to attend one of their seminar classes on Arts Informed Research. The above noted comments are taken from notes in my journal.

- 6) Incisiveness is used, penetrating to the core of the research question or problem.
- 7) It is generalizable and bears relevance to other educational research.
- 8) It yields new concepts through conceptual fruitfulness.

It is interesting to note that prefacing these claims is a sub-text, which states that these qualities are most consistent with literary forms of art. Does this then establish a different set of criteria when evaluating arts-based educational research in the visual arts? Does the inclusion of some or all of these qualities ensure and establish a research endeavor as arts-based? Are there alternative criteria with which to judge a work of arts-based educational research? Is all arts-based educational research art?

Eisner's criteria can be applied to many qualitative research texts that I would argue do not fall into the category of arts-based educational research, but might be better defined as a form of visually informed ethnography or image-based research.³ The aim of this chapter is not to analyze Eisner's key features; I refer to them in order to juxtapose the complexities and ambiguities involved in defining arts-based educational research. As stated earlier there is some degree of clarity needed to define research that is "put together" using artistic devices

³ I would argue that research texts such as Ricki Goldman-Segall's (1998) Points of Viewing could easily be defined and described using Eisner and Barone's categories. However, even Goldman-Segall (with whom I had lengthy discussions around this argument in her video ethnography class in the Winter of 2001) would argue that her research is a form of visually informed ethnography or image based research, not arts-based educational research.

versus a form of arts-based educational research, which posits art as a scholarly way of knowing.

A note from my journal

In trying to articulate the difference between a representation of research that may incorporate poetry, visual artifacts or even use narrative prose, and one that is arts informed⁴, Ardra Cole offers this suggestion: Describing a dissertation by Lois Iris Kunkel (2000) which incorporates phenomenology and narrative inquiry to explore six participants' testament of abuse and violence in missionary schools, Cole intimates that while the written dissertation includes aesthetic considerations of form, it is arts informed in inquiry because the six participants are not "data," but rather shape and provide a context within which to tell the story. The research explores experience and testament as a process of transformation and agency. The narratives told are not evidence used to support a research claim, nor are they grouped, coded or thematically explored, but rather viewed as material to help shape the story of empowerment and testimony. Thus, narrative (fact or fiction) constitutes a way of knowing (Richardson, 2000).

Laurel Richardson (2000) also offers five criteria with which to judge aesthetically informed research: *substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, reflexivity, impact, and expression of a reality*. They sound promising. They are

⁴ Ardra Cole and Gary Knowles use the term "arts informed research" as opposed to "arts-based educational research".

broad and general, easily modified to fit most alternative genres. However, these criteria are embedded within a book chapter on writing inquiry, a call to embrace non-scientific strands of writing ethnography. Again I ask: Can we just plug visual art into criteria set and defined for writing genres? If someone writes from a personal subjective position, adds a few extracts of poetry and a photograph, is this arts-based educational research? Should arts-based educational research define a set of criteria?

Articulating what constitutes as arts-based educational research is a difficult task. In fact, this section of the thesis has been re-written countless times, and each time I find myself tangled in words and phrases that are often in tension with each other. What I want to illuminate for the reader is the notion that arts-based educational research is more than adding a painting, a poem, or a fictional story to the research text. My understanding of arts-based educational research includes the artistic genre in the construction of knowledge. Art is a way of inquiring and researching. Subsequently, there is a responsibility on the part of the researcher to use particular artistic devices as appropriate to the research inquiry, and to recognize that while arts-based educational research may be a somewhat newer field of study, the arts have a deep historical tradition. In this section I will offer as critique the difference between art employed as “decorative fringes” to a research text, and an inquiry that is arts-based.

Laurel Richardson (2000) refers to an arts-based inquiry as “Creative Analytic Practices: CAP Ethnography” and states: “Writing is a process of discovery. My purpose is not to turn us into poets, novelists, or dramatists- few of us will write well enough to succeed in those competitive fields. Most of us... will be at best only almost poets” (936). *Almost poets?* If, as Richardson states, “writing is a process of discovery”, then *almost* could be interpreted as becoming, in a state of formation and something that is in process. I do not interpret *almost* in this way. *I am not an almost artist.* Art is not, as Richardson refers to it, my “second language”, but rather art is the way that I make sense of “texts”, art is a methodology through which I create meaning. Art as research is a bodied expression, a mode of communication that resonates with all of our senses. When I bring my scholarly self into the studio, I interpret academic texts, novels, poetry, and ethnographic data through art forms. Conversely it is the juxtaposition of my artist self that finds new spaces, new structures and brings forth questions that might otherwise have been ignored. I do not want to negate the process, the journey that Richardson speaks of, but her choice of words are troublesome to those of us who identify as artists, as poets and as novelists; to those of us for whom art is a first language. I am seeking a place in scholarship for artistic ways of knowing. I also interpret *almost* in this phrase as being second rate, and I wonder what researchers would say about *almost scholars?* Yes, artistic devices can reveal what might have remained hidden using traditional research methods, but should the quality of the research suffer because we are employing artistic devices? We need to be cautious of what aesthetic choices we

make and the rationales behind this selection. Encouraging graduate students and researchers to embrace artistic genres and alternative methods of scholarship is essential. However, whether it be poetry, drama, or visual art, the particular genre employed needs to become part of the inquiry, it needs to lend something to the interpretation, the analysis and the understanding of the research. It cannot simply make the page look nice.

Richardson's text continues, advocating that, "using creative analytic practices, ethnographers learn about themselves that which was unknowable and unimaginable using conventional analytic procedures, metaphors and writing formats" (931). Focusing on the process of inquiry, Richardson claims that, "writing up interviews as poems, honoring the speaker's pauses, repetitions, alliterations, narrative strategies, rhythms...may actually better represent the speaker than the practice of quoting in prose snippets...and that further poetic devices-rhythms, silences, spaces, breath points, alliteration, meter, cadence, assonance, rhyme-engage the listener's body" (933). I agree with and support such statements, and then add my own words of caution. For example, throughout this thesis, you will find examples of silences, space, breath points, and cadence. *Bruised skin. Tears.* While this type of writing inquiry can be arts-based (if the artistic genre of inquiry is poetry or other written art forms), in my thesis it is not. My arts-based thesis uses visual art as the mode of inquiry. The use of particular written stylistic devices are intended to add a sense of rhythm to the text, isolate words or phrases for impact, and are aesthetic choices I make in

constructing the written page. As an art student, years ago, my professors would examine and critique my artwork. They would often use their hands or a piece of paper to cover over a particular portion of a painting (or whatever the art form may have been) and ask, *If this section or object was removed how would the art change, what difference would it make?* When a symbol or a particular brushwork served no purpose to the piece, it was evident that this section needed additional editing or should be removed altogether. We can ask ourselves similar questions when analyzing a work of arts-based educational research: How has the art form contributed to the inquiry or the understanding of a particular phenomenon? What purpose does the artistic genre serve?

The arts have often been used in research as reflexive tools, asserting that “artists find patterns in new ways” (Neilson, np), focusing on the process of discovery and the unconscious modality of art making. Many scholarly texts advocate the imaginative and creative possibilities that art brings to a research project. Alex de Cosson (Irwin et al., 2001) creates a space for risk in his teaching, asking students to dwell amidst uncertainty and to allow the artwork to flow, to let go and to let the materials speak for themselves. However, art teachers also work with their students planning aesthetic decisions and re-working the design. As a work unfolds in my studio, there is a substantial amount of re-conceptualizing, editing and re-creating the artwork until a certain standard of final product is achieved. During both the creative process and the editing of the artwork considerable attention is given to an understanding of the historical, social, and political context of the materials used and the concept that has been developed. As researchers we

embed our own theories and work within the context of other research. In the written form we cite these scholars and their work as a way of “giving thanks”, and as recognition of the responsibility that we as a community of researchers share. In visual art we also respond to others’ work through a type of citation. Sometimes this is done through written text in the form of artist statements or exhibition catalogues. In other instances it is subtler, referenced through aesthetics, in the images placed around our studio spaces, in the manner that certain works of art are hung together in an exhibition display, or acknowledged informally in conversation: “*I have been influenced by...*”. My point is that as arts-based educational researchers we need to identify this tradition. We need to understand the aesthetic choices we make and use in our research. If visual art is to be recognized as a form of epistemology and used as a representational method of research, we must locate our work not only within educational scholarship, but also “give thanks” and context to the historical, social and political perspective of a particular art form.

When a fellow researcher and graduate student confesses, at a recent conference, that their arts-based educational research endeavor creates in Batik, an apple insignia on varied textures of fabric, each one to represent a participant (student teachers) in the research study, I immediately questioned this researcher’s use of *Batik* and asked if they were aware of the cultural traditions this art form and process embodied. I was curious to know why *Batik* had been selected to represent the participants in her study. As it was, the researcher was unaware of the historical tradition of *Batik*, and she did not conceive of the possibility that “apples” as a visual symbol refer to more than a singular interpretation of “teacher”. Our conversations continued, drawing in a number of arts-

based educational researchers, as I wondered aloud about the appropriation of a cultural art form and the misrepresentation of a very loaded visual symbol (unpublished conversations at Curriculum and Pedagogy conference, 2001). Perhaps the creation of these artifacts during the research process invoked a cathartic reflection for the researcher, but what relevance to the research topic (which was on student teachers' prior beliefs and experiences) does the contrived labeling of identity (one student teacher was represented by polyester, another 50/50 cotton fabric) with fabric choices seek to establish? In fact this form of arts-based research smacks of the very absurdities, distortions and inauthentic renderings that arts-based educational research is attempting to unravel. Arts-based inquiry makes great claims about the potential for diverse and multiple resonations. Thus, a researcher who uses a visual symbol of an apple must realize that teacher, eve, sin, seduction, sexuality, rape, punishment (and the list can continue) will be evoked simultaneously, or at the very least that different viewers will respond in a multitude of directions. In addition, *Batik* as an art form bears witness to significant implications of colonialism and capitalism, to name just a few of the social contexts bound up in this art form. I am not saying that her dissertation needed to spend pages on a full discussion or disclosure on these given topics, but if she had been aware of these perspectives how might her aesthetic choices have differed? Again I ask: Why *Batik* apples as a representation of student teachers? As researchers we need to embrace art as a way of knowing and being scholarship *because* it can reveal in diverse and different ways from the written word. Art calls our imagination to be aroused in new ways, to reorganize experience, and to respond to a bodied sensual awareness.

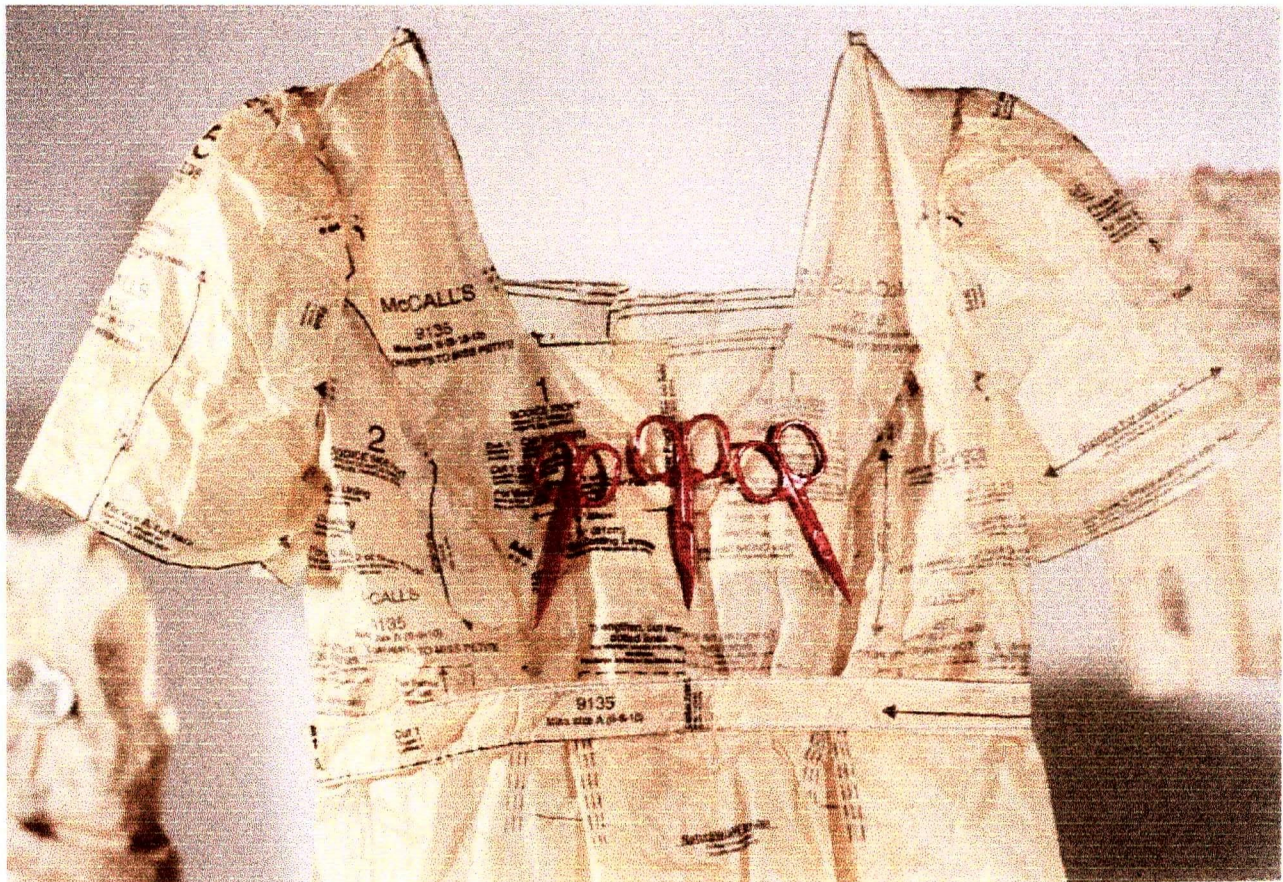
If arts-based educational research is to be embraced as a scholarly way of knowing and if the art as a representational form is to speak in new languages, then what conditions of merit and quality are to be placed on the final product? What might the art reveal? What is lost without judgment to the artistic validity of the art product?

The art must become part of the construction of knowledge, not simply a visual illustration, an added on afterthought of the research data. We must come to recognize that *art is a way of knowing, a way of being research*. Arts-based educational research as an alternative research methodology is also an alternative method. It is not enough to collect data, analyze and thematically code the data using methods and terms associated with rigorous qualitative studies, to then represent these findings as an artistically crafted genre. Instead we must recognize that art can be a way of researching. When we research using art forms, the art becomes the tools of analysis. Arts-based educational research is a particular perspective, one that includes diverse methods of investigating, inquiring, probing and interacting with participants and other research texts. Arts-based educational research is both process and product. As Sylvia Wilson cites in her thesis:

Art is a human construction, a tool that human beings use to make sense of their existence, of themselves as human beings, as people. It is not a medium for transporting meaning or beauty or truth. It is a tool for constructing meaning. Art is a way that we tell... stories about ourselves to ourselves and others. (2000, 22)

The art product can be likened to the “concept of the remainder” (as cited in Aoki, 2000). The remains are the research, they are interwoven as part of the

inquiry, providing additional, deep, complex and unique opportunities to create new understandings and meanings.



Artist/ Researcher/ Teacher/ Scholar

To live the life of an artist who is also a researcher and teacher, is to live a life of awareness, a life that permits openness to the complexity around us, a life that intentionally sets out to perceive things differently.

Rita Irwin, *A/R/T as living Inquiry*^{vi}.

The following section considers scholarship from one thematic arm of the vast and divergent texts on arts-based educational research. First, I provide a brief literature review of scholarship that proposes a relationship between the roles of artist/ researcher/ teacher/ scholar. Further to this review, I introduce two examples of arts-based inquiry as self-study. I focus not on the research inquiry of self-study, but instead turn my interests and questions to the artwork generated (in both cases they are art installations) that further enrich and extend the self-study towards an inquiry that is performative. This performative aspect of the art product calls attention to issues of audience and reciprocity, and introduces art as a form of social action. The remainder of this chapter and thesis position arguments for art as research as a form of intervention and agency; that creates possibilities for personal and social transformation.

Artistic inquiry has often been linked to forms of qualitative research, which are investigative, exploratory, intuitive and reveal the developmental process. Rhonda Watrin (1999) finds similarities between art as research and phenomenology and hermeneutics, citing such key features as: lived experience as source material, includes a study of the self, descriptive and interpretive, process oriented and inductive analysis.

“Art holds qualities that embrace complexity, ambiguity, and immediacy in search of fuller meaning” (Watrin, 1999, 96). Art as research is similar to phenomenological inquiry and hermeneutics “in the sense that the creator and viewer are held in a space where meaning occurs” (1999, 97). Art, she continues, reveals itself through metaphor and symbols that are oriented towards contextual relationships and relatedness.

Another argument put forth by Robin Stewart, reconstructs the term *bricolage*, an appropriation of traditional and established research models, in order to “develop better understandings about the changing and significant roles of artist, artwork and agency” (2000, 3). Using autobiography, Stewart argues, situates an artists’ understanding of their studio practice in relation to their teaching. An example in praxis of this methodological investigation between artist/ researcher/ teacher/ scholar, is Sylvia Wilson’s Masters of Arts Thesis (2000) which investigates seasons of loss, disability and dependence as she nurtures her multiply handicapped son, sewing into fabric as she writes and explores metaphors of birth, life and death. It is a personal search, an inward journey, which informs critical reflection of her teaching role at the University of British Columbia. The quilt, which accompanies the narrative text, serves as a visual narrative, viewed and interpreted in conjunction with and counter to the written text:

In the narratives/ art included in this thesis neither the images nor the text is meant to be read alone, rather together, each resonating with each other, reflecting and offering continuously evolving interpretation. There is no one fixed interpretation or response. The images are not intended to act as an illustration to the text and neither is the text offered as an explanation to the image. (24-25)

Combining autobiography, action research, narrative ethnography, phenomenology and hermenutics, Wilson offers: “The richness of qualitative methods can only be described

in terms of [their] difference... [their] strength is in the lived, felt, descriptive, nature of experience” (39). Further to this, Wilson speaks of the need for her practice as an artist and her art as research to “flow back and forth, and in and out, each influencing, directing and informing the other” (40). The tension created by joining these separate but related roles is further articulated by Nicole Porter:

As the term “art teacher” implies, both disciplines of pedagogy and studio art must be recognized as contributors to the art classroom... It is an inspiring proposition to bring the roles of artist and teacher together in the classroom in such a way that we do not feel that they are in opposition but in fact make each other stronger. (as cited in Wilson, 2000, 41)

Additional interpretations of self as artist can be seen in Patrick Slattery’s paper, Educational Researcher as Artist Working Within (2001), in which he explores the role of self in relation to arts-based educational research. Using as a framework of analysis, artist Jackson Pollock’s abstract expressionist paintings, which emanate from an unconscious space, Slattery poses parallel poststructural notions of self and autoethnography in order to understand his artistic processes. The paper builds a strong theoretical basis for autoethnographic research and forms a link between autobiography and arts-based educational research. Describing the process of conception and creation for his art installation 10,000 Ejaculations Slattery examines the repressed effects of his Catholic School curriculum on sexuality, desire and the body. The art installation includes artifacts and personal memorabilia arranged on top of and under a wooden school desk, in addition to a makeshift altar, candles, rosary beads and two large painted panels. As a performative tableau the viewer is invited to experience multiple reactions that are both illuminating and unsettling. While the installation piece is reminiscent of conceptual art practices, Slattery states that the work emerged from an unconscious realm

“without a specific didactic intent other than to probe my memories of the body and sexuality in my schooling experience” (385). He continues:

However, once my inner work becomes an aesthetic representation in a public space, the piece is available for others to experience, evaluate, critique, and apply to other contexts. In effect, it becomes a piece of interactive research in an ongoing process of deconstruction and recreation. (385)

While the paper is significant in its description and analysis of autoethnography, bodied regulation, and governmentality (all of which help locate the art installation in a theoretical discourse), what I find intriguing is the relationship between Slattery’s autobiographical account of the objects used in the art installation, and how the positioning of these artifacts leaves a gap or place for the viewer to enter into the work in a bodied way. I do not need to understand or even be aware of the autobiographical nature of the artwork for it to resonate and evoke in me a bodied and sensual experience. As I view and take part in the installation my body enters the space and I begin to unravel my own stories, my own feelings that mingle and dwell amidst the artifacts placed on display. The installation calls attention to oppressed and regulated bodies, and yet there is an absence of a physical body. The altar and the desk are void of bodies, inviting the viewer to participate (by kneeling or sitting) in the installation, moving the autoethnography out from within, shifting boundaries and opening new spaces of understanding.

Another in-depth narrative exploration of self as artist is undertaken in the paper and performative presentation, Performing the A/R/T/S: A Pedagogy of Self (Irwin et. al, 2001, np). Following Laurel Richardson’s (2000) framework of *theory as story*, the

performance piece interweaves six researchers' stories "of self knowing and self becoming" (Irwin et. al., 2001, np) in such a way as to recognize the relationship between the roles of artist/ researcher/ teacher/ scholar as a place of "metissage" (Irwin, 2001, np). While each narrative performs an individual role, such as artist or teacher, it is clear from the writing and the artifacts included in the performance piece, that the four roles cannot be isolated or divided. Similarly, the six performers' narratives weave in-through-between each other pulling apart and merging simultaneously. Encouraging a dwelling in the spaces between identities, Rita Irwin proposes the term metissage to unpack the contradictory nature of bringing multiple roles into theory and research. Like Irwin, I ascertain that bringing the A/R/T/S together means we must begin to negotiate *the seam*; the sutured, scarred space between identities (Springgay, in press). Joining artist/ researcher/ teacher/ scholar is not a blurring of distinctions, a merging of identities to form a singular role, but rather it juxtaposes these identities, allowing spaces to collide in conflict and to converge in negotiation and multiplicity. Rita Irwin (Irwin et. al., 2001) writes in the introduction to the performed piece:

If we conceive of researching, teaching and art making as activities that weave in and through one another, an interweaving and intraweaving of concepts, activities and feelings, we are creating fabrics of similarity and difference. (np)

Theory as art, continues Irwin, "reveals the need to immerse oneself in a collection of ideas, information and artifacts within the borderlands, while imagining and forming different relationships amongst people and ideas" (manuscript under review, np).

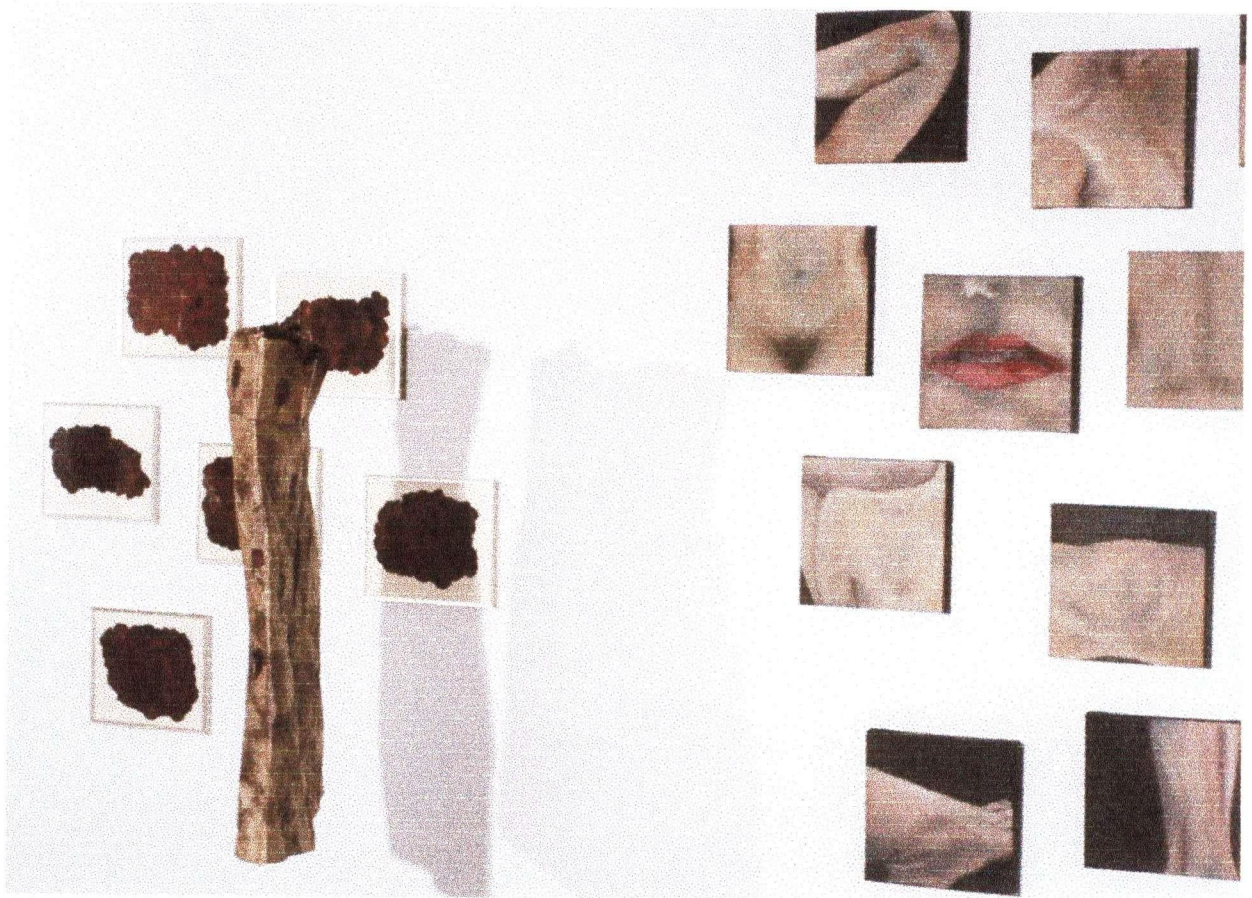
Weaving, in a postmodern sense, needs to be understood not as a metaphor that joins together different pieces of thread, but as a condition that celebrates the gaps and spaces between threads as part of the whole. Thus, weaving moves beyond a traditional

relationship that exists on a two-dimensional plane, towards an understanding of fragments and multi-dimensional space. Borderland imagery also needs to be re-constructed, understanding that power and privilege always prevail in a bordered space. Boundaries or borderlands should not be understood as merely multilectic or spaces where multiple identities thrive together, but rather that the lines of demarcation that separate and veil both mask and mark identities. Bodies/ identities are inscribed by power and privilege. Inscription and mediation can also become sites of struggle and possibility. Boundaries need to be recognized as shifting, we cannot and should not remove the seam, but observe and honor the sewn, stitched space of existence. Bringing multiple roles together suggests partiality and fragmentation. The appearance of what we see and accept needs to move beyond surface descriptions in such a way as to examine what it might mean to question identity, conformity and resistance through an engagement with our own body experiences and memories (hooks, 2000).

We had just finished “practicing” our performance piece in preparation for a conference presentation, on the roles of artist/ researcher/ teacher/ scholar. The art installation created during the performance lay scattered on the floor, and our attention turned from our scripts to this art piece. Someone felt the gray tiles of the floor detracted from the assemblage, so we re-thought the display, moving artifacts, erasing, adding, and re-aligning the aesthetic design. And it occurred to me that what I had originally thought of as visual artifacts illustrating key aspects of our narrative texts had become central in our research process. The scripted text was only one part of our investigation. It clearly defined our pedagogical and epistemological position, combining reflexive imagery with

scholarly theory, yet the art installation was the living breathing representation of art as research. At each "practice" or performance the written script stayed more or less the same. However, our bodies moved as we "performed" and created the art installation, which in turn constantly changed, shifted and grew. The process of making the art piece was reflected in our transcripts, as we spoke of uncertainty, flow, re-construction and process. But here things also shifted in new directions. We were asking the audience not to just listen to our words, but to engage with the visual record of our research pursuits. Was not the art piece then central to our investigation? What was its role? What was it supposed to do?

The Body Knowing installation is meant to provide the viewer with additional insights beyond the discussions presented in this written artifact. In addition, I see the artwork that I have created as a form of intervention. I am not interested in documenting viewers responses, it is not an ethnographic study that asks, "what does my art evoke?", but rather assumes that viewers will respond to the art in their own individual way. I have just spent three days in the exhibition space, witnessing viewers' bodied and verbal reactions to the installation. However, I do not want to address *what* happened, but to reiterate that something did. Art as social action is a form of intervention. Educational research as intervention is about possibilities; it proposes art as new sites of understanding.



What is the difference between art and arts-based educational research?

If we use Eisner's (2001) criteria, a simple answer would be that arts-based educational research engages in educational phenomena. But what is education? Is it the art classroom in a K-12 school system, an art education program at an art gallery, artist's work in an exhibition space, the street, the lived experience of the teacher and student? My art is art, it is also research. It investigates, collects, organizes and re-configures data into a visual format. If we consider that theories explain or illuminate a particular phenomena, and if as Laurel Richardson (2000) posits story as theory, then art forms which elucidate and enlighten can also be understood as theory. I would not offer that all art is theory (or research) but that art such as my thesis installation, attempts to narrate, explain, provoke and evoke theory through a visual form.

My thesis generates many considerations of form, two of which I borrow again from Elliot Eisner (2001):

1. What kind of knowledge, if any, does arts-based research provide?
2. What is arts-based research good for?

If research intends to "search a new" and "to exact change", then arts-based educational research unveils what may otherwise remain hidden. bell hooks (1999) confesses:

We write to find secrets in experiences that are obscured from ordinary sight: to uncover hidden coherences in what seems to be a mere jumble of unrelated events and details, and incoherences in what appears to be strictly ordered; to make transparent what is opaque, and to expose opacity in what seems transparent. (40)

It also moves beyond an investigation of “silent spaces” and begins to disrupt and challenge presumptions and methodological criteria governing knowledges legitimized in the academy. It seeks to find spaces for art as a way of knowing, arts-based educational research as aesthetic texts, thereby re-examining definition of communication, literacy and representational forms.

The aesthetic domain signifies one that acts on all of our senses, and so can be interpreted as bodied. Aesthetic texts recast the links between art and audience in such a way as to re-envision social relationships and illuminate possibilities amidst difference and uncertainty.

The aesthetic is at once both existential and political. It overcomes the bifurcation of liberal ideology where each are seen as separate and isolated activities. The possibility of the presence of new beginnings is perhaps where we can best understand that Art recognizes the significance of the human capacity to imagine and create- to liberate us from our own constructions. (Shapiro, 1999, 123)

Recognizing the art product in addition to the process of art making (and an awareness that the product itself is a process) in arts-based educational research envisions a new way of thinking about the art curriculum and art educations’ role in teaching and learning. Art in this sense then is not simply an isolated subject discipline but an exchange of ideas, an interaction with surface inscriptions and lived experiences. Art as a way of knowing empowers students to create meaning enabling new discourses and social change. I want my students to become aware that we are constantly bombarded by visual imagery much of which inscribes and resists body image and knowledge construction. By evaluating the visual form we can attempt to re-understand and re-

position aesthetic texts in order to locate teaching and learning as acts of agency⁵. I also want my students to know that art making is not always fun: that it is difficult, and painful and violent. I want them to understand that art making and viewing are not static or separate from each other, nor are they about “talent”, “creativity” or “skill”. I also want to address the idea that art making is not only about making “art” objects, but that it is an engagement with synaesthesia, opening out towards multiple possibilities of visibility, constructing meaning and performing acts of empowerment and transformation through sensual experiences. Art therefore becomes a way of knowing, a way of being and making sense of our daily experiences. Art needs to move beyond “fun add-ons” and turn towards re-conceptualizing teaching and learning. One intention of arts-based educational research is to re-define epistemological and empirical claims in the academy. Embraced as a scholarly way of knowing this new understanding and positioning will allow for a greater inclusion and a re-determination of art in education. Likewise, as a form of intervention, art as research creates potential sites for new understandings and meanings to be assembled.

⁵ For a more complete re-construction of the terms “empowerment and agency” see Kent den Heyer (2001). Empowered spaces and spaced out agency: Pivoting empowerment as an act of agency. den Heyer, argues that empowerment emanating from a Freirian (1972) understanding of reflexive praxis, provides opportunities for students and teachers to “appropriately participate in some realm of social life” (3). If empowerment is to gain access to certain codes and knowledge positions, agency “in contrast, contests the organization of social life defined by who ‘counts’ as participants and what is considered appropriate participation” (3). This is congruent to Elisabeth Grosz’s determination of a feminist understanding of agency: “Feminist text must not only be critical of or a challenge to the patriarchal norms it must also help to facilitate the production of new and perhaps unknown, unthought discursive spaces-new styles, modes of analysis and argument, new genres and forms-that contest the limits and constraints currently at work in the regulation of textual production and reception” (1995, 23). Empowered art education offers such programs as multicultural art lessons and includes women and artists of diverse cultural backgrounds in the curriculum. These “add-ons” are positive adjustments to the curriculum, however, they simply replace hierarchical divisions of power with new ones. Art as agency uses art making not simply as a subject discipline but as a mode of communication, which re-constructs power, privilege and structures of knowledge. In this sense, creating art that contextualizes a students’ relationship with, understanding of, and seeks to re-position issues in such a way as to destabilize the social order. For further examples and a theoretical analysis of agency, see Chapter The Body Knowing: Gender, art and knowledge.

Returning to questions posed earlier surrounding the merits of the art product, I offer three criteria extending current debates put forth by Eisner (2001) and Richardson (2000). I am wary of proposing “criteria” for arts-based educational research, which I believe is meant to resist system and order, however, in light of recent arguments surrounding arts-based educational research and in consideration of what new directions I am proposing for this ambiguous and extensive methodology, I would like to offer three points of reference in determining the value of art in educational research. If we recognize that educational research is to evoke or exact change, or provide and shape new potential spaces with curricular, pedagogical and epistemological implications, then we need to find value and place for the residue of artistic processes to also speak in new directions and inform in new ways. If we believe that art is a catalytic agent and that art is a form of personal and social activism, then the art in arts-based educational research needs to reflect these three considerations of form:

- 1) Art must have the potential and power to evoke and speak for itself in ways that may otherwise not be articulated.
- 2) Scholarship should be undertaken on the art form proposed in such a way as to locate the artistic processes (both the material process used and residual product) within historical, social and political contexts.
- 3) Arts-based educational research as *reticule*; a network of fine threads woven between the visual art product and the written artifact. The art product is

located within the issues and theories addressed in the written artifact.

However, this does not mean that the art will be illustrative of the written text.

The Body Knowing installation demonstrates these three considerations of form:

- The installation takes up issues that cannot be presented or constructed in a written form. It is a powerful visual encounter that moves viewers in multiple interpretive directions, unveiling new considerations for the body, knowledge systems and art making.
- Chapter two locates The Body Knowing installation within a discursive space in contemporary art practices, situating the installation (art as theory) in the broader field of feminist art theory and practice.
- The written artifact and the art installation neither illustrate nor describe each other. Fragments from each form loosely woven threads providing multiple opportunities to understand new insights and interpret ideas that conflict, disorient and are in tension with each other.

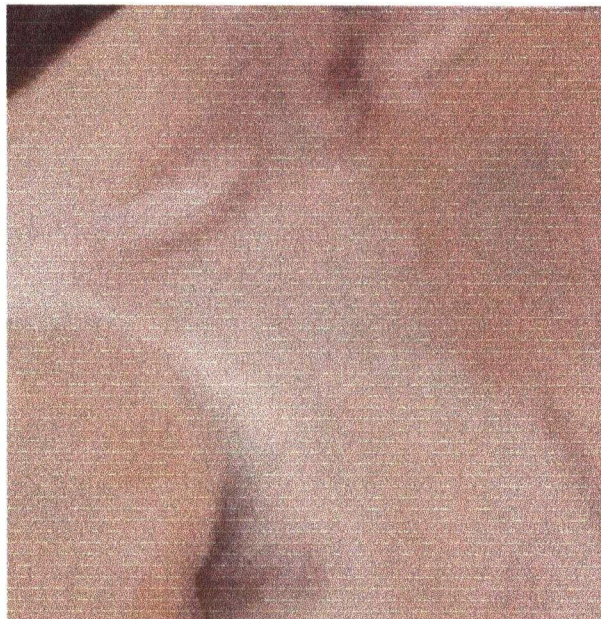
Of import is the role that audience now plays in the process of interpretation and creation.

Issues of reciprocity: Art and audience

It is the first day of teaching in a new fall term. Thirty-seven pre-service elementary teachers file in the door of the art room. I begin the class by handing out the course syllabus and reading package, and open the discussion to memories of their prior art experiences. Tensions rise and many students express their fear of learning and teaching art, a subject they feel they lack skill and expertise in. Quickly I turn their attention to a series of art catalogues and reproductions that I have placed around the studio, and we begin to look at the work of Andy Goldsworthy and Suzanne Lacy. There is no formal lesson on art criticism, simply a chance provided for the students to engage in the sensuality of the artworks and/ or their inherent social meanings. The students are awed by the beauty of Goldsworthy's (1994) leaf covered stones, and curiously drawn into Lacy's piece No Blood No Foul (1996), a basketball performance piece intended to incite dialogue around issues of race relations and teen violence. Dividing the class into groups, I hand out cameras and invite the students to create their own site-specific environmental works, or public performance pieces. Their only materials are what they can find outside on the campus, and cameras with which to document their process and the final art piece.

Gayle Leigh Greene (1998) describes this pedagogical approach as public genre art education, and argues that it transcends emphasis placed on the acquisition of technical skills and fosters critical thinking in students.

The inclusion of public genre art concepts and methodology in art education encourages students to envision new art forms, engage the community in projects that are socially reconstructive, and to reconceptualize art making as intellectual, scholarly endeavor (Desai, 2000; Freedman, 2000; Garber, 1999; Stuhr, 1994). Such rethinking of art education curricula requires the presentation and analysis of work by such artists, study and evaluation of societal issues, consideration of audience, installation or performance of work, and final evaluation (Greene, 1998, 77).



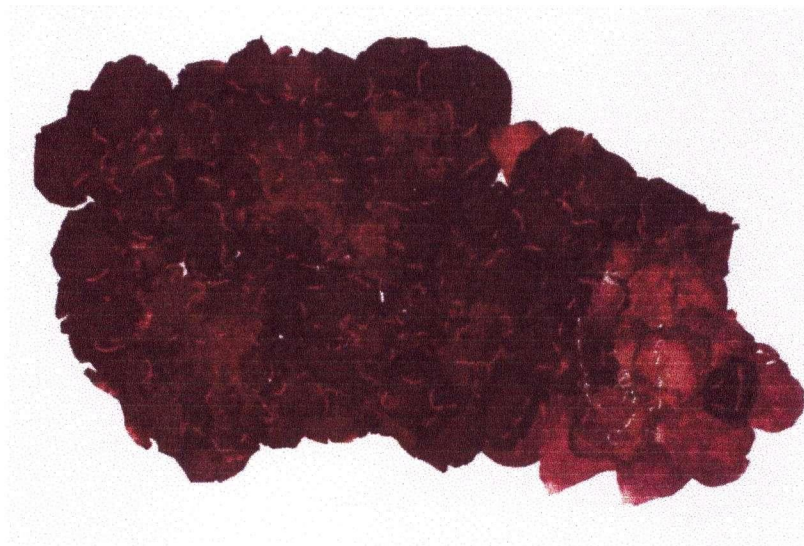
While I agree that introducing public genre art into the curriculum disrupts and destabilizes pre-conceptions of what is art and artistic processes, and engages students in analyses of art that has the potential to enact agency, transformation and social change, it also demands an examination of the space created between art and audience.

Understanding that art now embraces a whole host of unconventional materials and that

art can be erected in site-specific environments outside of traditional gallery spaces is only a beginning in understanding art as critical theory. As an art educator, I need to engage my students in an active interpretation of the artworks. However, I would argue that little to no transformation occurs simply because students are made aware of different art genres, or that for example Suzanne Lacy's basketball piece was *about* race relations and teen violence. These actions become simple labels that provide little possibility for agency and re-conceptualization. Instead I must invite the students into the *seam of experience*, the site of resonance between art and audience where meaning is re-created. Dialogues in this sense must also focus on what it means to create public genre art, deconstruct the critical ideas in the artwork, and analyse the site of tension created between art and audience. Art as agency must move students beyond simply *knowing* that art can be used for personal and social activism. Again I turn to bell hooks' insights to shed light on these points. She writes: "The possession of a term does not bring a process or practice into being" (1994, 61). She continues: "We need new theories rooted in an attempt to understand both the nature of our contemporary predicament and the means by which we might collectively engage in resistance that would transform our current reality" (1994, 67). Students, teachers, and researchers must position themselves in a space of unknowing and uncertainty in order for new understandings to unfold, new actions to take place and social change to occur. When we begin to embrace the art in arts-based educational research as a research and communicative artifact, that has no fixed identity, narrative or singular interpretation, generativity will be seen as an indetermined struggle, a process of becoming, which is infinitely incomplete.

Similarly, I would argue we cannot simply re-brand or label alternative research forms to include artistic genres without a re-construction of what new understandings these aesthetic texts bring to research. Considerations of form are essential in order to evoke scholarly understanding within aesthetic texts. Visual arts-based educational research needs to question the relationship between art and audience. The artwork cannot be a backdrop to the theoretical framework, a fancy window dressing of research. The artwork itself needs to become an ongoing site of critical exchange and dialogue. This boundary shift between art and audience (which I discuss in greater detail under the topic “gaze”) creates a space of hesitation where acts of imagination are not static, where audience is not a passive receptacle and the line of demarcation between art and audience transgresses. bell hooks (1994) writes:

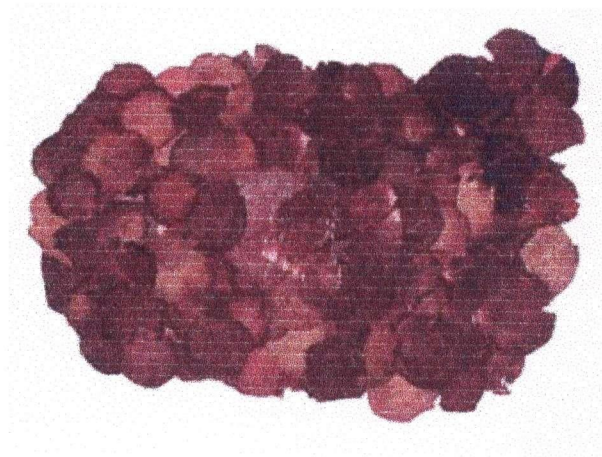
Teaching is a performative act. And it is that aspect of our work that offers the space for change, invention, spontaneous shifts, that can serve as catalyst drawing out the unique elements in each classroom. To embrace the performative aspect of teaching we are compelled to engage audience, to consider issues of reciprocity. (11)



Rishma Dunlop's words echo in my ears, "I wonder if Teacher Education could have taught us to be courageous" (1999, 190). I wonder about the risk I am taking in the academe as I strive to bridge the academic communities of art education and fine arts. But this bridging is simply not enough. Arts-based educational research needs to find value in the academe as new epistemological directions are undertaken. I want my research to be thick like impasto painted surfaces, infused with passion, heavy and translucent like fading rose petals and scars. I want my art to be strong art.

She wants her voice to be like a modern painting, voice and story like the colors of a Mark Rothko canvas. This is how she wants the story to be, written in the alphabet of bones and blood, trembling with light and vibrant hues, spiraling with winds, rooted in the earth, breathing with tides. (Dunlop, 1999, 22)

Art needs to be recognized as an engagement in a critical process of theorizing that enables and empowers.



An ecstatic step into the outside: Art as a scholarly way of knowing

Art changes us all and makes us more than we could ever be without it. Still the being we become in the midst of the very act of writing [read: creating art] is only ever intimately present to the one who creates. Writing about writing [read: creating art] is one way to grasp, to hold and give added meaning to a process that remains one of life's great mysteries. I have not yet found words to truly convey the intensity of this remembered rapture-that moment of exquisite joy. I do know that I return again and again to that place, to that moment-to the rapture.

bell hooks, *Remembered Rapture*^{vii}.

Alizarin crimson... a colour so unreliable it could practically be called fleeting, it disappears in less than thirty years. No amount of varnish can protect it. Turn it from the light and it still fades with a determination that is almost athletic. And yet it is the most beautiful of the reds; dark, romantic, and fragile, it is an outburst of joy among the other colours on the palette, though chances are the artist will live to see it weaken, deteriorate, and finally vanish. It is impossible to keep.

Jane Urquhart, *The Underpainter*^{viii}.

The needle glides in and out of the paper, casting irregular stitches along the borderland between art and education. Burnt sienna, alizarin crimson, parched earth, skin of the canvas. Light pours out of me, pulsating, dripping from my fingertips. My body moves into the work as I brush, caress the painting... "refashioning memory into art" (Dunlop, 1999).

Ecstasy is defined as a state of emotion so intense that one is carried beyond thought and self-control. Associated with notions of excitement, passion and desire, ecstasy can also mean to "stand outside"(hooks, 1999). Art making is my passion, it is a way to experience the ecstatic, a way for me to shift boundaries, disrupt, erupt, to "stand outside".

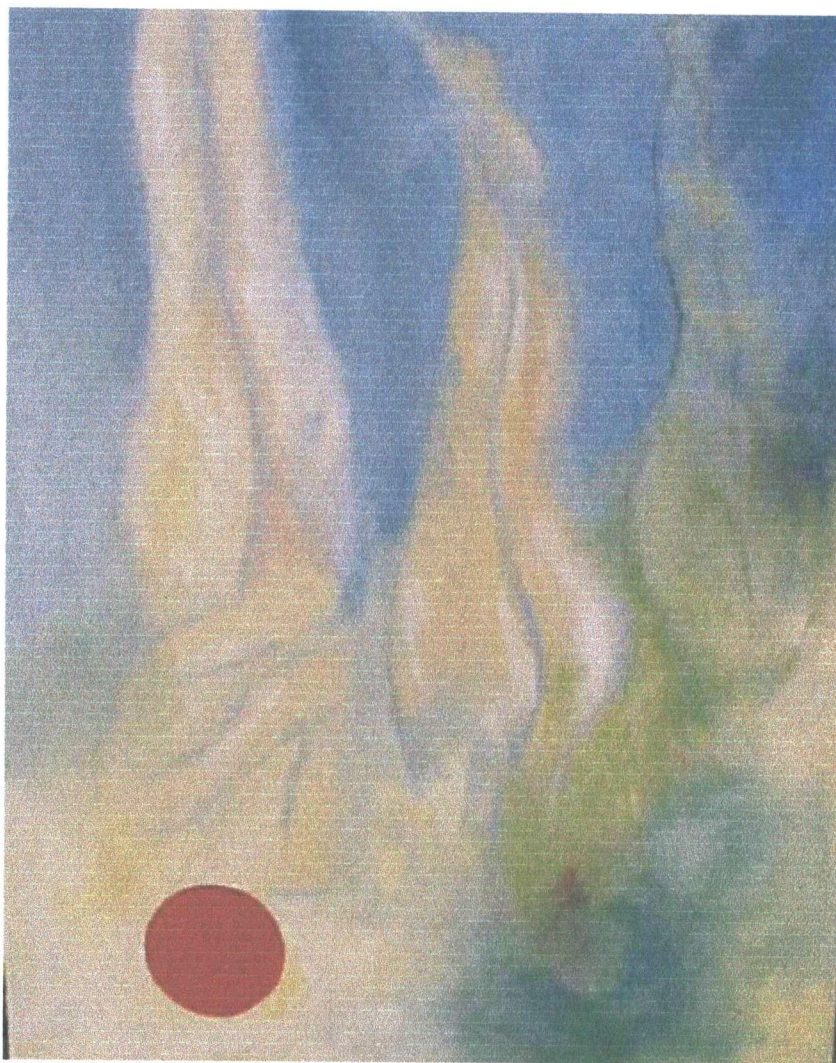
Vermilion is an artist's pigment. It is a colour that I use in my art selectively, allowing the vulnerability of the pigment to speak of the frailty of art making, the uncertainties of artistic ways of knowing and being. Sewing rose petals for my thesis requires me to abandon neat ordered lines and symmetry. Rose petals bruise. I have to allow for red loopy and uneven stitches, rose petals falling and overlapping each other. Each rose petal flesh discolours and changes in new ways. They are always changing, the red deepening and fading. Someday they will be gone altogether.

I paint and sew, collage and create as an act of violence, as a form of political resistance, art emerging as a narrative that enables "self-discovery and self-recovery" (hooks, 1999). I refuse to accept distinctions between academic critical writing and creative art making as theory (Dunlop, 1999; hooks, 1999). That refusal demarcates me in the academe. Sewing rose petals differentiates my art within a hierarchical tradition of fine art. Curators, conservators, and collectors debate issues surrounding the ephemerality of my artwork. The rose petals are changing colour. They refuse to stand still. The academe argues over the validity and value of my research. Institutions terrorized by change, decay, uncertainty. *It is not the inner place of red I am seeking but the right to wear it outwardly. To wear it brazenly* (Griffin, 1995). *It is another way of thinking, of reading, writing and teaching that posits knowledge as intimacy rather than power. It is a recognition of the body as a lived-text, a re-conceptualization of teaching and learning.*

Red roses, red pigment, red texts in the academe, residues of mark making, will begin to permeate boundaries, speak of impossibilities and ruptures. Art as research not

only challenges and destabilizes epistemological hierarchies traditionally upheld in the academe, art allows us to have the direct experience of being in two places at once, feeling two opposite emotions, holding two contradictory opinions (Griffin, 1995). Art does not replace a traditional voice in educational research, rather it emerges as a juxtaposition, generating a sense of opposition, difference, and creative tension. It is not an either/ or position, but one that dwells in the seam between two worlds. *Like desire, language disrupts, refuses to be contained within boundaries. It speaks itself against our will, in words and thought that intrude, even violate the most private spaces of mind and body* (bell hooks, 1994, 167).

Feminist artists disrupted conventional notions of what gets counted as art, and since the 1960s artists have refused to accept the traditional conception of the art object as something precious, permanent or beautiful. Contemporary art practices dynamically challenge long-established materials and considerations of diverse and alternative forms of representation. Educational sites now include the study of multiple artistic genres and visual culture in their curriculum. When will educational research allow for similar considerations of form? Autobiography, visual ethnography, action research... research that has re-determined and shifted the boundaries of educational research and research methodologies; however, they still place emphasis on the written word. Imagine the possibilities of research as a visual art installation, a form of social intervention that empowers and transforms.



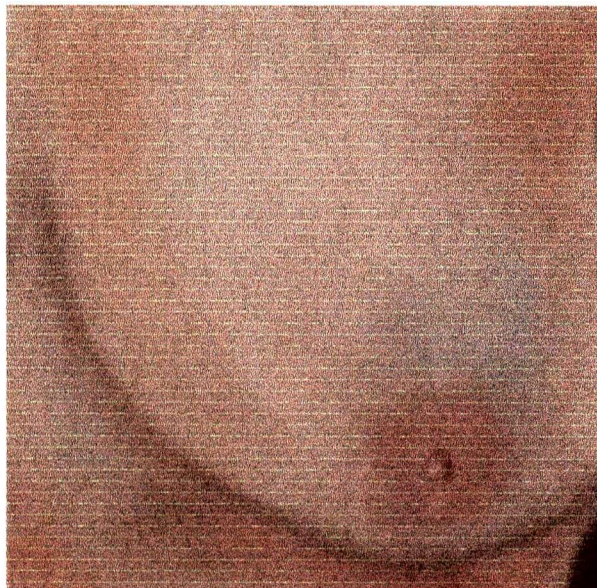
Boundary, Dress, and the Body

You swear you can feel it now. Traces of this history, lingering here. A subtle force that pulls you out. You can feel it on the surface of your skin. That and a mysterious suspension; as you move you are almost floating. And then suddenly you are stopped by an instant of comprehension. All the delicate junctures between foot and earth, mouth and air, eye and light, full of anticipation.

Susan Griffin, *What her body thought*^{ix}.

Boundary, Dress, and the Body

In this chapter, I will deconstruct the visual imagery in my art installation The Body Knowing guided by psychoanalysis, feminist art criticism, feminist theory and critical theory. Secondly I will locate the methodology of my art practices (materials used, processes employed) within the broader context of contemporary art and feminist art theory, a position which advocates and introduces art as social action. Using examples of feminist embroidery art, I will position art making as a site for empowerment and agency. Additional scholarship recognizes and honors the fragment establishing conditions for art as theory as fragment. Throughout the chapter I use a boundary metaphor to bring a critique of my art into a discursive space about teaching and learning.



Artifact and Archive

There is something eerie about a museum of costume... We experience a sense of the uncanny when we gaze at a garment that had an intimate relationship with human beings long since gone to their graves. For clothes are so much part of our living, moving selves that, frozen on display in the mausoleums of culture, they hint at something only half understood, sinister, threatening; the atrophy of the body, and the evanescence of life... Clothes without a wearer, whether on a second-hand stall, in a glass case, or merely a lover's garments strewn on the floor, can affect us unpleasantly, as if a snake had shed its skin.

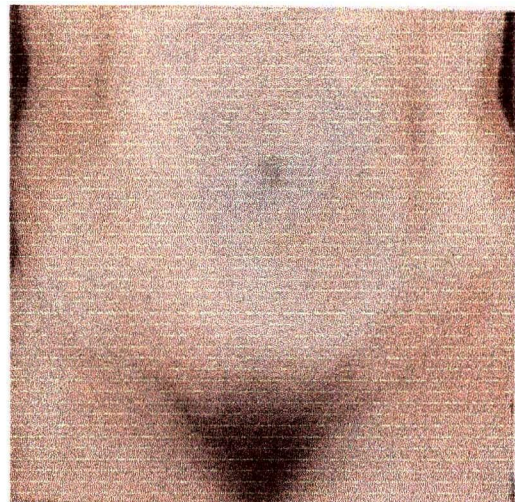
Elizabeth Wilson, as cited in
Fashioning the frame: Boundaries, dress and the body^x.

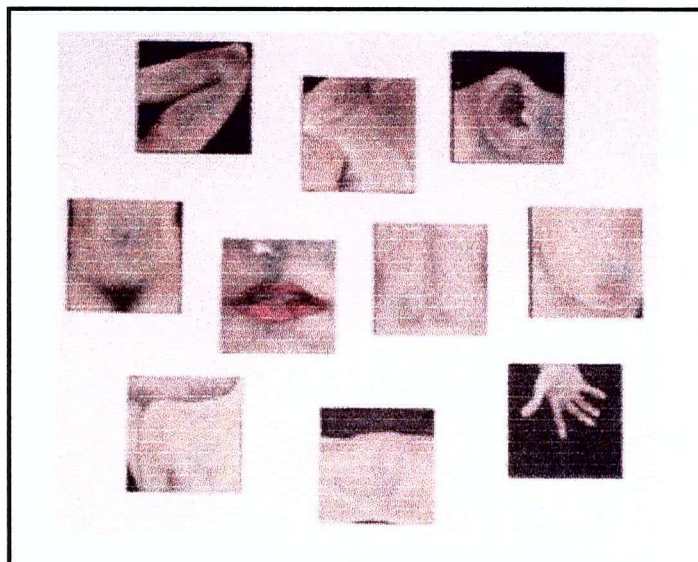
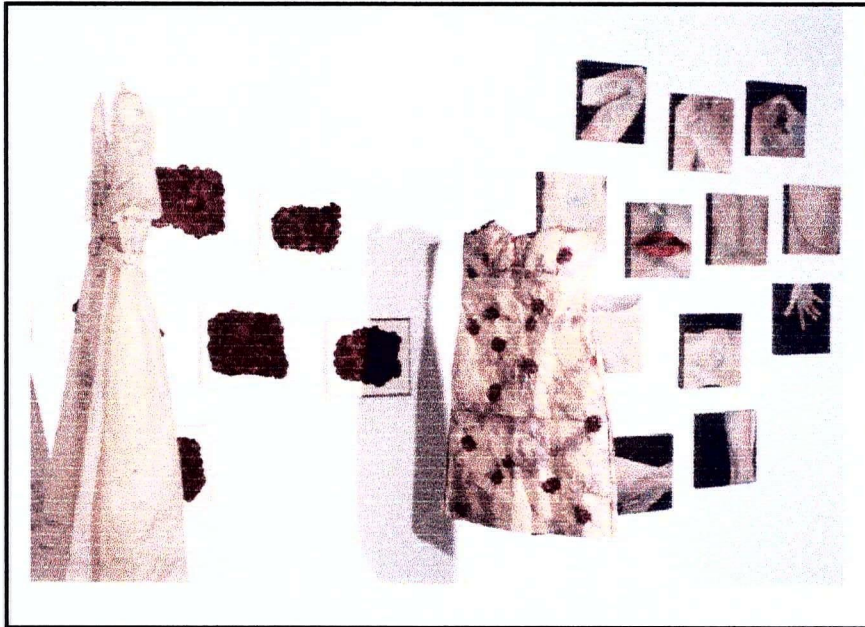
The Body Knowing installation consists of three series of artworks, each series intended to be viewed in relation to the other. One series consists of twelve painted body parts and six sewn rose petal panels⁶, each panel bearing gold embroidered body parts. Another series exists of fabricated dresses, while the third series is a set of four, larger oil on canvas paintings of bodies and garments in a paradoxical relationship of decay and emergence. The works examine the body in relation to history, cultural production, nature, and identity as fragment. Fractured painted body parts are juxtaposed alongside panels of sewn rose petals, and speak of new composites in an exploration of both the ephemerality of the body and our desire to leave a mark: to create, organize, and understand. The works position the body between artifact and archive, as a region of uncertainty.

The fragmentation of the work alludes metaphorically and metonymically to gender, sexuality, and desire, and issues pertaining to the split identity of woman-artist-

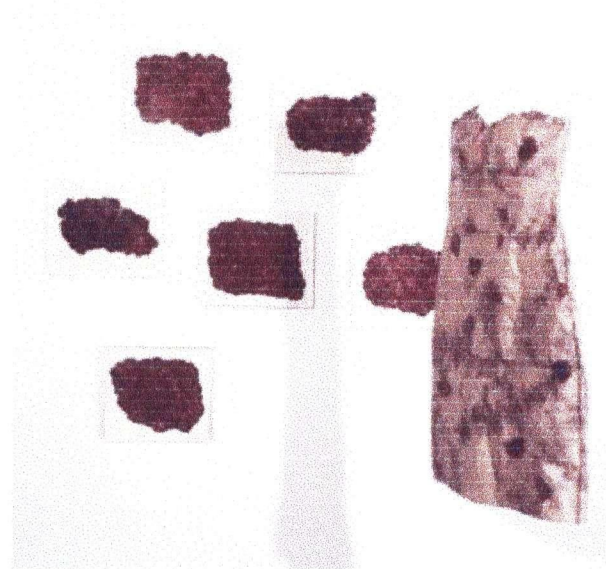
⁶ Originally I had intended to create twelve corresponding rose petal panels. However, pressing and sewing rose petals is a difficult task, and four panels were "lost" in the process to mold and three additional panels turned brown in the drying process. While the work speaks of this vulnerability and temporality, there is a certain "quality" that I am seeking and thus, these panels are not part of the final art installation.

scholar in the academe. The fragmentation in this sense is both literal (relics are themselves often fragments of an uncertain past) and metonymic (reflection on the fragmentariness of knowledge itself). The works emphasize representation as an effect of, and something embedded within culture, and pose questions regarding the limits and implications within which knowledge is produced and represented. The paintings, appendages of broken, splintered body parts, awkward in their square frames and poses, are placed before us for examination, like specimens pinned to a wall. Motionless. Lifeless. Distant. Unreal. Juxtaposed are sewn rose petals, each piece embroidered with gold metallic thread, which summon the slightly withered and shriveled memories of the whole. Skin. Decay. Change. Nature. Life.





While the paintings serve as historical references to a tradition of oil painting, and the rose petals negate traditional notions of permanence, together they create a museum both within and outside of boundaries. Artwork itself becomes an artifact, an archive of body memories, a container of processes and actions unfolded in the making of the work. Traces of the artist's body remain as part of the final product. A residue of bodily knowledge, artistic knowing and understanding. The artworks exist as souvenirs of moments and as objects that serve as traces of authentic experiences. Susan Stewart (1993) suggests that the souvenir is always incomplete and partial. The souvenir sign functions not as object to object, but rather metonymically, as object to experience. The object cannot stand in for the memory, but exists as part of the whole in evocation and resonance to the experience. The souvenir's partiality, Stewart explains, is the source of its power: "The souvenir must remain impoverished and partial so that it can be supplemented by a narrative discourse, a narrative discourse which articulates the play of desire" (136). Narrative is seen in this sense as a structure that both invents and distances the object, inscribing a gap between signified and signifier that is a place of uncertainty and generation.



It is the very desire of part for whole, which animates narrative, transforms and collapses distance into proximity, contracting the world in order to accentuate the personal. The art itself becomes an art of boundary. The painted body parts, twelve in number, mimicked by the rose petal panels. Five dresses, a further series of four large oil paintings. Repetition. Duplication. Susan Stewart points out the following:

To play with series is to play with the fire of infinity. In the collection the threat of infinity is always met with the articulation of boundary. Simultaneous sets are worked against each other in the same way that attention to the individual object and attention to the whole are worked against each other. The collection thus appears as a mode of control and containment insofar as it is a mode of generation and series... The finite boundaries these objects afford are played against the infinite possibility of their collection. (1994, 159)

It is this tension of repetition that is also called into question by a further abstraction of severed limbs. The body in pieces intimates completeness while simultaneously deconstructing notions of eternity, wholeness and normity. Thus seen, the work is designed to educe systems of cataloguing, control, and linearity, which are simultaneously set into motion through a multi-logical pull, opening up a space aimed at questioning nature, culture, and archive, as a repository of different systems of knowledge and understanding. The fragment resists an attempt at being put together as a whole (the entire body is not depicted in the art installation) and thus, is caught in an endless web of uncertainty. Further to this argument is the act of viewing, which cannot be controlled or determined by the artwork or the artist. While the works are embedded within semiotic relationships that evoke particular meanings, the artist cannot determine how each viewer reacts to the work.⁷ A singular interpretation is not desired either.

⁷ One could argue that those "trained" in art criticism might be able to articulate shared ideas with the artist, however, I believe that beneath a theoretical analysis, even an art scholar would initially come to the work in their own individual way.

Subjectivity is indeterminable, bound with/in the body and discourse, which changes from moment to moment. Thus, the questions who do you think you are? how do you know?, are always incomplete. I invite the viewer-reader to an unanticipated eruption in the midst of the familiar. According to Gadamer, “understanding begins when something addresses us” (as cited in Jardine, 1998, 40) and it is exactly this arousal of desire that my artwork seeks to conjure. As Madeline Grumet (1988) so eloquently states:

It is the function of art to reorganize experience so it is perceived freshly. At the very least, the painting, the poem, or the play cleanses a familiar scene washing away the residue of habit and film of dust collected over time so that it is seen anew. (81)

Boundaries have existed as metaphors in critical theory and education research as sites of tension and negotiation (Garber, 1995; Desai, 2000, Irwin, manuscript under review). Rishma Dunlop (1999) writes in the Prolepsis to her novel as dissertation, Boundary Bay:

The use of the boundary metaphor resonated with my wish to take a stance by way of the literary form of my research as a form of transgression, of boundary crossing, of blurring of genres, of interdisciplinarity, questioning the validity of standard paradigms of knowledge and pushing beyond them...(4)

Boundaries are not places that dissolve difference but are seams of conflict and struggle. If boundaries are recognized as uncertain sites that shift and change, forming new lines of demarcation, then boundary becomes not something that is definitive and declarative, but rather an undefined space that is constantly in the process of becoming.



The Abject Body

Abjection/ the abject: the indeterminate, fluid, borderline area between certainties; an area associated with change and the uncanny, and thus the occasion of fear and revulsion.

Barbara Brook, *Feminist perspectives on the body*.^{xi}

Reading Grosz (1989, 1995) abjection, as I have come to understand, is a violent response to the body's boundaries: food, faeces, urine, vomit, spit, scars and disease. It is the seam through which outer and inner contours of the body merge, deconstructing and re-negotiating acts of boundary. Abjection disturbs identity, system and order. It attests to the impossibility of clear borders, demarcation or divisions (Grosz, 1989, 1995). The abject body is a body in revolt. Similarly, dress frames the body as an organizing signifier, while simultaneously being independent of it. It separates individual bodies, while also connecting them through symbols, moulds and socially defined perceptions (Warwick & Cavallaro, 1998). If the body is uncertain, then dress reinforces the fluidity of its frame: Where does the body end and where does the dress begin?



The dresses that compose part of the art installation hang suspended in the midst of the exhibition space, exist as both static metaphors and breathing representations of self and other. Four of the dresses are fabricated from transparent sewing pattern paper. Further embellishments of pins, human hair, toy tea cups, and metal scissors; marks of desire, fetishism, and the souvenir, are stitched onto the bodice of the dress. The body is implicated by its absence; an abject body, which disturbs identity, system and order. Abjection attests to the impossibility of clear borders, demarcations or divisions (Grosz, 1989, 1995). The dresses on display are constructed from unusual material, not equated with a particular wearer and lack appropriate zippers and fastening devices. Thus, the dresses themselves become an abject body, unsettled and uncertain.

Dress *represents* the body as a fundamentally liminal phenomenon by stressing its precarious location on the threshold between the physical and the abstract, the literal and the metaphorical. What is more, the transition from the material to the metaphorical, and vice versa, is not a smooth passage of either transcendence (in the direction from carnality to disembodiment) or empirical grounding (in the direction from abstraction to incarnation). In fact, no transition is ever conclusive, in so far as the framing strategies enacted by dress invariably involve open-ended processes of disjunction and displacement (temporal, spatial, physical) that may provisionally represent experience but never totalize it. Dress thus emphasizes the haziness and experience of any spaces that the body may strive to inhabit or indeed may be allowed to lay claims on: those spaces are ineluctably associated with a sense of transit and disorientation, with split identities and fretful exploration. (Warwick & Cavallaro, 1998, 7)

Dress punctuates the notion of a shifting boundary emphasizing not only that spaces of habitation are in transit and incomplete, but that the exterior surface and interior cavity also transgress and reallocate one into the other.



Behind a false wall in the attic hang rows of meticulously sewn garments. Gabardine, taffeta, and woolen blends dance together, caresses of absent limbs, whispers of hidden stories. The dresses, suits and fancy ball gowns, all sewn by the previous home-owner, have been left behind, discarded relics, shed skin. It is a haunting discovery; they hint at something only partially understood, frozen, suspended in time. As I move closer I discover pinned to their collars a label indicating date, place and occasion that the garment was worn. September 24 Church tea. Souvenirs of fashions past; archives of memories and narratives of bodies, living, moving selves. Fragments of knowing and being.



Relocating the Lacanian “floating signifier,” Katherine Hayles (1999) cybernetic metaphor assumes a “flickering signifier” (as cited in Garoian and Gaudelius, 2001, 338). The “flickering signifier” is “characterized by [a] tendency toward unexpected metamorphosis, attenuations, and dispersions” (338). The body is not suspended in space, but instead fluctuates, changes and is transformed. Hence, Hayles’ metaphor is more apt to suggest generativity and mutation. It is this alteration of form that is modeled by the four larger oil on canvas paintings.

The larger paintings suggest a paradoxical site between growth and decay. Unlike the painted body parts, tight and controlled in their references to historical traditions of oil painting, the painted lines in the large works unwrap fluid moving shapes of both body and dress. Neither vestment nor material body are complete, at times exaggerated, distorted, with sketchy pencil marks persisting through the opacity and transparency of the oil paint. The marks made on the canvas are residues, traces of previous lines and shapes. I allow ghosts of past images to emerge in the final picture, lending both an eerie quality to the work, and one that hints at change. There is a sense of time, pushing beyond definitions of presence and absence. My painting process is less conceptual, allowing for the unconscious gestures of my body to scratch and wipe away pigment, while simultaneously building up layers of paint. Unlike the dresses and small painted body parts, where I set out to establish a particular aesthetic concept, these paintings grow out of mark making that is both sure and unsure. I am aware of what I am painting, and yet, I also step back from a completely conscious effort and allow the painted surface to evoke and relocate ideas and imagery.



Further to this, the body and/ or dress is often placed away from the center of the canvas, and appears to be stepping out from boundaries, and off the picture plane. Multiple and fragmented limbs are repeated creating a sense of movement and disorder, augmented by intense flashes of red and orange. While the paintings can be seen as generative they also voice a sense of violence and disturbance. Art opens up this opportunity, allowing for multiple interpretations, colliding struggles and incongruent thoughts. The body in my art installation is both generative; becoming, metamorphosing, and in transition. Simultaneously, the art evokes memories of pain, erosion, and fear. It is imperative that we understand that all of these multiple images be considered, that we not close down our interpretation and understandings to a singular form. *Not just what is unspoken but hope too exists between the lines* (Griffin, 1999, 318).

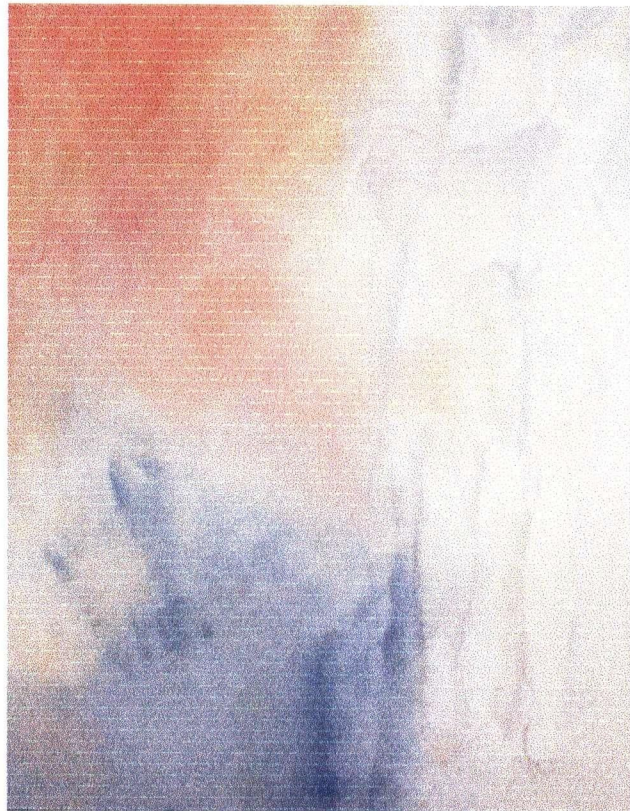
For example, if we believe that teaching is safe, that teaching art is only about imagination and creativity then we are harming students through our ignorance. Teaching is violent when we refuse to acknowledge the presence of many lives, of many bodies, of many texts in our classrooms. As an art educator I spend the first three weeks (of a thirteen week class) working with the teacher education students dispelling fears and anxieties conditioned since their own elementary school years. Beliefs about their inabilities to draw realistically manifest as dislike for, and a misunderstanding of art. Their former and well intentioned elementary teachers insisted that art was “fun,” an “easy subject,” and harbored “no competition”. And yet, these adults remember the pain of art classes. They use language to label students “talented,” “creative,” “artistic” and equate art education to realistic drawing and technical skill. As a teacher, I recognize that every move I make in a classroom is marked. It inscribes itself on the bodies of my

students, it burrows deep inside as memories that delight or haunt for many years.

Recognizing that what we present and leave absent in our curriculum and in our pedagogy offers both hope and implies violence. Nothing should be taken for granted.

Power relationships should be re-evaluated, disturbed and transformed.

The body is present throughout the entire installation (and throughout teaching). Moving beyond inscriptions and skins, all the artworks, not just the four large paintings, begin to come alive, to suggest an interior space, a living breathing body. Acts of transgression flow from inner and outer cavity, and the body finds the potential to enact an art of political resistance. Thus, the art itself becomes a bodied pedagogy, performing acts of inscription and defiance.



Dead industry as critical theory

Painting has often been viewed as a condition of modernism, thus as the art canon expanded to include and destabilize hierarchical categories, in North America painting became troubled and often evaluated as a “dead art”. Spurred on by a lack of exposure in the “gallery scene” a group of young Toronto artists collaborated together to exhibit works of art; paintings of a decidedly contemporary nature. The collective, Dead Industry, was just one amongst a series of painting collectives (soon collectives of all varieties of artistic genres would emerge) that sprang up in the city almost over night. It was paramount to a young artists’ career to be a part of, to speak collectively, and to exhibit outside of the traditional gallery scene (Jordan, 1995). However, within the painting collectives Dead Industry, MUD, and Painting Disorders, there was also an agenda to place the spotlight on a genre once thought to be lacking in critical theory. The paintings created by these artists employed irony, pop cultural motifs, were infused with anti-subject and ironic styles, while also often stretching the boundaries of what constituted painting (painting directly on the wall graffiti style, mixed media such as sand-impregnated pigment, and other photo-material manipulations). Painting was not dead after all.

And so I paint. I was schooled in the tradition of most modernist art academies. Painting, printmaking, drawing and sculpture. The basics of “an art career”. Studio courses provided little “teaching” and “instruction” and were infused with heavy doses of formalist art criticism and art history. I learned glazing techniques, pigment properties and bronzing and casting qualities. It was rigorous, competitive, and did not

accommodate a reflection on processes, the body or alternative ways of knowing. It is only as I ruminate on these experiences that I remember both the agony and revel in the delights of my art education. Regardless of which side of the story I weave, the smell and intoxication of oil paints still permeates my studio, my sense of creation and my artist self. Even after deliberately deciding to continue my fine art studies with course work in contemporary fibre arts, I return to my studio to paint, combining both textile arts and oil painting. It is unusual to find the two material explorations combined together in one thematic exploration. Many artist-colleagues question the relationship between the two genres, and often wonder if they limit and deny each other. Perhaps it is the fragmentation of two mediums in opposition that further establishes disorder and discontinuity.



There is something jarring about experiencing painting on formalist modernist stretchers, adhering to standards of “fine art” establishments in juxtaposition with rose petals and

paper garments. Marks from one inform the other, a multi logic resonation of part to whole.

In one of the gallery spaces at the Art Gallery of Ontario, paintings of a decidedly different nature exist. Eric Cameron's *Thick Paintings*, are commonplace objects (ie. a film canister, a beer bottle) that Cameron covers with layer upon layer of white gesso, which are expected to drip and run forming sculptural mounds of pigment (Holubizky, 1999). Similarly, Germaine Koh, Toronto based artist whose work ranges from an oversized knit blanket, to an exchange of postcard snapshots, and personal messages in local newspapers, sustains an accumulative, labour-generated undertaking. Related but different, her painted work exists as a series of degenrefication, a self-portrait that has been painted over and over again on the same panel since 1994 (Holubizky, 1999). Each rendition is documented through photography before adding an additional layer of paint, eschewing any sentimentality towards permanence and yet, recording the process of destruction and temporality. Both artists' work resist the temptation of completeness, letting go of notions of what might be considered "good painting", "finished products" and resoluteness.

As contemporary artists attempt to demonstrate painting's critical nature, through material exploration, subject analysis or through the formation of collective experiences, scholars also seek ways in which to reclaim painting as an embodiment of critical theory. One such example is an article by Dan Nadaner (1998) which proposes several concepts in analyzing and understanding painting as critical theory: *the use of a floating signifier, metonymy, and incommensurability*. His article uses arguments from critical theory,

psychoanalysis and postmodernist thought to suggest “painting as change” the “unsuspected possibilities” of which allow for the unknown and risk taking in art education (178). However, he uses examples from the art canon, which are modernist in both technique and theory (Munch’s *The Sick Girl*, Monet’s *Water Lilies*) and attempts to ascribe new interpretations onto artworks already conditioned using other analytic means. His intentions are valid, but ignore contemporary art practices. A critical theory of art cannot be a re-labeling of terms, cannot begin to re-define modernist art through postmodern lenses, but rather, needs to recognize art practices that do exemplify a critical perspective. Eric Cameron and Germaine Koh, as examples, offer the incompleteness of processes and art objects as records of everyday experiences. Viewers are left to determine the fragile and partial state of identity and experience. In a more recent performative exhibition, Koh places herself in a storefront window conducting daily routines, unresponsive to public passersby. Like her paintings and other artworks, this performance invites participants into the art installation, conferring on both parties “the security and distance to observe each other freely as we enter into a wordless relationship fraught with unspoken responsibilities” (Holubizky, 1999, 38). Critical theory in art and art education is an identity exchange that recognizes both artist and viewer in a multilectic relationship and asks: How can we read art outside of the frames of artistic value and artist’s intentionality?

Gaze

As you begin you are alone, making notes, placing a line here, a piece of dialogue there. And then perhaps when you have a moment of doubt, because for instance the scene you have described is not quite right or strikes a false note, you shudder as you become aware of the others. A sea, an obdurate mass, a jeering crowd, disappointed with your feeble efforts. But you keep your nerve. You adjust the language. Shift the focus. Add complexity to the order of events. Until slowly, by almost imperceptible degrees, the gaze of the others no longer troubles you. Not because you are pleased with your efforts- you are still erasing, adding, altering-but because you have joined the audience yourself. Curious and attentive, you too are watching, eager to see how the plot proceeds.

Susan Griffin, 1999, *What her body thought*^{xiii}.

Traditional modes of criticism suggest a master narrative explanation of an artwork, one that implies a singular interpretation, truth, and posits that the art product is finite and complete (Lyotard, 1984). A critical theory approach to art interpretation suggests fragmentation of the subject. In many contemporary art installations and artworks, including my thesis installation The Body Knowing, the exhibition posits a reversed “gaze” on the viewer, who in turn becomes the subject-in-process in the exhibition space (Ho, 1993-4, 23-24). Viewers “look” at my artworks and immediately “see” a body; a female body. However, the fragmented and distorted imagery returns the “gaze” to the viewer, where the subject now under consideration is not the artwork per se, but the viewer-as-subject themselves. (For further analysis of this fragmented or reflected gaze, see the chapter, The Body Knowing: Gender, Art and Knowledge, where I discuss the writings of Trinh Minh- Ha and the art of Cindy Sherman.) Thus, “gaze” is a peripheral or obscure state of “looking”, one that re-positions the artistic process as a shared challenge. Rosa Ho (1993-4) writes about this carved up ownership in the

catalogue to Savage Graces, an exhibition by Gerald McMaster, Canadian Native artist and Curator:

I would suggest that one of the strategies of pedagogical positions of those who deploy the “reversed gaze” in their work is not only to have the “Master” viewer recognize his/her own subject position, but to take a position as “an opacity on the other’s distant horizon” in order to evade, and refuse entry into the “Master’s” gaze. Instead, the “Master” is thrust into a position s/he is not prepared for, a position many are not prepared to accept--the focal point of the gaze. I would further infer that this theoretical position is one that can be seen in the practice of many artists whose work explores and challenges the power relationships between domination and resistance. (24)



Critical theory in art considers issues of audience, moving art out from static interpretations towards an exchange with art that provokes destabilization and a re-interpretation of ourselves and others. This interaction need not be a public solicitation, but rather provocatively aims to make the audience a partner in the production of meaning.

Locating my voice amidst contemporary art practices

Needlework has often been diminished within the hierarchical canon of western art, associated with women's craft, femininity and the home. Embroidery as contemporary art making is not intended to disentangle the feminine from sewing, but rather meant to represent this femininity as a source of strength and empowerment (Parker, 1984). In addition, needlework in a contemporary sense is not limited to traditional manipulations of stitches, but combines paint, collage, and non-fibre materials. Since the 1960s artists have refused to accept the traditional conception of the art object as something precious, permanent or beautiful. Feminist artists extend this attitude to new concepts of art and artistry, to include what has traditionally been excluded from the public art domain:

Embroidery also has a place in the feminist effort to transform the conditions of art practice, the relationship of artist to audience and the definitions of what constitutes art. (Parker, 1984, 208)

The use of textile arts in contemporary art making practices challenges value-laden divisions and emphasizes that definitions are not fixed.

Acts of sewing and negotiating art forms traditionally upheld as "women's craft" is a conscious act I embrace as an artist. Growing up there were few opportunities to learn sewing or other needle arts, perhaps because they were seen as just that: feminine, delicate and private. It was a modern sensibility that educated me to believe that in order for a woman to succeed I needed to embrace the power of the male genre art forms. My teacher's voice, "Big is better, paint like a man". I arrived at textile explorations as

an adult artist, re-affirming the feminine, empowering tradition, and seeking alternative materials with which to express my ideas.

The contemporary art community is infused today with artists manipulating textile arts in a variety of assemblages (Lippard, 1976; Pollock, 1999). As feminism expands, material investigations become diversified and critically engaged in broader cultural discourses, “dangerous, vulnerable, angry, chaotic and multifariously defined desires [are] conjured by textile metaphors, processes and materials” (Carson & Pajackowska, 2001, 198). Many artists also parody the adage “sugar and spice” creating objects that contest niceness and femininity. Examples of such explorations can be seen in the work of Janet Morton, Michelle Gay, and Catherine Heard (Springgay, 1996, & as cited in *Surfacing*, 2001).

Janet Morton, a Toronto-based artist, knits giant sized and familiar objects. One art piece is a giant sized knit blanket, which she stitched while sitting in a storefront window on an urban street. Knitting every day for one month, Morton cast the headlines of Toronto’s three major newspapers into a blanket. As she performed this task, public viewers stopped to watch her work. Partitioned from the street by the window glass, members of the public stopped to show her their own personal knitting, woolen objects, or tried to communicate through body movements (there was an assumption that she could not hear through the glass), creating an ongoing site of bodied performance. Some visitors even sat down on the pavement to work on their own knitting. The finished art piece included the completed blanket and a video, which highlighted the performative

aspect of her work, cut with shots of literary “knitters,” ie. Madame Lafarge, and other visual metaphors (Springgay, 1996).

Michelle Gay’s work, in contrast works on the level of performance and the body in more obscure ways. Gay’s art pieces often incorporate embroidered text sewn in white thread on white fabric. Here the abject body is disturbed one step further, as the embroidered text is placed over a stuffed bed-like form, elongated and exaggerated to suggest a body in repose. The viewer, in order to interpret and “read” the text must stretch their own body over the bed, strain to peer down at the words, resulting in a mass of contorted and unruly limbs (Springgay, 1996).

Catherine Heard uses fabric, human feces, hair and various other substances to create doll-like creatures, which undermine notions of femininity, childhood, sexuality and bodies. Her most recent doll sculptures seem sanguine and pretty, until close viewing shows the skin abrasions and eruptions (as cited in *Surfacing*, 2001).

While the boundaries between art and craft have continued to shift and artists employ a variety of fibre techniques in their work, there is a distinguishable difference between feminist art and textile arts. Recent critical art theorists have asked the question: Is the simple elevation of women’s craft to art, a feminist act? (Carson & Pajaczkowska, 2001) Disrupting binaries and hierarchical traditions, which relegate certain art forms to a lesser than status, can be a feminist act. However, does that imply that all artwork created using traditional “feminine” techniques is feminist art? For example, are all quilts feminist art? Is simply sewing a subversive act?

Today the hybrid art practices employed by artists has transformed hierarchical canons of gender, race, class and art, leaving textile arts to be manipulated by men and

women alike. Likewise, materials alone do not determine what constitutes as art. As demonstrated through the above examples and in my artwork, feminist textile art moves beyond a simple empowerment statement of diverse artistic genres, and acts as destabilizing agency, “where gendered [ways of knowing] and identities are loosened by the fragments of cloth and bits of sewing” (Carson & Pajackowska, 2001, 201). Sewing does not make my work a feminist act, or an art of agency. It is important that the use of fibre art in my work not be understood as a particular craft technique simply elevated to an art status. Rather, with as much importance as I paint, the fibre materials in my work are consciously manipulated in order to make certain political acts present. Secondly, the combination of painting and fibre art, their inherent contradictions and place in the art world, create further tensions and eruptions. I want my art to speak to larger discourses than to simply dislodge traditionally upheld belief systems in the academe. The artwork itself must become an agent of dissonance, an art that changes how we understand epistemology, the body, and the fragment.



Art as empowerment and agency

The role of imagination is not to resolve, not to point the way, not to improve. It is to awaken, to disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, and unexpected.

Maxine Greene, *Releasing the Imagination*^{xiii}.

I have outlined in the previous section feminist fibre artists that manipulate and deconstruct needlework and notions of femininity locating my own artwork within a contemporary art practice. From this I ask: Can art be social activism? Can art empower and effect social change? There are numerous examples of art as social activism in contemporary art literature, gallery spaces, the web, and on the streets. Many of these examples I reflect on when creating my own work or writing about art as theory, and many others become teaching tools as I engage in weekly lessons with my students. Their absence in this paper artifact is challenged and addressed in the installation work that is a part of this thesis. The work by Janet Morton, Michelle Gay and Catherine Heard can be understood as art that empowers and re-conceptualizes feminine forms and identity. In this section I will highlight two embroidered art forms as further examples of art processes and art products that empower and effect social change⁸.

As illustrated in the previous section, contemporary fibre artists purposefully investigate and use textile methods to deconstruct conditioned meanings and disorient

⁸ I have specifically used examples of embroidery art because of their connection to a) my own experience living and working with the Rabari artists in India; b) my installation incorporates embroidery and it is this connection to feminist fibre art that I want to continue to expand on in this section of the thesis. There are other strong examples of social activist work, such as the art by Germain Koh and Suzanne Lacy (taken up in other sections of this thesis) as well as work by Ken Lum, whose recent public art sculptures installed on the roof of the Vancouver Art Gallery are intended as a social comment on the exclusionary history of immigrants in Vancouver public monuments (Milroy, 2001).

traditional conceptions of femininity and art. However, the Rabari women artists in India continue to utilize traditional needlework from their past, but actively seek to change their living conditions by commodifying their art forms. They re-contextualize traditional stitching patterns to speak back to conditions not of their making, producing contemporary products (pillow slips, wall hangings, and purses) that employ the traditional embroidered motifs. Judy Frater (1995) has spent years studying and working with the Rabari women of Kutch, India, documenting their embroidery patterns, and collecting their stories. Through acts of empowerment (providing direct and indirect means through which traditional Rabari embroidery, once feared a “lost art,” can be created to generate income), Judy Frater assists the women artists in gaining access to money and education. It is not the textile medium of Rabari art that makes it a feminist art, but rather, the process through which the artwork is created, “contesting the limits and constraints currently at work in the regulation of textual production and reception” (Grosz, 1995, 23) that enables empowerment and agency.

In another Indian context, Bihari women artists manipulate traditional Sujuni and Khatwa textile forms to include observations and reflections of their daily lives (Morrison, 1999). Sujuni is a type of straight running stitch used in Bihari embroidery which like the Rabari embroidery, traditionally incorporated geometric designs, flowers, religious and secular imagery through an established set of visual symbols. The artwork created today, with the assistance of Canadian artist and scholar Skye Morrison, expands the use of traditional visual symbols to include new designs taken from the women’s daily lives. For example, the women of the Bihari collective created a *Condom Quilt*, after an NGO (non-government organization) visited their village handing out condoms

and “lecturing” on the promises of birth control and safe sex. In a documentary, filmed by Skye Morrison (film under review), the women speak about this trivial act of “education” that over simplifies a much more complex and intricate social, political and personal issue. The condoms meant to empower the women’s sexual identity and bodies in fact create more confusion and problems. This poignant fact is well articulated in the documentary film when a young woman reminds the viewer that condom wearing is not a woman’s choice in her village. While this thesis is not the space to adequately delve into these complex issues, I illustrate them at present because of the role that art making then takes in the women’s understanding, and enactment, of empowerment and agency. Using the experience of the condom visit, the women created a *Condom Quilt* to re-tell their stories in relation to the condom visit and ways in which they can or might empower their bodies and sexual identities. This particular quilt and subsequent textile pieces created by this collective uses story as theory (Richardson, 2000) to narrate and enact agency through personal and social transformation. The quilt along with numerous other artworks traveled throughout Bihar to small tribal villages, in addition to three exhibitions in India, one in New York city and an additional show at the *Textile Museum*, Toronto, Canada.

Embroidery has been a form of literacy amongst tribal Indian women for centuries, documenting and recording events and passing on important rituals and ideas to future generations. The Sujuni collective re-claims self-expression, embroidery as a way of knowing and understanding, and uses a form of both art and literacy that is important and valuable to their own lives. The Bihar collective now works with other tribal woman and their traditional art forms, expanding relationships of literacy and

power, shifting the boundaries of self-determination and transformation. The art products, the embroidered stories, do not become static entities or isolated art forms. They are intended to be used, exhibited and sold, subtly infiltrating the public domain, inviting viewers and makers to continue the story, to create new meanings from the fragments.

Similarly my artwork is not only critical of, or a challenge to traditional norms (both in the academe and in an art context), it also intends to facilitate the production of new and perhaps unknown discursive spaces (Grosz, 1995). There are “texts” and theories in the artworks that are deliberately not addressed in this written document. The art is meant to move the viewer, to ask them to become part of the gaze, to insert their own bodies and stories into the installation. What can you understand, create, and contest from the body fragments on display? The art itself becomes an art of empowerment and agency. This act of transformation is both personal and social. If we embrace art as agency, how does this translate to art education and arts-based educational research? What must art educators embrace and allow for, in order to facilitate a space in which art education is not just the acquisition of technical skills, but a place where the unknown is accessed and the impossible entertained? How might an art education of risk and uncertainty unfold? As David Smith (1999) asks: “What should be embodied in our actions such that we are working on the side of true generativity even while in the midst of what we do not fully understand?” (131)

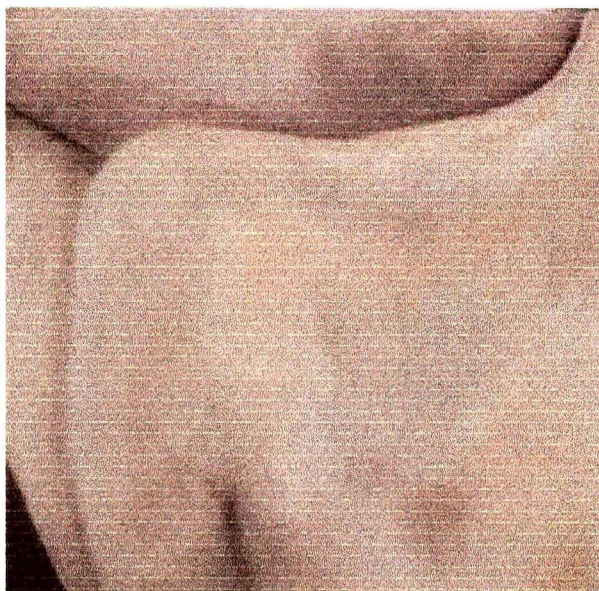
In Threads of Identity, Judy Frater (1995) weaves a tale about identities embedded in embroidery styles whose subtle differences become crucial in signifying

different communities and simultaneously implying relationships among them. As I stitch red threads piercing rose petals, my body travels back to India, where I spent three years as an artist and a teacher. Memories of threads embroidering patterns between the spaces of women and artists, fragments of lives, remnants of cloth. I return to Kutch daily, my favourite embroidery placed above my computer screen, to a place of learning to sew new styles and syntax, vocabularies of parched desert skin. The visual language of the Rabaris told through the stitching of fabrics, the manipulation of threads, is not a text that can be mastered, codes that can be broken. Learning a new art form impressed upon me how difficult and impossible teaching art can be. Art lessons are not easily transcribed into neatly formatted overheads or text-books. This translation of visual imagery into words often fails. In classrooms we have been conditioned to converse in a language coded by schools and scholarly institutions. Art making is my first language, it is a voice that informs in passionate ways. Allowing for artistic language, a bodied language, is about sewing lives. Like hand stitches, teaching is imperfect, irregular and can never be imitated in exactly the same way. This lack often manifests as fear and apprehension for what we assume we don't know. Art educators need to entertain uncertainty moving beyond limited definitions of what it means to know and to learn.

Pedagogy then becomes a vocation to live and act within the difference between what we know and what we do not know, that is, to be drawn out to what calls us from both within and beyond ourselves. (Smith, 1999, 128)

When we reconsider uncertainty as regeneration, new threads are cast and new patterns are sewn, recognizing the violence of discourse closed in on itself.

To live within the contradiction of (educational) discourse, then, means to be oriented to speech as being neither closed in on itself nor abandoned to a future which is out of our hands. (Smith, 1999, 129)



Maxine Greene's (1995) seminal work on the role of imagination and the arts, states that "we must make the arts central in school curricula because encounters with the arts have a unique power to release imagination" (27) and confers that "imagination allows us to particularize, to see and hear things in their concreteness" (29). Imagination encourages and enables us to make new connections, "that suggests the contingency of the reality we are envisaging" (30). We need to lift the term imagination from the hopeless bowels of romanticism and complacency, trivializing and emptying the arts of their investigative potential. If educators only see the possibilities inherent in art to be that of awakening the imagination, then we are ignoring art's ability to communicate, to inform, *to break from demarcation* (hooks, 1999). Art as transformation must bring into being something beyond our present situation. Art is not only "creative" or "imaginative", it renders the world as a flickering struggle against the restraints and structures that dominate. Art as intervention must awaken our imagination in such a way as to arouse social action.

Art as theory as fragment

Reassemblage. From silences to silences, the fragile essence of each fragment sparks across the screen, subsides, and takes flight. Almost there half named.

Trinh Minh-ha, *Woman, Native Other*^{xiv}.

*As we grew older, I stopped trying to show Roopa the hidden worlds that seethed beneath the surface of the ordinary, for it seemed that she had, in her mind, closed the doors that opened into imagination. If she could not **see** a purple rose on a bush or a peacock on the front lawn, she declared, it couldn't possibly be there.*

Anita Rau Badami, *Tamarind Mem*^{xv}.

Creating art is a bodied act. I transcribe body memories, autobiographical references, social re-constructions and ethnographic narratives into visual imagery. The artworks become stories, theories, fictions of my life, tangled and beaten together. In a paper stylistically written as letters and responses between two authors, Rishma Dunlop (Dunlop & Springgay, in press) writes about art and this act of storying:

Stories are theories, I tell my students. Stories are theories, opening up the scars of history, geography. Stories map us. Every work of research is in some sense a narrative, a fiction... Tell me your story and I will come to know my own in new ways. I will read you, your texts of art, reread you, see myself anew, retell our stories intertwined, tangled...(23)

My artworks are stories. The images in my artworks are intimate objects: dresses, rose petals, toy tea cups and my own body parts, suggesting deep intimate secrets. However, their details are not intended as *my story*, but placed strategically together to evoke multiple possibilities. In this sense every mark is important, not because each mark has a specific attached meaning, but rather meaning is constructed through a larger set of

relationships that surround the work. My stories are tangled in the limbs and surfaces of my artworks, yet it is not a literal reading of these stories that is important, but more importantly a metonymic weaving of fragmented visual imagery, new composites, new beginnings.

Art is about revealing what is hidden. It is a way into other realities and other personalities. It is a way of looking at something differently, a form of intervention. Art is living. It is breath taking--it stops us-- moving from past to future, while disrupting the present. Sewing rose petals is a sensual experience, it speaks of embodiment, vulnerability and essence. In a powerful exhibition at the Seattle Art Museum (Huska & Reddy, 2001) six artists celebrated the experience of cloth. Wendy Hanson, whose work informs and inspires my own rose petal creations, sews and photographs rose petals and stitches discarded fabrics and clothing into monuments that mark the passing of time. In the exhibition catalogue Hanson describes her process:

In my work I also like to reference the body. The way we go through various transitions in our lives, the ways we age, and how our identities shift during these processes. The materials I use are also very important. I like to use materials and methods that will add additional layers of meaning to the work and create a personal connection between viewers and the artwork.
(Hushka & Reddy, 2001, np)

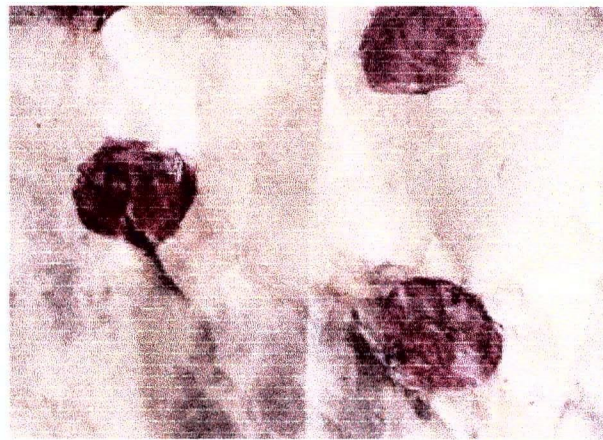
Rose petals are substances that wither and decay. Skins; aging memories of time. They defy value and permanence and simultaneously evoke metaphors of expensive gifts, sensuality, and love, gestures that hint at eternity. It is essential that all meanings are evoked simultaneously, that the multi-logic of symbols not be reduced to singularity. Thus, art as theory is theory as fragment. Pieces. Portions. Parts. Splinters. Remnants.

Blood drops. Bits of flesh. Art as theory as fragment demands that we seek illumination not through linear sequences but rather allow for pieces and splinters to erode into a metamorphosis of new beginnings. Fragments are juxtaposed, they collide and they shift each other, creating new assemblages, new theories and form new ways of knowing. Theory as fragment is “a fragmented telling in a fractured world” (Brown, 2000, 17). Brenda Brown’s (2000) dissertation investigating testaments of childhood sexual abuse is “a story told in fragments” (14) emphasizing that stories do not need to imply a beginning, middle and end. Her writing and her visual art; fragmented scraps of paper, paint, words and visual symbols leave gaps, sutured, scared spaces, allow the reader to assume their own role in the construction of the story. She writes: “A story spun of imagination and collected fragments of words and images, based on lived experience” (22). It is essential, she states, to tell the story in fragments; there are parts of the story that cannot be told, there are pieces missing, but also, because as she tells the story she in turn becomes fragmented (Brown, 2000).

The fifth dress in the series of artworks that compose The Body Knowing installation, is constructed from cotton hand-made paper dyed and stained as if to evoke bruises, traces of memories and bodies. Beaten onto the surface of the dress are rose petals, which also stain and seep into the skin of the paper. Some of the rose petals are left as crusts and scabs along with small hammer marks that can be seen imprisoned on the surface of the cotton fibres.



The Body Knowing installation speaks of stories untold, of places hidden deep inside. They are real and imagined fictions, live and aware, yet buried and partial like bruised impressions on skin's fragile shell. Fragments leave gaps. Slits. Cuts. Seams. Breath. Spaces with, in, and through bodies, casting new fictions, creating stories and pulling up the threads of existence. *Our stories touch and twine, but they are threads of different hues. Sometimes it seemed as if the past was a painting that she dipped in water, allowing the colours to run and drip, merge and fade so that an entirely altered landscape remained. Perhaps she only pretended that she did not recollect... she preferred to spin her own stories* (Badami, 1996, 137). The paintings, rose petals and garments form a relationship between the fragmented figure, awash in atmospheric plumes of colour, intense reds, blood in water. The figures are buried under alizarin crimson, as if hidden behind veils, abbreviated or interrupted. But for all the potential horror and oppression that this art exhibition might entail, there is a basis for hope and a kind of freedom of poetic absence that bears witness to envision the world anew and to fill the holes that absence leaves in history and in us.



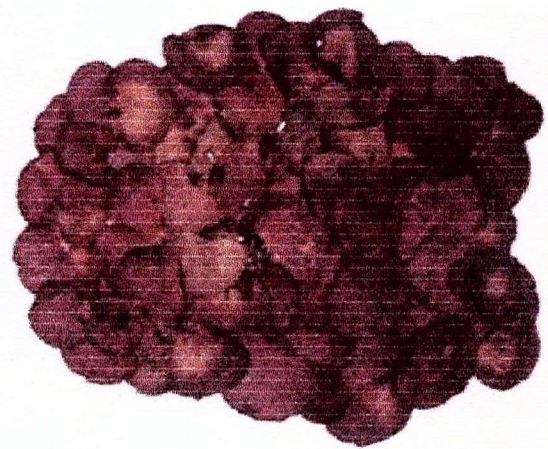
The Body Knowing: Gender, Art and Knowledge

*Skin turns to canvas. Ink spreads across the vulnerable softness of her wrist,
giving shape to the sound of her name.*

Shauna Singh Baldwin, *What the body remembers*^{xvi}.

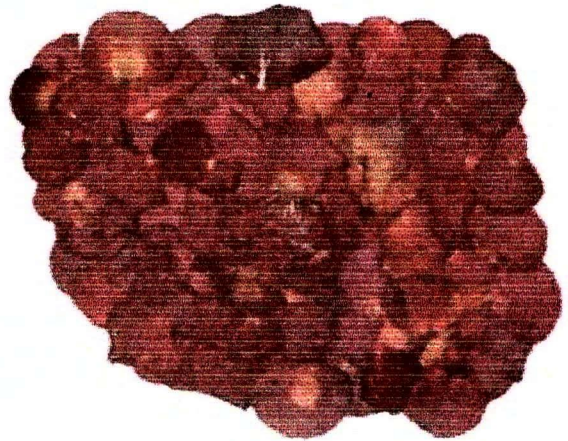
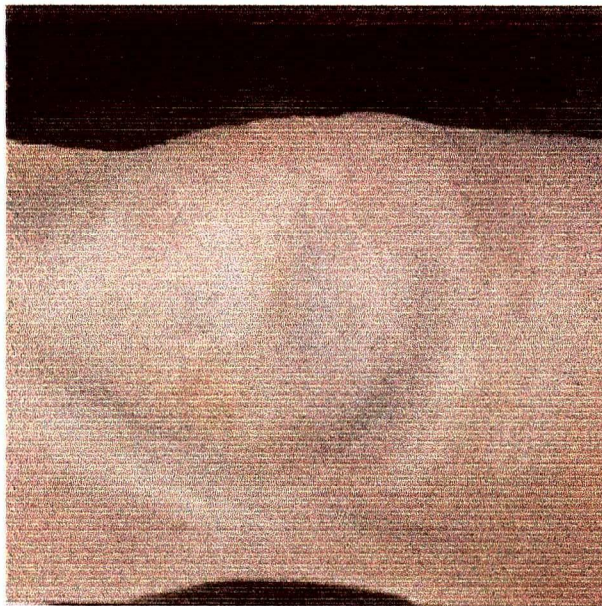
Hands

Her hands drop shelled peas into the ceramic colander with precision. Wrinkled, cracked, scarred. Earth stained, humus tracing lines and memories of gardening, cooking, mending, farming, healing. Rough patience. Skilled hands shell peas, weed rows of potatoes, strike hymn cords on ivory keys. Strong hands enfold mine; small, young, growing. Guiding hands. Watching hands. Her face blurred in my memory, her voice faded altogether. But her hands, the sting of discipline, course tenderness as she wipes tear streaked cheeks, offering chocolate laden spatulas to lick and savor, memories incised on my limbs. Hands; stained records of her pedagogy. A body pedagogy.



Knee

"Young ladies don't sit like that", legs sprawled, knees pointing east and west. (Un) feminine, certain kinds of ladies, red ladies. Red. Colour of blood, colour of anguish. Blood on the sheets red, poppy red, clot red, red of aloneness, threatening red that says, "beware young lady, stop before speaking". That red. Stop don't love yet. That red. Red of anger. Inner red. Vulva, spit, sweat, a spinning out of thought. Struck with language that relegates bodies and the arts. Basic. Feminine. Outside. Underworld. Red. Sex. Faggot. Rape.



Feet

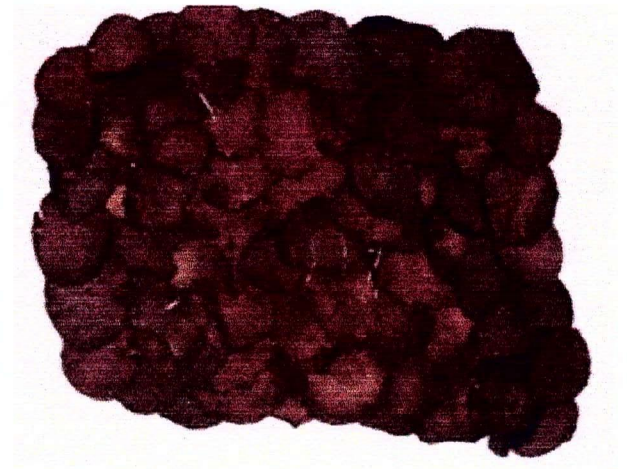
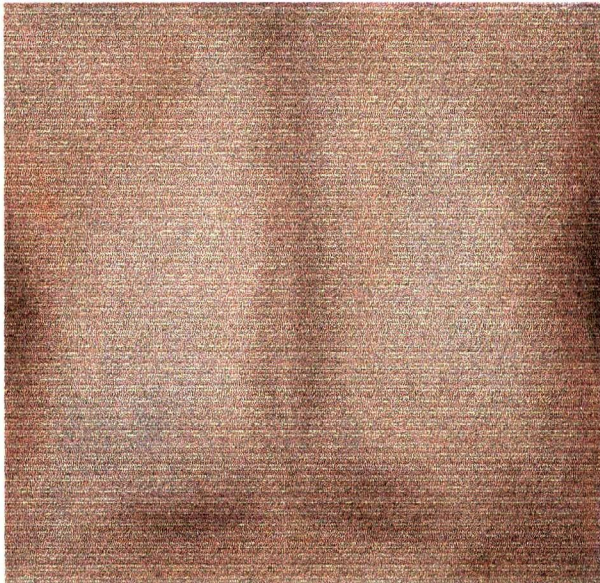
My first art was music. Piano lessons weekly, yearly passing through grades of Conservatory repertoire. Scales, listening tests, harmonic cords banged out nightly in practice on the keys. The eerie tick of metronomes, pennies balanced on top of hands, perfect playing posture. Balance. Discipline. Play it again. Play it over. Rigid rules, one note misplaced, juried competitions, first place awards, examinations. But I could not be contained by finger tapping perfection, choosing instead to feel sounds, music pulsating through me, synaesthesia not existing on the page. Failed sight tests. Two notes misplaced. I fell in love with the piano when I learned to use my feet. Adding pedals; piano, forte, damper; body sound vibrations, part to whole. Body sound vibrations, reading text aloud.



Back

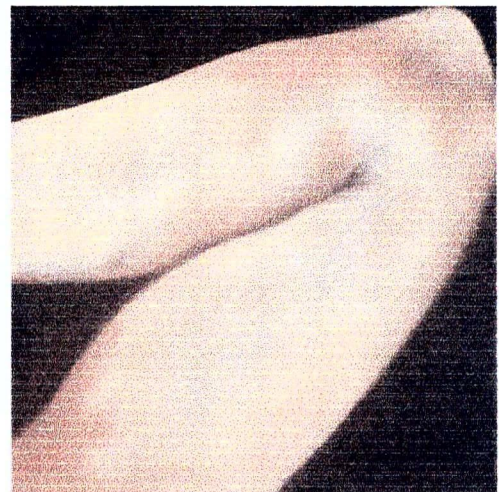
It was a game of fitting bone on bone. The curve of your spine, marks of your skin. Bone on bone. Flesh on flesh. To remember you it's my own body I touch. The physical memory of love lost. Wisdom says forget, the body howls. I did not think of what it would mean to remember.

Myself in your skin, myself lodged in your bones, myself floating in the cavities of absence. This is how I know you.



Arm

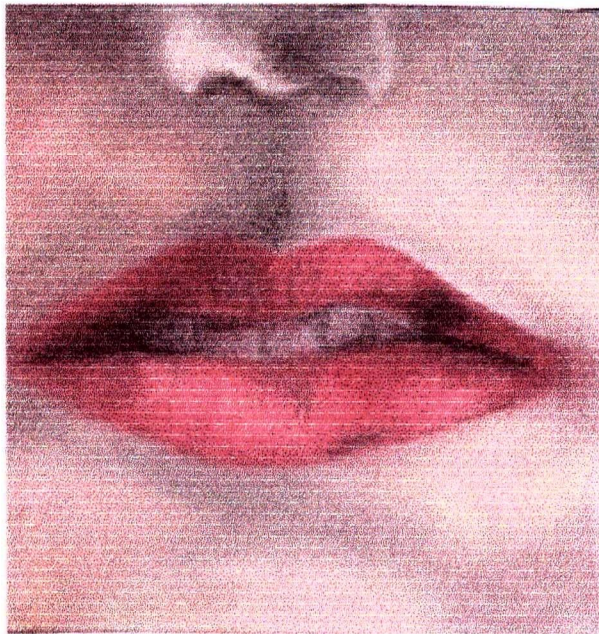
My arm moves swiftly across the paper's surface, rubbing pressure felt. I am 8. The artist-teacher bends towards me, a mark made, dark imprint on blank page. My own arm traces his gesture, following the curve and angle of the line. Residues of his body inform mine. Watching images emerge, I can feel the hand of the artist-teacher guiding me. A brushstroke is an exquisite record of the speed and force of the hand that made it. Tracing gestures with a finger or an arm, this is how I come to know, to understand the artist and the artwork. Memories of stones and waters and moving bodies mingle. It is about what the body knows as opposed to what the mind memorizes. These places have nothing to do with how much we know about them. We will never know enough. It is about the struggle of an artist- scholar to know the world, to speak the world through substances.



Lips

I used to watch my Grandmother getting dressed. Pearl necklace, tear-drop earrings, white gloves and hat. She was a proper lady, skirts ironed crisply, hems well below the knee. I would sit on the end of the large poster bed, white covering spread smooth. Sometimes she would ask me to help fasten the 'hook and eye'. She never spoke. It was a silent ritual, disrupted by two reflections in the vanity mirror; waiting. It was as if I was the one getting dressed. And then, lips taugt and slightly parted, she would apply the final touch, turn towards me, scarlet lips a smile, a secret shared between friends.

Fragments. It is the viewer who decides what is what.



What about the body?

The body is... both an object represented... and an organism that is organized to represent concepts and desires. Two systems of representation intertwine and overlap. Language is a system of signs produced in a particular set of historical circumstances and involving repetitions and encoding of the kind to which societies attribute specific meanings either consciously or unconsciously.

In Warwick and Cavallaro, *Fashioning the Frame*^{xvii}.

Feminist artists and scholars have been interested in the ways female bodies have been talked about, classified, destroyed, invaded, altered, decorated, sexualized and fragmented (hooks, 1994; Minh-ha, 1989; Nochlin, 1994; Shapiro, 1999; Sherman, 2000). Similarly, the fascination with the body engages not only in thinking about the body as object, but also in ways our bodies actively construct and write ourselves (Dunlop, 1998; Winterson, 1992). Over the last decade there has been a proliferation of feminist publications and art exhibitions on the body, and more recently in academe a turn towards the use of the word 'embodiment', disrupting the hold of binarism, particularly the mind/ body split (Hocking et. al, 2001). Though my research embraces and critiques all of the above, I also wish to extend the body as subject to include the body in the construction of knowledge. The question then is: What *about* the body? What about the *body*?

In this chapter I intend to challenge presumptions and methodological criteria governing knowledges traditionally upheld in the academy, by examining the body and the role the body plays in the production and evaluation of knowledge. My research inquiry proposes that knowledge is constructed with, in, and through our bodies. Thus, if one way that our bodies are constructed and inscribed is through visual imagery, then the

role of the body in (art) education (and subsequently educational sites) becomes an important discourse. First, body knowing as a term needs clarification.

Body knowing is tacit knowing. It is intuition, an unconscious construction of ideas. Body knowing is knowing through our senses; synaesthesia resonating impulses with the visual world. Body knowing is kinesthetic; it is an active exploration of text. Body knowing is separate from the mind, but is not exclusionary of the mind. Body knowing is embodied knowing.⁹ Body knowing is marked out on the surface of our skin. It is the way in which our bodies have been constructed by visual images in the environment, through social and historical positions of power and privilege. Understanding how this interaction is performed, inscribed and resisted through the body enacts a re-positioning of body knowledge as both interior and exterior transgressions.

This chapter refuses to seek definitive answers, allowing for the gaps of fragmentation and contradiction. Through poetry, narrative inquiry, feminist theory, and critical pedagogy I begin to re-conceptualize a space for the body in education. Beginning with an examination of visual culture I position a place from which the body needs to be taken up in contemporary educational theory. The next section isolates three themes for the body in educational scholarship: tacit knowing, feminist theory, body pedagogy, and concludes with a brief visit back to the notion of sensual scholarship, an erotic understanding that the body is present throughout arts-based educational research.

⁹ Embodied knowing in educational discourse is often located within holistic and spiritual educational theory. Therefore, I have used the term, body knowing, not to claim that body is separate from the mind, but in order to place emphasis on the body.

Why study the body? The body in visual culture and art education

The explosion of the body in technology, science, fashion, and popular culture could account for the rampant popularity of the body in scholarly discourse. The urgency to re-conceptualize and re-define the body has never been more important than now, when body parts can be transplanted and machines appropriate the functions of human organs; when genetic change can be engineered and human beings cloned; when a fetus can be nurtured in an artificial womb; when we impulsively rebuild faces, breasts or thighs to conform to the moment's ideal of beauty; and when we live in a virtual reality where cyborg bodies deny aging, weakness or time (Warwick & Cavallaro, 1998). Through popular culture, young girls idolize the likes of *Brittany Spears*, and awaken their senses to a host of *GAP* advertisements, where the notion of individuality is commodified in sameness and brand labels. In art classrooms a shift in art genres embraces a new field of study called visual culture (Carson & Pajackowska, 2001; Duncum, 2001; Freedman, 2000). Visual culture integrates various disciplines of the visual image (art, art history, anthropology, media studies, cyber imagery, fashion, architecture and design) disrupting traditional boundaries of academic discourse. As such, visual culture not only expands the range of visual artifacts to include those traditionally seen as outside the art canon, it also focuses on ways of seeing, often referred to as *visuality* (Duncum, 2001). In this view, visual imagery is not limited to a visual response, but resonates with all of our bodied senses. Similarly, visual culture (the making of and the viewing of) is to be contextually understood historically, socially and politically. Thus, I argue the body becomes even more cogent and interesting as a field

of study. If, as feminist scholars note, one way the body is constructed is through visual imagery, then can students and teachers reconstruct body image and inscriptions through art making, to position the body and art making as sites of agency and social change? Can art making (and viewing) as text offer insights that would otherwise remain hidden in traditional codes of discourse?

As scholars recognize the importance of our living aesthetic environment and the impact of everyday visual stimuli on the curriculum (Duncum, 2001; Garoian & Gaudelius, 2001), students require tools to re-construct the meaning of such imagery, and to understand how this interaction is performed, inscribed and resisted through their bodies. Art enacted as a form of critical literacy thus becomes a mode of communication and representation that combines personal and social agency, implications of which reach beyond art education to other curriculum areas. Re-conceptualizing how students (and teachers) come to know with, in, and through their bodies critiques the way in which the body is implicated and bound up in our understandings of curriculum, pedagogy and schooling. Art education needs to move from a series of lesson plans, well intentioned and well constituted, to art education as agency and empowerment, that is infinite and incomplete and that entertains a struggle of difference.

The body as text

Bodies are essential to accounts of power and critiques of knowledge.

Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion*^{xviii}.

*Now the world stands visible through your body, the world,
transparent through your transparency.*

Muriel Rukeyser, *Body of Waking*^{xix}.

The body has gained considerable attention and importance as a place from which to theorize, analyze, and critically re-consider the construction, reproduction and evaluation of knowledges. Paying attention to the body has the potential to inform and disrupt what we look at, how we look, what we ask, and how we create and represent with-in-through our bodies. The body in education has been traditionally understood as a fixed system, carefully managed for the enhancement of mental effort, envisioned as experiential, or altogether repressed (McWilliam & Taylor, 1996). My research project departs from these understandings of the body as a passive ground in which knowledge is enacted upon, and re-conceives bodies as beings in process and as sites of agency. Always incomplete and in the process of becoming, bodies (both surface inscriptions of, and lived experiences) reside between presence and absence. The body cannot be oriented in this sense as being an object that is present, but “is one that keeps open the possibility and the responsibility of returning, for the very next instance might demand of us that we understand anew” (Jardine, 1998, 43). Further accentuations of fragmentation, abjection and boundary crossing between interior cavity and exterior surfaces

problematize binary oppositions such as mind/ body, private/ public, inside/ outside, known/ unknown.

Journal entry: July 17th, 2001.

A student approached me today after class. We had a peer critique, a chance to share, to assess, to reflect. She had three paintings in process, was perplexed on how to tie them all together, to finish one most troublesome. I examined her pieces, talking to her about her aims and directions. They were beautiful pieces, pushing way beyond what I had hoped for from this introductory drawing and painting class. I pointed to a particular spot on one of the canvases, layers of texture and colour spilled over each other, a swirling mass of blurry shapes. Residues of her arm. I wanted more of this. She looked at me exasperated, not knowing how or why that particular corner had emerged. I encouraged play with paint and pigment, acrylic mediums, risk and time for reflection. She wanted step by step do it this way in one night answers. Criteria. Deadlines. Grades. We talked about how I might be able to re-create this spot, how after years of building body memories I was able to return to a place of knowing, of understanding what materials might do. Yet, even for me there were no certain guarantees. I would try it one-way, failing that attempt a second until I arrived at a desired goal. Sometimes goals change en-route. New journeys. She didn't need to mimic, to copy that particular corner. What I was asking her to do was to find that space of risk and uncertainty, to plunge deep into her pigments, to leave her mark. She spoke of the impossibility of teaching art to children. Curriculum. Assessment. Ambiguity. I spoke of the

possibilities that art opened up for students in school. "Risk is the repeated refrain" (Dunlop, 1999). A pedagogy that cannot exist in overheads and lesson plans. A pedagogy of uncertainty, incompleteness...

Tacit knowing

Tacit knowing or unconscious knowledge has often been linked to artists and art making. Associated with awe and wonderment, this ecstatic state is often described as a sense of something happening or occurring without the doer's knowledge of this action taking place. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes this experience as "flow":

Flow is a state of self-forgetfulness, the opposite of rumination and worry: instead of being lost in nervous preoccupation, people in flow are so absorbed in the task at hand that they lose all self-consciousness, dropping the small preoccupations...of daily life. In this sense moments of flow are egoless. Paradoxically, people in flow exhibit a masterly control of what they are doing, their response perfectly attuned to the changing demands of the task. (as cited in Goleman, 1995, 103)

In an effort to understand the aesthetic experience, Csikszentmihalyi (1988) investigated a broad range of skill-based activities including rock climbing, chess playing, musical composition, dancing and playing basketball. He discovered that despite the vast outward differences of these activities, at the experiential core there is a cluster of related sensations essentially the same for all. This cluster constitutes a heightened state of consciousness, which was called "flow" because respondents used that term frequently to describe the deep involvement in the activity. Tacit knowing, because of its sensory awareness, is often expressed theoretically as aesthetic experience. Monroe Beardsley (1982) suggests that an aesthetic experience consists of object focus, felt freedom, detached affect, active discovery and wholeness (as cited in Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 7).

Michael Polanyi furthers this postulation between mind and body maintaining “that all human cognition is to a large extent bodily in nature, acquired through a kind of absorption, as it were, and known in a way that largely escapes articulation by the knower” (Sorri, 1994, 15). Polanyi distinguishes between focal and subsidiary awareness, a continuum that is mutually exclusive. He asserts that we are focally aware of what we direct our attention to (reading this thesis) and simultaneously subsidiarily aware (holding onto the paper) at the same time. We cannot however, be focused and auxiliarily aware of the same event. For example, when we direct our attention to the holding of the paper, it becomes focalized knowledge, and another action becomes subsidual. Further to this, Polanyi defines knowledge as explicit or tacit in character. Explicit knowledge answers such questions as “What is the capital of Canada?” This is knowledge, which can be articulated conceptually, and transferred through the acquisition of data. “Tacit knowledge, on the other hand, involves the kind of knowledge that we cannot fully articulate... we always know more than we can tell” (Sorri, 1994, 17). Knowledge of a skill is an example of tacit knowing. For example being able to ride a bicycle we need not know how to explain this phenomena, and conversely, being able to explain how to do it does not actually mean one can ride the bicycle (Sorri, 1994).

Of importance to cognition is the notion that tacit knowing is not only a legitimate structure of knowing, but that many forms of tacit knowing can not be articulated as explicit knowledge irregardless of being focalized knowledge. Polanyi explains:

Things of which we are focally aware can be explicitly identified; but no knowledge can be made wholly explicit. For one thing, the meaning of language, when in use, lies in its tacit component; for another, to use language involves actions for our body of which we have only a subsidiary awareness. Hence, tacit knowing is more fundamental than explicit knowing; we can know more than we

can tell and we can tell nothing without relying on our awareness of things we many not be able to tell. (as cited in Sorri, 1994, 18)

In schools, explicit knowledge is acquired through interaction with focalized attention on a subject area. How then, is tacit knowledge achieved? Again, Polanyi states that tacit knowledge is not a result of direct transfer of data, but arises from what he terms “indwelling” (as cited in Sorri, 1994, 19). Indwelling is learning through example or processes, one that is bodily in recognition and is “to be distinguished from the inferential reasoning processes of explicit knowing” (as cited in Sorri, 1994, 19). While explicit knowledge would allow us to “know” that a particular work of art was made by a certain artist, determine what materials were used, it is virtually impossible to translate into data or explicit knowledge *how* the artifact was created. It is difficult to determine marks made, traces left by the body of the artist during the process of creation. I would argue that this holds true for all art, a specific example would be the work of abstract expressionist painter Jackson Pollock. His sensuous drip paintings evade even the most skilled technician. Similarly, Mary Sorri writes about her experience as a potter:

The fact that tacit knowing is never fully articulable is clearly manifest in the process of centering clay on the potter’s wheel, for there is no way to *say* how this is done. A potter simply comes to know when and how centering takes place. (1994, 24)

My students, pre-service teachers, struggle and want ready-made techniques to use in the classroom. The hardest and most violent exercise of all is asking them to accept that they may never know an art process fully and yet they must somehow “teach” students immediately as they enter the practicum and eventually as teachers. Together we struggle

with mark making, allowing spaces for our bodies, our bodied knowing and the whispers and silences that slide in-between the fragmented gaps of knowing and not knowing.

James Elkins (2000) in his book, What painting is describes painting as substance: "Painting is alchemy. Its materials are worked without knowledge of their properties, by blind experiment, by the feel of the paint" (9). This does not mean that artistic processes are completely arbitrary or lack "skill" but artists become experts through "doing", and their artistry is informed through residual practice and familiarity with a given medium. "Alchemy," cites Elkins, "is the art that knows how to make a substance no formula can describe" (19). Artists feel in their bones how substances behave.

We were working with paper pulp and plant fibres, casting sheets of hand-made paper. Learning to skillfully use a mold and deckle, to pull a perfectly textured sheet from the vat is a difficult process to articulate. There are no words to clearly explain the tilt of one's hand, the flick of the wrist, the pause over the water... it is something lived and felt through practice, one's body finding comfort in a residual process. As my student teachers struggle to learn and understand this process, I feel an urge to reach into the vat and guide their hands, something that I would not hesitate to do when teaching elementary students. As an elementary teacher my hands become a teaching tool; I cover their hands with mine, guide paintbrushes, print brayers, and slide a double layer of hands over the wet slimy surface of clay. Yet, when teaching adults I find this method awkward, unsure of touching adult hands. But without it, how can I re-create this bodied pedagogy?

Tacit knowledge as bodied knowledge is present in classrooms (and outside of classrooms in many other educational contexts), particularly in art education. However the historical positioning of tacit knowledge often identified with women has situated body knowledge outside of “authorized” knowledge (Debold, Tolman & Brown, 1996). This has meant that in both the academe and in schools, epistemologically and pedagogically body knowing has been denied and ignored. While current directions in embodied or holistic education have repositioned the role of the body in teaching and learning (Hocking et al, 2001), tacit understanding as a valid form of cognition has not been entertained or reconditioned in such a way as to allow for the incompleteness and unknowable possibilities in education.

But body knowledge is not only tacit knowing, an interior erudition; body knowledge is also shaped, formed and understood through inscription and resistance.

Journal Entry: July 11, 2001.

There is a perfection that I seek in my art. I started sewing rose petals with my sewing machine, seeking precise rows of petals, lined neatly side by side. Equal stitches; disciplined, controlled. Rose petals scar. Tracks left by the weight of the machine's feet, require me to abandon the orderly appearance in exchange for red, loopy, irregular stitches. Hand stitches. Sometimes I can't control the thread, pull it tight against the skin of the petal or decide where each petal will fall. Days spent sewing, only to discover their self-degeneration, mold, decay, deterioration. As the sewing unfolds, I accept the

becoming, the process, the suggestiveness of my art making. My hand, body traces, memories of learning stitches; Brownie badges sewing buttons; dolls dresses from discards in the sewing basket; patches on torn jeans. Red threads disrupting our dwelling in language, disrupting ourselves, our self-understanding.

Feminist theory

Feminist scholars have contextualized the discursive body, constituting it as a social and cultural artifact. The expanse of feminist theories on the body cannot be addressed within the confines of this thesis. There is a considerable amount of scholarship that I have not even begun to uncover or to fully understand, but I will attempt in this brief section to extract from my readings in feminist theory, and the viewing of art as theory¹⁰, a framework that has informed my art installation and that posits the body as both a condition of semiotic representation and as a process of representation.

The body as artifice

Artwork by contemporary artist Cindy Sherman (2000) reflects the body as a *ruinous landscape*. Distorted, dismembered, and assaulted body parts, re-enact a staged intervention between the perfect feminine image and death. Contemporary society through cosmetics, the fashion industry, media and science epitomizes dead woman as

¹⁰ For a discussion of art as theory please see Chapters one and two.

the perfect woman. The body as mediated by visual culture implies that women must die in order to reinvent themselves as perfect, doll-like specimens.

The self dies in the process of deformation and as illustrated by Cindy Sherman's artworks, becomes theatrical. Sherman's corpses installed in dramatic settings, with wigs, costumes and theatrical props explore the space between reality and fiction, and further re-construct the ideal of woman pieced and glued together. The natural self is rejected for the artificial self, which in turn is construed as a dead or grotesque image. The female identity is bound by this synthetic construction, as Laura Mulvey (1989) points out:

Woman stands in a patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer, not maker of meaning. (15)

Resisting the implications of death due to femininity, the work of Cindy Sherman asks the question: How do we use artifice to critique the construction of identity? I inquire further: How can artifice be used as a re-constructive tool in the formation of knowledge? And can we move beneath a binding epidermal layer in order to better re-construct our understanding of self and knowledge?

Elizabeth Grosz (1995) delineates two approaches to theorizing bodies. One taken from Nietzschean and Foucauldian notions of social inscription on the body, the other a "lived body", which references the "lived experience of the body, the body's internal or psychic inscription" (33). Grosz problematizes explicit accounts of gendered knowledge as anatomical, physiological or biological bodied difference, a departure that posits bodies as sexualized identities constructed through sociocultural means. While

much attention has been given to the exterior inscription of the body, the “lived body” bears thought:

If the notion of a radical and irreducible difference is to be understood with respect to subjectivity, the specific modes of corporeality of bodies in their variety must be acknowledged. These differences must in some way be inscribed on and experienced by and through the body. (1995, 32)

Grosz struggles to generate non-essentialist approaches to knowledge recognizing the body as a sexualized entity and rejects the association of knowledge as a mind/ body split. Knowledge is an interaction of power and bodies and thus, bodies are essential to critiques of power and knowledge. Wanda Pillow (2000) in her study of pregnant teen girls observes how “social structures and modes of representation simultaneously form and *deform* women” (200) and asks: “What kinds of strategies and commitments might a move toward the body make possible or hinder?” (2000, 200). Using bodies as sites of deconstruction and agency, Pillow was able to position young women’s bodies as sites of resistance and self-representation, acknowledging the body’s messiness and “leakiness” as potential spaces of thinking beyond limited notions of *what is*, obscuring boundaries and explicit knowledge patterns (2000, 214).

This challenge is further taken up in an article by Susan Hopkins (1996) on femininity, subjectivity and postmodernity in which she theorizes the supermodel’s ability to rework identity and to transform artifice. Understanding visual culture’s fascination with doll-like women, Hopkins questions young women’s contextualization of desire, femininity and subjectivity within “an intense but superficial game” (1996, 55), in which women exercise the power to re-invent themselves.

To postmodern girls, femininity is entered into as a game, something which they manipulate in a self-aware manner. The act of toying with the self suggests a way of being plastic but powerful. It is a detachment which need not imply objectification in the sense of slavish internalization of the male gaze. Rather it is an ironic and playful detachment from an increasingly unreal and chaotic world. (1996, 57)

Artifice is inverted moving beyond limited definitions of “dead” woman towards a re-thinking of systems of knowledge and power.

Similarly, dress not only enacts framing strategies through systems of control (corsets, bras, and other binding garments) but also refers to the creation and cultivation of distinctive modes of behaviour and systems of beliefs. Dress clothes both exterior object and interior subject allowing the meaning of artifice to exercise power from within. “The body can be regarded as a kind of hinge or threshold: it is placed between a psychic or lived interiority and a more sociopolitical exteriority that produces interiority through the inscription of the body’s outer surface” (Grosz, 1995, 33). The body becomes a process in which inner and outer cavities engage in an unresolved and ongoing struggle. “The modern body becomes the object of knowledge: within the residual dead flesh is the potential for investigation, that which can be described, organized, trained and made available for use” (Warwick & Cavallaro, 1998, 75). Re-shaping our understanding of bodied inscriptions moves away from assumptions of domination and repression to one in which power is re-interpreted and re-assessed both with, in, and through the body.

The self as other

I write to show myself showing people who show me my own showing. I-You: not one, not two. In this unwanted spectacle made of reality and fiction, where redoubled images form and reform, neither I nor you come first.

Trinh Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*^{xx}.

Sherman doesn't reveal herself in her work (even though her art is often referred to as self-portraiture), but rather critiques the masquerade of femininity. Her images explore excesses of the body and the revolt of the self, by trying to make people recognize something of themselves in the works, rather than a self-portrait of the artist.

Sherman's work is about performing as the subject of another's gaze. Her images explore the relationship between posing and the self, as well as questioning the authenticity of each. Can a self-portrait exist without bearing culture's reflection?

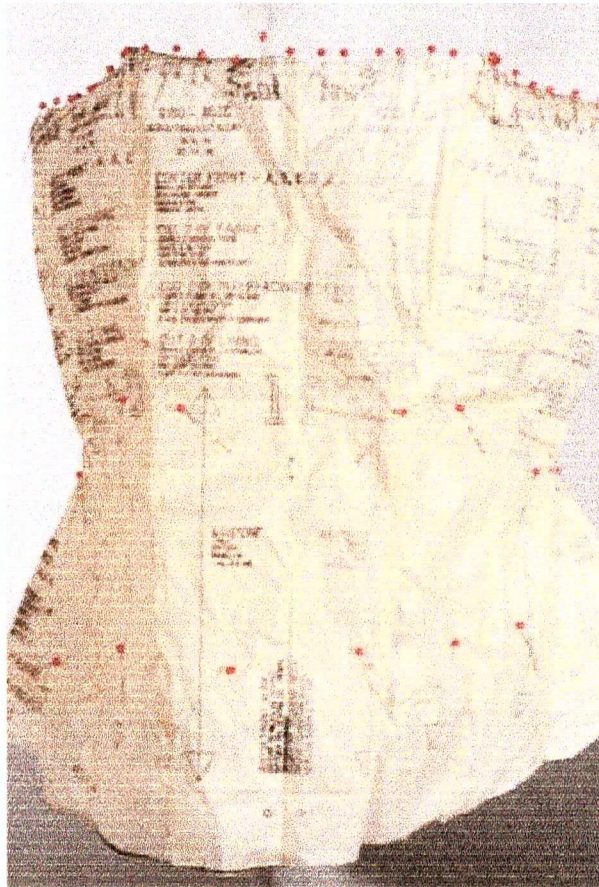
Sherman uses the grotesque body to emphasize the body in opposition to the classical body; closed, smooth, and impenetrable. Deformed, the self is collapsed into a landscape of different body parts in the process of transforming. The distorted body creates a sense of ambivalence and uncertainty by calling attention to disorder, a world no longer defined by boundaries. Body parts seen both in the work of Sherman and in my installation, are exposed, mixed up and tangled, challenging codes of femininity, raising issues of abuse, and re-constructing systems of knowledge.

Fragmentation is further articulated in the writings of Trinh Minh-ha, Asian feminist scholar and artist, who poses an "inappropriate/d other" reorganizing *who is*

being spoken to? who speaks back? Post-structuralist views on subjectivity suggest non-dualistic approaches to self and other:

One strategical definition of "the Inappropriate/d Other" ... is that one always fares with at least four simultaneous gestures: that of affirming "I am like you" while persisting in one's difference; and that of insisting "I am different" while unsettling all definitions and practices of otherness arrived at. This is where inappropriate(d)ness takes form. Because when you talk about difference, there are many ways to receive it; if one simply understands it as a division between culture, between people, between entities, one can't go very far with it. But when that difference between entities is being worked out as a difference also within, things start opening up. Inside and outside are both expanded. Within each entity, there is a vast field and within each self is a multiplicity. (Minh-Ha, 1998, as interviewed by Grzanic, np)

Shifting boundaries requires a reflection on ourselves as other, transgressing between the body's surface inscriptions and corporeal lived experiences.



While artists like Cindy Sherman (and in my installation, The Body Knowing) represent and/ or manipulate their own body forms, relationships with “other” are articulated within absence. It is as if an *endless play of mirrors* shifts the self to other, to self to other “within which countless combinations of reflecting reflections operate” (Minh-Ha, 1989, 23). Minh-ha continues with this analysis when she states: “writing is meshing one’s writing with the machinery of endless reflexivity” (1989, 23). However, this is not to say that infinity is void of consequences, particularly one in which understanding leads to emptiness. The body as fragment becomes increasingly regarded as functional, easily duplicated and repeated. Allowing for reflexive understandings of difference not limited to surface illusions means recognizing and negotiating difference experienced by and through the body (Grosz, 1995).

Subverting positions of the body as disembodied or narcissistic tropes, implies that knowledges must be seen as perspectival, partial and contestable (Grosz, 1995). Body knowledge strategized from a borderline or marginal position both bound by and beyond the limits of existing theory articulates the need for permeable or shifting boundaries. The body’s boundaries must begin to transgress; outer shell leaking into and inner cavity spewing forth; the with, in, and through of body knowledge.

For me, the question of hybridity or of cultural difference has never been a question of blurred boundaries. We constantly devise boundaries, but these boundaries, which are political, strategical or tactical-whatever the circumstance requires, and each circumstance generates a different kind of boundary-need not be taken as an end in itself. The notion of the migrant self, which has taken on a new lease in our times, is very relevant here. The self-in-displacement or the self-in-creation is one through which changes and discontinuities are accounted for in the making and unmaking of identity, and for which one needs specific, but mobile boundaries. ... It is not a question of blurring boundaries or of rendering

them invisible. It is a question of shifting them as soon as they tend to become ending lines. (Minh-Ha, 1998, as interviewed by Grzanic, np)

The boundaries between art and audience, bodies and art need to be re-evaluated. Audience is rarely taken up in art educational discourse¹¹. And yet, reflexivity implies audience, a reconsideration of self in an exchange/ interaction with other. As Minh-ha claims, it is not a knowing of self that defines an awareness of other, but rather a space is created where self and other are able to interact and collide. This interaction is tenuous, uncertain and ambiguous. When Cindy Sherman's most recent works were installed at the Art Gallery of Ontario (2000), the large C-prints were intentionally placed amongst historical Baroque and Dutch masterpieces. Gallery viewers conditioned to "looking" and "seeing" large historical paintings in a particular way, at first barely noticed the intrusion of Sherman's artwork. However, once they recognized something disturbing about a contemporary and living (photographed) body interacting with them in the gallery space, their subject position changed, their gaze shifted, and new interpretations and perceptions were traversed. Playing with the tropes of historical portraiture, often in parody, Sherman manipulates and distorts the awkward depictions of female anatomy in Old Master Paintings. The large photographs act as a type of Kaleidoscopic mirror, fracturing the gaze, returning it not in a linear transaction but one that augments multiplicity and variance. The viewer is not asked to gaze at other, but rather the viewer is asked to re-think their own subject-object position locating themselves within a new discourse.

¹¹ Most citations of audience in Art Education journals or publications refer specifically to museum or gallery education. Rarely is student understood to be audience and the role of art making undertaken within this discursive practice.



Body Pedagogy

In addition to tacit knowledge, feminist theories of the body's internal and outer boundaries, I want to briefly discuss body pedagogy in relation to bodies and the construction of knowledge. I will briefly outline critical pedagogy, which in no way is a comprehensive or exhaustive treatment of this complex and cogent field of scholarship, in order that I may then deconstruct the prevailing mind/ body split in critical pedagogy. Here I aim to illuminate how critical pedagogy might be combined with an awareness of body knowledge, to inform desired personal and social transformation. My reading in this area was greatly influenced by the work of dancer and researcher, Sherry Shapiro (1999), whose book Pedagogy and the Politics of the Body I will address in particular, citing aspects that link back to previous positions and arguments I have made for the body and art as sites of agency.

After completing my University degree in Fine arts, I ventured off on a year-long train ride through Europe. Determined to experience the world through my own eyes, to live amongst strangers and to share my dreams of adventure, I had one practical item on my agenda. I wanted to see first hand, the works of art I had studied in slide lectures and text-books. It was a pilgrimage to the great monuments and museums of the world. I remember snapshots of the Mona Lisa, the Musee D'Orsay, Monet's Water Lilies, and small wonders found in the Hermitage. But the memory most vivid and revisited is of a quiet room in London's Tate Gallery. There amidst the luminescent washes of Turner's stormy skies, my own personal experiences took shape and new meanings were created.

It was not a sense of nostalgia, or something familiar within the subject matter that evoked such emotion and transformation. It was a sensation that I get from paint that comes from attending to specific marks and the way they were made. It was looking at the small details of the paintings, the scratching, scraping, waving, jabbing and pushing, all reminiscent of the painter's body.

A brushstroke is an exquisite record of the speed and force of the hand that made it (Elkins, 2000). It is bodied residue. If you watch an artist in an art museum, they move up close to the painting's surface and trace the gestures with a finger or an arm. Paint is a cast made of the painter's movements, a portrait of the painter's body and thoughts; hung, they preserve the memory of the bodies that made them (Elkins, 2000). We often flatten things out in school, learning to know from text-books, standardized tests, and speak of accountability. Mark making speaks in colours and textures. It is a pedagogy that cannot exist, or be defined by over-heads, lesson plans or course objectives. I cannot teach about the body knowing, the way it moves into the brushstroke, caresses the canvas, inhales the noxious fumes of materials. A teacher's hands at the end of a school day; stained red, cut, bruised and covered in substance. Records of her pedagogy. A body pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy

Critical pedagogy desires education to be a form of social justice, and locates the exchange of knowledge as an interaction between student and teacher. Kathleen Weiler (1988) notes, "what essentially defines critical educational theory is its moral imperative

and its emphasis on the need for both individual empowerment and social transformation” (6). This statement is problematic calling for a need to disrupt the notion that someone can empower another. “Individual” and “collective” are terms that do not fit easily together. Often determined as the “father” of critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire (1997) advocated a social reconstruction of education, drawing attention to power relationships and the inequality of capitalism. Subsequent scholarship aimed to define how pedagogical practices reflected a lived experience and contested power hierarchies.

Critical educators need to develop a discourse that can be used to interrogate schools as ideological and material embodiments of a complex web of relations of culture and power, on the one hand, and as socially constructed sites of contestation actively involved in the production of lived experiences on the other. (Giroux, 1985, 23)

In this vein, critical pedagogy advocates “giving voice” to individual and collective stories in order to allow for a multiplicity of voices that would traditionally be suppressed or invalidated (Shapiro, 1999). But whose voice are we giving? Critical pedagogy becomes contorted when it assumes that empowerment is given, when it fails to recognize that power and privilege are always present. Thus, voice needs to be turned inwards towards an attunement to, a listening to, and a dwelling with, in, and, through bodies.

Feminist critical pedagogues (Brady, 1995; Ellsworth, 1997; hooks, 1994; Lather, 1991; Weiler, 1988) claim that emancipatory discourses are not enough, that labeling such interactions as “authentic” and “representational” deny true liberatory education (Desai, 2000). Feminism’s contribution to the analysis of pedagogy has been prodigious through attention to educational sociology, psychoanalytic readings of contemporary

culture, media studies, cultural studies, literary criticism and feminist studies (McWilliam & Taylor, 1996). Feminists maintained that critical pedagogists failed to understand themselves as producers of power. Feminist critical pedagogy asks individuals to reflect on their own subject position, not merely insight liberatory action onto others. Students and teachers need to reflect on how their own relationships are embedded within history, power and privilege. Kathleen Weiler (1988) writes that the most important aspect of critical theory is the “belief in each person’s ability to understand and critique his or her own experiences and the social reality “out there” that any project of pedagogical and ultimately social transformation rests on” (23).

However, such perspectives still prove limiting in view of a critique on bodies in educational theory. Much of the literature on critical pedagogy has continued to speak in terms of a mind/ body split purporting methodologies that separate and abstract the lived body as being enacted upon. Bodies are interpreted as the vehicle of resistance, but rarely bear consideration for how bodies themselves constitute systems of knowledge. In contrast to this disembodied theory, and in keeping with my own research positions, the work of Sherry Shapiro (1999) argues for an examination of the body in critical pedagogy and states that “schools undervalue language and representation as a factor in shaping the body subject and as the bearer of meaning, history, race and gender” (25). As a dance educator and researcher, Shapiro’s research inquiry interprets a bodied awareness of dancers’ connection to, and representation of their bodies in relation to identity structures and as an ecstatic mode of being. Bodies she argues need to be revisioned as sites of resistance and oppression. Working with a group of graduate students in dance education, Shapiro’s research study articulates the women’s reconceived understanding

of “their bodies, not as objects of hostility, but as something that is to be valued, indeed cherished” (132). Unraveling the knowledge of the body in dance education means circumscribing traditional modes of discourse that objectify the body opening up dialogues about: why dance, what body experiences are lived when dancing, and how the students might make sense of embodied knowledge (Shapiro, 1999). Shapiro distinguishes the inseparability of bodily knowing from conscious or mind knowing.

Embedded within perceptions and interpretations are personal experiences understood through a hegemonic consciousness that suspends us in the contradictions between a dominant and a resistant consciousness. From this space between domination and resistance is where meaning is found, securing the living body as the material that hold both. Ideas do not exist somewhere outside of this living material. What we know is at all times attached to bodily knowing, whether as tacit knowing or as conscious knowing. What we know speaks with and to our bodily memories of living. (32-33)

The body, she argues needs to be situated discursively in the context of critical education incorporating the corporeal into the lived experience of students and teachers. She re-images:

What we must do is re-envisage dance in terms of a critical pedagogy where the body/ subject can give voice and expression to everyday life with all of its indignities, injustices, and oppressive silences. Such a pedagogy can then reconnect dance to the struggle for a freer and more caring world. (1999,137)

Speaking against a dualistic notion of arts and aesthetic experiences, and towards one that recognizes the value of pedagogic processes that “engages the individual to reflect upon, gain understanding of, and give meaning to one’s life” begins to re-position a bodied critical pedagogy (Shapiro, 1999, 136).

As a woman, as an artist, and as an educator, I want to extend scholarship on the body to not only include inscription and resistance, but to embrace listening and watching

for the silences, the nameless, the unspoken, the encoded-for there we will find the true knowledge of the body (Griffin, 1994). In breaking those silences, “attending to the negatives, that is, the silences, the blockages, the unspeakables of life” by making our bodies present, we begin to define a reality, which resonates to us, which affirms our being and our understanding (Smith, 1988, 247). Understanding and allowing for the language of the body involves a constant negotiation of signs and symbols largely dictated by history, memory, institutional frames and social practices. The incompleteness of this process of interpretation does not categorize the body as a representation of knowledge, but rather actively engages in a hermeneutic construction that is self-generating, reflective and transformative.

Sensuous scholarship and Erotic Pedagogies

Stiffened from a long sleep in the background of scholarly life, the scholar's body yearns to exercise its muscles. Sleepy from long inactivity, it aches to restore its sensibilities. Adrift in a sea of half-lives, it wants to breathe in the pungent odors of social life, to run its palms over the jagged surface of social reality, to hear the wondrous symphonies of social experience, to see the sensuous shapes and colors that fill windows of consciousness. It wants to awaken the imagination and bring scholarship back to "the things themselves".

Paul Stoller, Sensuous Scholarship^{xxi}.

It is the light that moves her. The light in this landscape is like the spreading of honey, like the beginning of reading. Here, past words can be replaced, made shiny and new again, spreading honey over the page and the days become sweet with learning. Dusk over Boundary Bay is always indigo, edged in pink and gold and silver light. In these descending dusks she walks, her mind stroked by silvered fingers spreading the forms of words across the waves as the blue disappeared from the sea and daylight faded. In the lunge of night she begins to write again, her blood and imagination stirred by the sea. She dips into her mind, re-fashioning memory into art. She writes [read: paint] where dreams swirl between the boundaries of shadow and light.

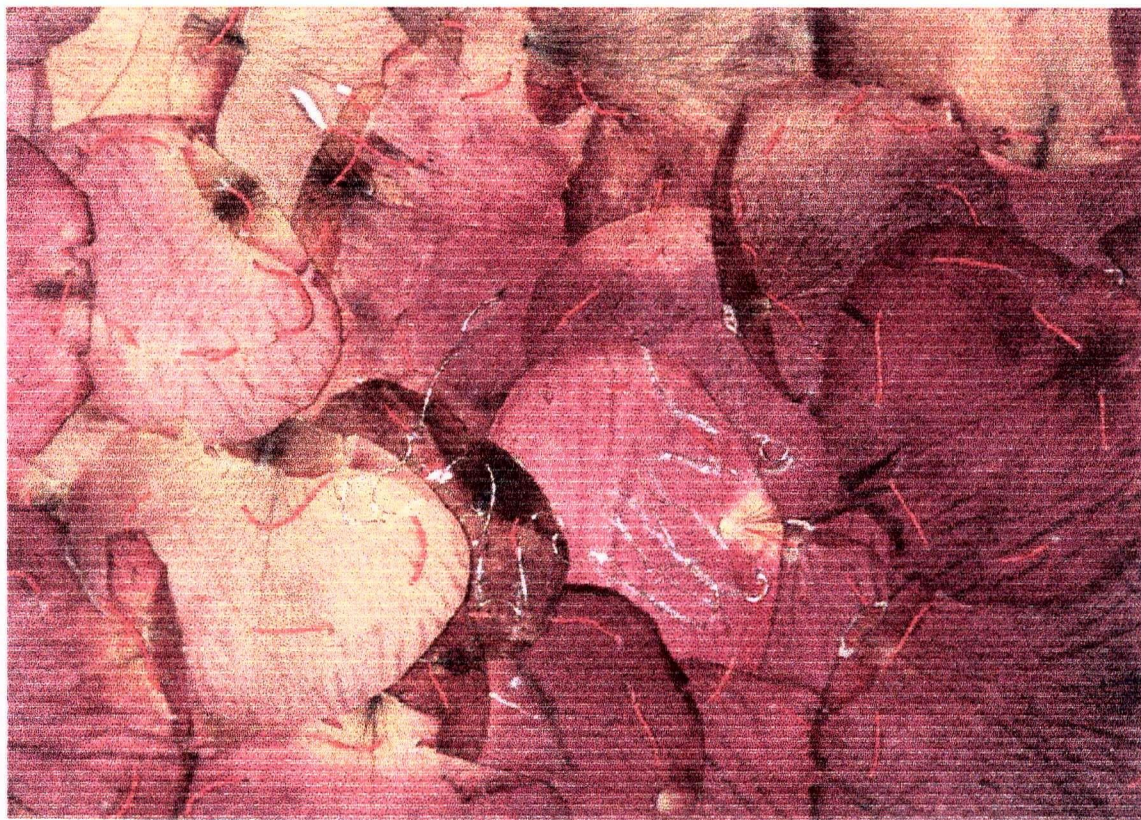
Rishma Dunlop, Boundary Bay^{xxii}.

A sensuous awakening is a disturbing act in an academe where mind has been separated from body, and in educational sites where education has effectively repressed all hints of an aroused body. In recent developments in feminist, social and educational theory there has been an important re-evaluation of the body. However, as Paul Stoller (1997) notes most scholarship on the body expresses arguments in densely packed and intricately formed language, ignoring sensuous expression. While I would contend, and he agrees, that such a discourse is insightful and most often enlightening, he reiterates: "discussions of the sensuous body require sensuous scholarship in which writers tack between the

analytical and the sensible, in which embodied form as well as disembodied logic constitute scholarly argument” (xv). I want my research to be with, in, and through the body, *written in the alphabet of bones and blood*, a bodied way of knowing. I am reminded of bell hook's (1994) words: how difficult it is to cross boundaries, to break from demarcation, to not stand still. Art is my way of communicating with the world. It comes from a place deep inside me...*she paints where dreams swirl between the boundaries of shadow and light*. Art is inseparable from my skin, from my fingers, from my limbs. I want my research to reflect that impulse of synaesthesia that is necessary for strong art, art that is capable of moving the human heart and mind in significant ways. Art touches us, it resonates with our senses, *and we begin, the route of mystery, unfolding in the cadence of breath, iridescent poems housed beneath the flesh* (italics cited from Dunlop, 1999; 2001c).

“Pedagogy,” writes Alison Pryer, “is a special kind of erotic encounter, a meeting of teacher and student... [one that] is a wild and chaotic process, a struggle that is sometimes joyful, sometimes painful” (2001, 137). “Eros is an opening and receiving, an attunement to the unique gifts of the other that releases swells of joy, passion, and desire in the body” (Pryer, 2001, 135). Eros is also a struggle, a resistance, recognizing that bodies are in a process of becoming, incomplete. The bodies of our students whisper silent caresses, calling out to be included, pushing out from beneath their skins. “Eros is power is knowledge” (2001, 140). Bodies are knowledge. They mark, they resist, they re-imagine. Bodies and art as sites of agency and change. Theory as art as fragment.

Madeline Grumet (1988) writes: “To adopt the stance of the artist is to challenge the taken-for granted values and culture that one shares with others” (p. 81). An erotic pedagogy, sensuous bodied scholarship, is one that addresses us, instills in us something new, and allows the senses of our bodies to speak in new ways. Erotic “pedagog[ies] rupture the student’s everyday understandings, permitting teacher/ other knowledge to enter the student” (Pryer, 2001, 137). Reawakening the scholar’s body infused with eros and fecundity enriches the path towards understanding ourselves and others, enabling us to live well in the world.



Endnotes

- ⁱ Winterson, 1995, 71.
- ⁱⁱ Brown, 2000, 218.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Winterson, 1995, 12.
- ^{iv} Dunlop, 1999, 22.
- ^v Witzling, 1994, 311.
- ^{vi} Irwin, manuscript under review, np.
- ^{vii} hooks, 1999, xv.
- ^{viii} Urquhart, 1997, 31.
- ^{ix} Griffin, 1999, 324.
- ^x As cited in Warwick and Cavallaro, 1998, 45.
- ^{xi} Brook, 1999, np.
- ^{xii} Griffin, 1999, 185.
- ^{xiii} Greene, 1995, 28.
- ^{xiv} Minh-ha, 1989, 118.
- ^{xv} Badami, 1996, 123. Bold replaces italics in original text.
- ^{xvi} Baldwin, 2000, 56.
- ^{xvii} Warwick & Cavallaro, 1999, 6.
- ^{xviii} Grosz, 1999, 29.
- ^{xix} Rukeyser, 149, 63.
- ^{xx} Minh-ha, 1989, 22.
- ^{xxi} Stoller, 1997, xi-xii.
- ^{xxii} Dunlop, 1999, 79.

A Visual Art Installation as Educational Research

In order for this thesis endeavor to manifest as a work of arts-based educational research, it was imperative that the art installation be on view at the time of the oral defense presentation. Given that my artwork is invested in the body and advocates a position for art as a form of social action, it became apparent that the exhibition site was integral to the body of work. Originally I envisioned displaying the art pieces in store-front windows in a busy urban shopping district of Vancouver. This proved problematic, as proprietors were not interested in displaying artwork, stating that they needed window displays that advertised items for sale in their stores. I turned then to the possibility of renting an empty store and setting up the artworks as an installation. Again, store owners were either not accommodating or the rental prices were too expensive to be used in this way.

On campus exhibition sites by this time had been booked and I struggled, wanting desperately to mount the show away from the University setting. I desired that the audience be comprised of University students and professors in addition to the general public and the arts community. Likewise established gallery spaces were programming two to three years in advance. Over the course of four months numerous venues were investigated and proposals submitted but nothing proved satisfactory.

My studio space on the east side of Vancouver was part of an annual open studio show. This studio tour, called *The East Side Culture Crawl* includes sixteen studio spaces and the *Eastside Cultural Centre*. Organized by a volunteer committee and supported in part by generous donations of eastside establishments, over two hundred artists open their studio spaces for a three-day weekend at the end of November.

According to the organizing committee more than five thousand visitors attend the studio tour each year. I was planning on participating in this year's event, and as such decided that this venue would become the site for my thesis installation.

Included in this written thesis are photographs of the individual works of art, installation documentation and text material produced for the exhibition site.

Exhibition Text

The Body Knowing: A Visual Art Installation as Educational Research

Stephanie Springgay

November 30 – December 2, 2001.

Arts-based educational research

The Body Knowing: A Visual Art Installation as Educational Research brings together pieces of theory, written text and artwork, as *reticule*. The network of intricately woven fragments between the visual art representation and the written artifact provide multiple opportunities to understand new insights and interpret ideas that are often in conflict with each other, creating a place of tension and disorientation. The visual art installation illuminates through absence, *what could not be represented through the written form*. There is no singular interpretation. I cannot describe a story or an event that these art forms represent. They are fragments of theories, pieces of autobiography, gathered and collected evidence; they are multiple beings and evocations. Each viewer is called alongside the artwork, invited into the installation to reflect on their own bodies, on the bodies of their students and to create new meanings.

Artists who engage in installation art and/ or art as social activism, have found asking questions about the process in which they are engaged to be a necessary part of the work. Their continuing re-evaluation not only of art forms and content but also of art's relationship to the wider social and political realm has become an established strand of contemporary cultural discourse. In turn, art installation places a shared responsibility between artist and audience. The audience-witness distinction remains vital and provocative since it reminds us to ask again the questions about where art matters and where it leaves its mark. It seems that arts-based educational research is both the memory and the chronicler of what might otherwise pass unrecorded or unnoticed. It is a site where the connections between personal history and cultural identity can be reinvented.

If research intends to "search a new" and "to exact change", then arts-based educational research unveils what may otherwise remain hidden. bell hooks (1999) confesses:

We write to find secrets in experiences that are obscured from ordinary sight: to uncover hidden coherences in what seems to be a mere jumble of unrelated events and details, and incoherences in what appears to be strictly ordered; to make transparent what is opaque, and to expose opacity in what seems transparent. (40)

As an artist and a scholar my thesis inquiry addresses two distinct but related research areas: 1) It creates a theoretical framework for the enactment of visual art as a scholarly way of knowing and the representation of educational research as an art form; and 2) It

examines the body and art making as sites of agency and social change. The artwork and text presented in this thesis intend to challenge presumptions and methodological criteria governing knowledges, by examining the body and the role the body plays in the production and evaluation of knowledge.

Boundary, Dress and the Body

The Body Knowing installation consists of three series of artworks, each series intended to be viewed in relation to the other. One series consists of twelve painted body parts and six sewn rose petal panels, each panel bearing gold embroidered body parts. Another series exists of fabricated dresses, while the third series is a set of four, larger oil on canvas paintings of bodies and garments in a paradoxical relationship of decay and emergence. The works examine the body in relation to history, cultural production, nature, and identity as fragment. Fractured painted body parts are juxtaposed alongside panels of sewn rose petals, and speak of new composites in an exploration of both the ephemerality of the body and our desire to leave a mark: to create, organize, and understand.

The fragmentation of the work alludes to gender, sexuality, and desire, and issues pertaining to the split identity of woman-artist-scholar in the academe. The works emphasize representation as an effect of, and something embedded within culture, and pose questions regarding the limits and implications within which knowledge is produced and represented. The paintings, appendages of broken, splintered body parts, awkward in their square frames and poses, are placed before us for examination, like specimens pinned to a wall. Motionless. Lifeless. Distant. Unreal. Juxtaposed are sewn rose petals, each piece embroidered with gold metallic thread, which summon the slightly withered and shriveled memories of the whole. Skin. Decay. Change. Nature. Life.

The dresses that compose part of the art installation hang suspended in the midst of the exhibition space, exist as both static metaphors and breathing representations of self and other. Four of the dresses are fabricated from transparent sewing pattern paper. Further embellishments of pins, human hair, toy tea cups, and metal scissors, marks of desire, fetishism, and the souvenir, are stitched onto the bodice of the dress. The body is implicated by its absence; an abject body, which disturbs identity, system and order. The dresses are constructed from unusual material, not equated with a particular wearer and lack appropriate zippers and fastening devices. The fifth dress is constructed from cotton hand-made paper dyed and stained as if to evoke bruises, traces of memories and bodies. Beaten onto the surface of the dress are rose petals, which also stain and seep into the skin of the paper. Some of the rose petals are left as crusts and scabs along with small hammer marks that can be seen imprisoned on the surface of the cotton fibres.

The larger paintings suggest a paradoxical site between growth and decay. Unlike the painted body parts, tight and controlled in their references to historical traditions of oil painting, the painted lines in the large works unwrap fluid moving shapes of both body and dress. Neither vestment nor material body are complete, at times exaggerated, distorted, with sketchy pencil marks persisting through the opacity and transparency of

the oil paint. The marks made on the canvas are residues, traces of previous lines and shapes. I allow ghosts of past images to emerge in the final picture, lending both an eerie quality to the work, and one that hints at change. There is a sense of time, pushing beyond definitions of presence and absence.

Moving beyond inscriptions and skins, the artworks begin to come alive, to suggest an interior space, a living breathing body. Acts of transgression flow from inner and outer cavity, and the body finds the potential to enact an art of political resistance.

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