

A TALE OF THREE PSYCHES:  
reflecting on art education as journey work  
in words and imagery

by

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## **abstract**

Art education has the potential to change the world. How art changed worlds — mine and those of the people in my art classes — unfolds here through text, fonts and images. These words and images try to touch upon “the intangible benefits” Wilson (1994) of art education. Art education that opens to the search for personal meaning through the wow of engaged experience, extends the content of traditional art education and operates with an awareness of the art as therapy is art as journey work. Journey work invites students to trust their unique vision of the world and in so doing moves towards social change by questioning dominant power-over structures through fostering power-from-within.

Reflecting on the voices of the women i interviewed, on my personal journals and on discussions with my colleagues and friends, i interrogated my own art education practice. An interview-based methodology using memories and art work as key points for reflection, reflective research offers an intimate understanding of a classroom through stories and memories of three participants, two students and myself as teacher. Our participation in an on-going dialogue of friendship before and after interviews gives resonance and depth to our discussions.

Weaving together my students’ stories, my own life story, and theory brings the personal into the academic. The analysis section seeks relationships between these personal stories and the culture in which we are embedded, and concludes the personal is more than political, it is ecological: what we do to ourselves, we do to the web; what we do to the web, we do to ourselves.

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Blessings to you all.

*For my family.*

*You enter the forest  
at the darkest point,  
where there is no path.*

*Where there is a way or path,  
it is someone else's path.*

*You are not on your own path.*

*If you follow someone else's way,  
you are not going to realize  
your potential.*

(Campbell in Osbon, 1991, p. 22)

## **begin at the beginning: personal ground**

How did i get here exactly? Let me think.

*Art keeps me alive. In a volatile childhood home, art let me touch serenity, contentment. My younger sister recalled that i "handled things" when life got out of control. "You just painted" she says. Art answered discord. Something came from ugly: i pulled beauty out. i needed art — it was integral to my existence, necessary for survival.*

*If i make things, i am happy, and if i am happy, i make things. Art is blood, life's blood, always has been. When i create, i know that i am rich: i am real. My ideas are bountiful and deep. But when i tap into the depth, it frightens me, i touch my personal power. Do not misunderstand, i have no desire to be famous, no need for accolades. I do not make to show off, to share. Sharing my work with others is an important part in the art making process, but feedback --positive or otherwise -- does not drive me. These are necessary, but only as steps in the process. No, i make to live: through art i make my life manifest.*

*My high school art teacher did not understand. He perceived my attitude as blatant disregard for my natural talent, and he was frustrated by that. He didn't understand. My mother tells me that at a parent teacher conference he told her i lacked motivation. Never, he said, would i be an "artist". Though i had what it takes, i didn't. For my part, i thought it was his job to help me find my motivation, some direction. But instead, because i had some talent, he left me to my own devices, to find my own way.*

*i found my way: through studies in English and art history, making things was my touchstone. Not many years later, i announced to my parents that i was going to do what i shouldn't: be an artist. (Never tell me i cannot do something.) They were enormously upset, threatening to disavow themselves of me should i follow through on this. They perceived my art as a threat. Hmm. In the heat of the moment, my father even said they would do everything in their power to stand in the way of it happening.*

*Hmm. What was going on? Exploratory, revelatory, art frightened them. Uncontrolled, unmonitored, unconventional, art threatened them. i didn't understand how the source that sustained me confounded them, terrified them. Why??? Why so many misunderstandings?*

This journey begins here. Come with me.



## on the journey

i cannot define "journey" exactly. Because i recognize that there are multiple interpretations of this term, i hesitate. i resist proffering the definitive definition. This will upset those who need structure and constraints in order to be convinced of the mere existence of a thing, let alone its veracity. But i recognize also that journey is idiosyncratic. What i offer here are suggestions of definition, and snippets of meaning, mine and others. i invite the reader to find a place in these definitions, or between them.

In art, like life, there is no one right answer. Both in the art classroom and outside it, this is true: there usually is no one right way, there is only exploration. Journey is a broad term. Journey is exploration, in all its senses. Journey can be the actual physical movement from one place to another. But journey also implies things spiritual: the searching for personal meaning. That searching is the journey of which i speak. Journey is life. The living of a life. With meaning.

*The goal of the hero trip  
down to the jewel point  
is to find those levels in the psyche  
that open, open, open,  
and finally open to the mystery  
of your Self being  
Buddha consciousness  
or the Christ.*

*That's the journey.*

(Campbell in Osbon, 1991, p.23)

Like life, journeys have a beginning, a middle and an end. We take short, quick, unplanned side trips and long detailed important trips that we anticipate and plan for over an extended period of time. Like life, journeys, no matter how well planned, must accommodate the happy -- and the not so happy -- accident. A well planned trip can get surprisingly waylaid by the interruptions along the way. In fact, the line between metaphorical and literal blurs, for life itself begins with travel down the birth canal through the first steps to passing on. The word journey and its associations pervade our language, a language made of metaphor.

Likely because of the relative ease of its parallels with the path of life, the metaphor is used frequently in the therapeutic community (eg. Cameron & Bryan ; 1992; Baldwin, 1991; Estes, 1995; Keen, 1992; Welwood, 1991). The therapeutic community's hope is to assist those of us 'on the journey' perceive the journey we are on — our lives — as productive and successful.

Art is one place in the curriculum where students can explore life this way: art as journey work.

Journey work allows us to move more meaningfully/safely/fluidly through the traveling. Journey work heightens awareness of the learning of the path itself. Learning is most relevant when it sustains one on the journey. As students, we learn that what has relevance has value. Journey work is relevant. It empowers students for the journeying by strengthening their sense of self.

Art empowered the women i worked with in this research, two former students; however, they were not the only students who responded to art as journey work in my classes. i invited these

particular two women to participate for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was that the art as journey work curriculum seemed to resonate with them. These two women really used art as journey work, grappling with some challenging moments in their lives through their art. And, though these challenges differed for each, with one struggling with a crisis within her self and the other working through issues outside of herself, both openly acknowledged the pivotal role the journey work played in their working through these crises, indeed on their lives.

### **impetus: imbalance**

Do we need journey work? Yes. Why? In a word, balance. In our imbalanced world, we need journey work to create balance.

Through discoveries in quantum physics, (Bohm, in Harris 1993) science has recognized that we contain within each of us the entire universe. The elders (not surprisingly) are right: we *are* all related. What we do to ourselves we do to the web of life, what we ignore in ourselves, we ignore in the web. Interconnectedness. A web is connections. Our web, our culture and the learning systems embedded therein, contains a continuum of potentialities, between masculine and feminine, reflecting the beings who make it up. We have the growth energy of yang and the gestational strength of yin in each of us. Both sides of the continuum should be recognized for the unique blessings they bring. Both should be acknowledged for their part in wholeness. Both should be cultivated. But, one is not always acknowledged: imbalance.

## walking with me

Quiet tears streamed down my face. In public. Jungian analyst Marion Woodman spoke of the need in our collective present for the re-cognizing of the feminine (lecture notes, September 26, 1996, Vancouver) within each of us, within our culture. The masculine, as chaos, an unrestrained force, needs the feminine, as container, for grounding. Without the coupling of the two forces, and, i hasten to add, an embracing of the varieties along the continuum between them, we remain doomed to list in perpetuity. A former high school educator herself, Marion cited cuts in all high school arts programs as painful examples of our culture's complete lack of awareness of the need for balance in our world, in our schools, in ourselves. Of course, i cried. i cried because though she speaks in dichotomous terms that sound less inclusive than i would like, i agree with her.

In Dancing in the Flames (1996), Woodman posits that imbalance is the result of trying to control change by building hierarchies and busying schedules. Contained and directed in creativity, the forces of chaos can move us through change, towards exciting new realities. But, at present, Western culture works instead to control change: we maintain the status quo to keep up with the Joneses. 'The more things change the more things stay the same' right? We are taught to resist change. Inevitably however, we collapse exhausted somehow, internally or externally. Marion speaks of this collapse:

In the last few years we have witnessed the old order collapsing throughout Eastern Europe. We have seen the Berlin Wall come down. We have seen Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia, the former Yugoslavia, Rumania, Georgia, Chechnya, ...Africa, India, Central America, the United States, Canada -- we are all facing our own chaos.

Within and without chaos reigns. We look on, dismayed, as the natural order buckles under the strain of ecological disruption. We watch helplessly, as the institutions we believe in collapse. We witness the dogmas that gave us faith being challenged. We see the social order totter as crime and violence rock our schools and neighbourhoods. We sense our immune systems being assailed, as new and virulent strains of virus emerge. We are overwhelmed by alienation as our relationships fall apart. We feel the Earth move under our feet, and we are terrified at the prospect of an inner earthquake.(p.180)

Young people *live* in the time of inner earthquakes: adolescence.

[C]hildren, the youngest children, still get crayons and are encouraged to draw and to use their left imagery faculties somewhat. But it's right when in their adolescence when they need this experience the most that we take it away and make them so serious about getting into college and about doing only the left brain work. (Fox & Sheldrake, 1996, p.196)

When art classes focus on the technical, and the academic aspects of art, then even art can let young people down. The women I spoke with articulated that these sorts of art classes, before and since ours, intimidated rather than inspired them. Though Kim has an incredible natural talent for representing reality through her drawing, she revealed in the interviews that, because of the expectations inherent in the act, "I'm definite I don't like to draw" (Kim, 1.3, 17-18). SL also is incredibly talented; however, she says she feels less talented in the traditional sense because she does not draw to represent reality, though she can. SL feels she is less 'talented' than 'artistically gifted'. As an adolescent, she referred to herself as 'artistic' only in the most general sense, because "when I got to art class, it was just total inadequacy" (SL, 3.10, 21). Art intimidated her.

As students, adolescents deserve opportunities to explore channeling their energies constructively, before these forces become destructive. This means moving into change. This means strengthening the self through an embracing of change: containing the chaos (Woodman,

1996). Containing the chaos allows new ideas to gestate. Awaiting the birth of new ideas in meditative contemplation is one way of re-imagining life. Imagination precedes meaningful action. We need chaos and creativity. We need to regain our balance.

Regained balance makes room for imagination. Balance nurtures the neglected feminine aspect through honouring the things perceived as feminine – the arts – in our culture, in education, in our selves. Balance cultivates meditative and reflective thinking in education, acknowledging that we are human *be*-ings, not just our human do-ings.

Art is a place in the curriculum for this. Art as the place for ‘working through.’ Art as meditative learning. Art as reflective process. Art as journey work.

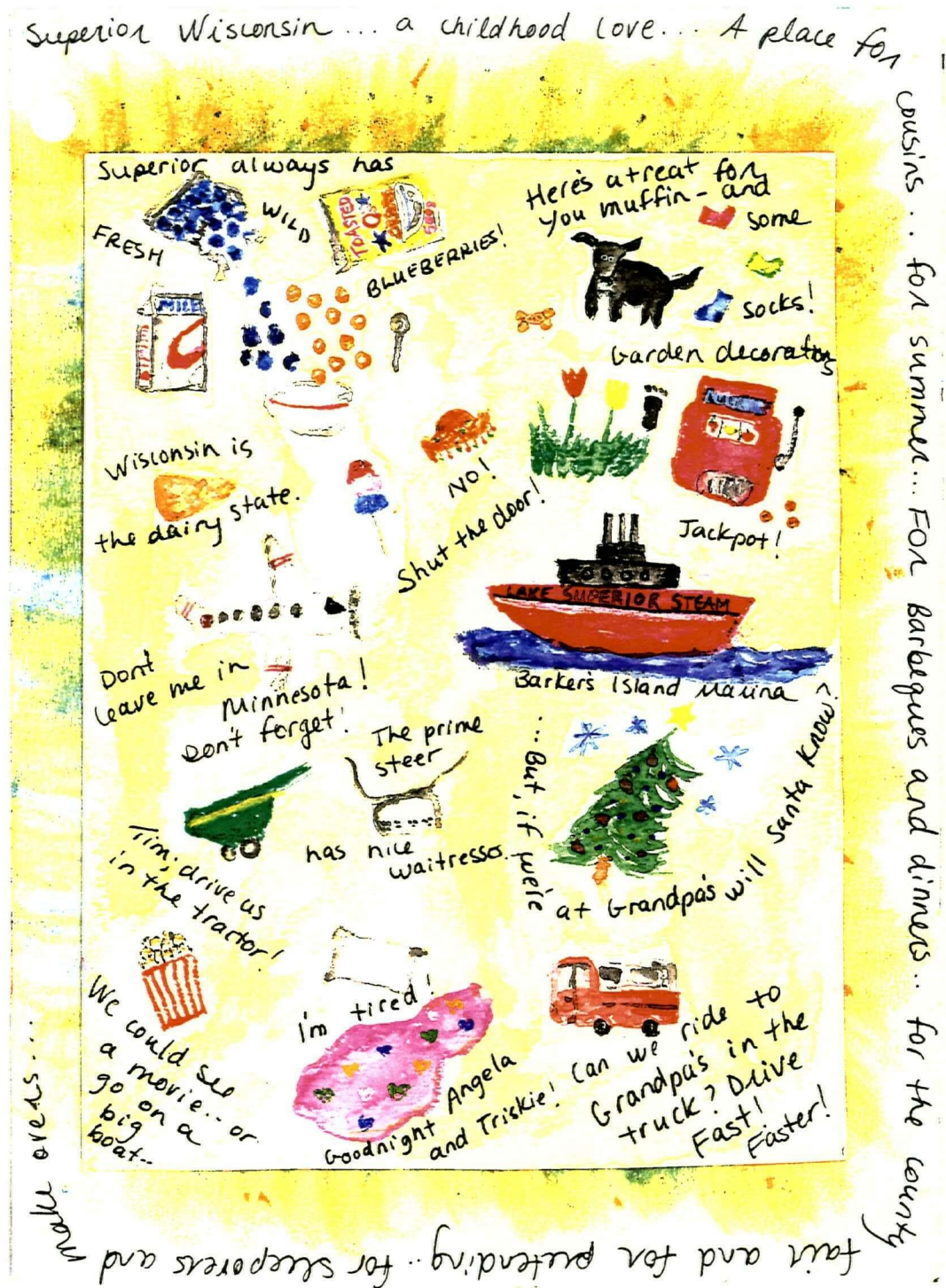
**figure 1a** And this is but a portion... a slight look into what's inside...

And this is but a portion... a slight  
look into what's inside... into what is me...  
To others... each small image is just that...  
but to me, each image has so much more  
behind it... you know, that's just the thing...  
We are such visual people... I can't imagine  
not being able to see... All the things I  
have seen in my life have come into the  
head and this heart... and have jumbled  
themselves into these wonderful images... into  
memories of sights, of smells and of  
feelings... without the past we cannot move  
into the future... without a knowledge of  
what love is... what happiness is... or what  
it means to experience pleasure... And that is  
the truth.

These pages from SL's little watercolour book give us insight into how she used art as journey work. These pages were created as part of a senior secondary art class project. Figure 1a explains in words how SL works through the past using art as journey work: "without the past we cannot move into the future". Figure 1b is one example of this.



figure 1b Superior Wisconsin ... a childhood love...





### **what is art as journey work?**

Art as journey work may appear mysterious, especially to those without first hand experience of art. When art is journey work, art education is approached in a somewhat unconventional way. In journey work, art is used as a means for working through life's complexities -- those inner earthquakes -- in an effort to make sense of them, in a search for personal meanings. Though it may be difficult to articulate, journey work process is no mystery to the participants: the 'working through' is overt, in that it is openly discussed and acknowledged -- though not rigidly defined -- as part of the art making process by the artist and the art teacher.

Working through is a cornerstone of art as journey work. And while the other offerings of art as journey work — the meditative and reflective benefits to a person's holistic development that will also be discussed later in this document — are real and important, they are intrinsic to the process of working through, and primarily through that relationship are part of journey work. Therefore, though all of these elements make up the journey work process, none is so integral to art as journey work as working through.

Because working through cannot be rigidly defined, however, it is arguably too nebulous for the secondary art teacher to touch. It is often regarded, and summarily dismissed, as an only an intangible benefit of art education.

Working through the complexities of life in art is an idiosyncratic process. Art as journey work, therefore, is not prescriptive. Each and every time an individual artist approaches art as journey

work as a means to work through some life experience, the implications of this process on the art and the art making will be different. Regardless, working through means the end result will be infused with personal meaning, to a greater or lesser extent as determined by the artist in context. The art is the artist's after all. In this way, the working through process seems in constant flux: the process will be unique, because the artist and her/his own awareness and situation is also unique. Because of this, the working through may take many different forms.

Even acknowledging that journey work is an idiosyncratic process, i have seen artists' 'working through' manifest in the general categories that follow. This list is based only on my experience.

Working through may appear:

- Interpretatively, as emotional content, for example through the use of specific colours, or through exploration of media and technique.
- Narratively, where the artist works through an issue or event in a literal or thematic fashion. Subject explorations would fit here.

Big categories, to be sure. But this is the point. An artist will 'work through' in a way that best suits the needs and aims of that artist at that particular point in time. How the working through manifests depends on so much, not the least of which is the development, both artistic and personal, of the artist working through. While the art teacher may suggest that the artist try to work through a particular event or life incident or emotion and use it in the art, and the two may discuss the possibilities of this thoroughly together, *how* that 'working through' manifests is left

to the discretion of the artist. Perhaps surprisingly then, 'working through' can be done within the confines of an established project as readily as within a sketchbook or an independent study.

However it is done, working through is the *student's* process, not the teacher's. This is also true of art as journey work. Neither process is quantitative. Because it is an intrinsically motivated process, rather than extrinsically motivated, it is a difficult, if not impossible, aspect of art process to assess and evaluate. In this way, also, it is intangible.

But, because journey work is a hands-off process for the teacher, it offers ownership for the artist. This ownership is vital to the journey work process: the research findings reveal ownership of their art process and product in the art as journey work classroom as a key difference between the students' experiences of art teaching in the traditional and the journey work classes. Because of the personal investment made in journey work by working through, ownership over the art process and product is critical to the student's sense of safety — of not feeling violated — when using the journey work process in a class room situation. The art room must be a haven of respect, and inviolate.

Through my research, i attempt to understand how art as journey work has had an impact on student lives. After approaching art teaching practice this way, and operating from the particular assumptions i do, i wondered what might be revealed by revisiting the students of art as journey work, students who worked through things in their art.

## **advocacy and re-searching**

There will be trouble writing this paper.

When I think about it, this should come as no surprise. There is so much to say. Elliot Eisner himself recently wrote a response to calls for revisionism in art education. In it, he questioned whether art education should even consider opening its agenda to reconstructing society. He asked how we would choose our changes, how we would prioritize them, because "[there] are many ills and human needs in the world. Which one is the responsibility of art educators?"

(1994). A good question. What is our responsibility?

Responsibility to art, art teaching and our students, makes a number of us in art education walk the razor's edge between research and advocacy. We have looked for direction to other subject areas, acting like the younger sibling, when we are not. We are related, but we are different. Some art education research (such as the Getty Center's Discipline-Based Art Education or DBAE) has worked to keep art education academic: when, really, art offers something more. In the zeal to demonstrate our academic prowess, we risk losing sight of what makes us unique. Art that offers only what is equal to other subjects is a frill, just another path to the same destination.

But do we travel to the same place? No. Definitely not. Art is a primordial response to the human condition (Dissanayake, 1988). Art can be journey work: a means of cultivating the inner self through reflective thinking, an exploration and enrichment of our life's path. Art as journey work. We have many times proven we are equal to other subjects, now we must re-discover our

uniqueness: we must re-search.

We cannot take for granted that art is understood and accepted by those who have no experience of it, be they administrators, colleagues, or the general public (Wilson, 1993). Ignoring the facts, for example that art course marks are deemed unacceptable for university admission, is perilous. Art advocacy is, and must be, woven through the fabric of art education and related research with a thread of critical inquiry. Without research there would be no advocacy because there would be no case to plead — without advocacy, no art education for which to plead.

Interweaving passion (which may manifest as advocacy) and intellect (which may manifest as critical inquiry) is as necessary to the research experience as to the art experience.

### experience

Art education research "interests may shift from artist to art act, to art acting, to art product, but remain always within that limited segment of human experiencing that may appropriately be called art" (MacGregor 1982, p.28). Maybe that's the answer Eisner sought. Our responsibility is to the "human experiencing" in the art classes we teach. Peter London acknowledges this, and describes how the human experiencing of art is not a singular phenomenon, but is unique to each person. The experience of art is personal.

The end of art is not art, but communication, or better still, communion, breaking out of the solitariness and silence of one dimension and making contact with the "other." That other may be intrapsychic: the conscious mind acknowledging the subconscious; or it may be interpsychic: one person meeting another; or it may even be transpersonal: one self touching the universe. (1989, p.74)

The human experience of art, however it manifests, is the key to understanding art. Art is a way of experiencing life, of making meaning on the journey. Art is a search, seeking understandings of art is re-search. Art's uniqueness is tough to articulate, difficult to explain, but in its braiding of the intellectual, affective, somatic and spiritual, art opens to experience. Experience is what makes art different from other subjects.

The concrete sensuous qualities of experience, being individual and particular, become progressively articulated as we mutely 'sing and dance' the world. The unspeakable is expressed through the most highly developed form of the immediately sensuous, namely the arts. (Madenfort, 1978, p.15)

And, though we may have trouble articulating artistic experience, as researchers, we can attempt to record artistic experience. According to Ron MacGregor, Madenfort was considered before his time (lecture notes, 1997). But I think his time has come. Certainly, time has come to acknowledge art as the "singing thread" running through the tapestry of humanity (Lane, 1988, p.45). It's time.

Others, many of whom are not "in" art, are re-discovering art as the location for re-imagining the individual, the school, the world (eg. Campbell, 1993; hooks, 1995; Fox, 1994; Moore 1992; Sumara & Davis, 1996). Art is used as a means of revealing truths in education and educational research across the curricular spectrum today (see, for example, JCT ). Have we in art missed something?

Michael Wilson points out, that

[arts] teachers perceive [the] intangibles, however real for their students, to be liabilities in justifying their subject to administrators and the public. Although the arts really provide new meaning to the lives of the students who are involved in them, teachers are reluctant to admit that this is their central benefit. (1993, p.28)

Why?

explanations from past experience

If art is about making meaning and yet, according to Wilson, art teachers are reluctant to admit that this is art's central benefit, then art's uniqueness has been relegated to the sidelines, dismissed as 'only' self expression. Angela Baker, an art education researcher in Newfoundland, wrote:

It has been said that "expression" is a dead issue in Art Education, and that the "expression of feeling" is the weakest of the aesthetic theories. Moreover, "it's only therapy" is a common, dismissive, derogatory criticism of some art work. (1998, p.87)

In fact, art educators have been debating the merits of art education for the individual primarily either from a pragmatic/cognitive base or an expressive/psychoanalytic base for at least a century (Wygant, 1988). And though in 1998 it seems that the pragmatic /cognitive side has won out, this debate is ongoing.

In the past, the two approaches, the pragmatic/cognitive and the expressive/psychoanalytic, became most clearly delineated through the work of John Dewey and Margaret Naumberg (Wygant, 1988). Regarded as one of the most influential thinkers in education ever (and for his work in psychology, sociology, and philosophy) Dewey (1934) was known to have a particular dedication to art and its role in education. Naumberg was once his student. She evolved into an innovative art educator and became a Freudian, who brought the ideas of infant psychology to art

education.

And,

while it is true that neither Freudian nor Jungian theories of art are a current preoccupation in art education, their explanation for the human drive for symbolic expression are at least as commonly accepted as those of Dewey. In the post-war decades, the intensity of public and educational interest in psychologies and therapies, and the dominance of expressionism in art, would have made it extremely difficult to conclude that Dewey's views provide a firmer ground for art education than those of Naumburg, especially as the latter were extended by Read and Lowenfeld. (Wygant, 1988, p.59)

Though Dewey's ideas may have been no firmer ground, to date they have proven the more fertile for education (MacIver, 1988, p.56). However, Naumburg's firm ground did cultivate a field of ideas, a field that would become known as art therapy (Waller, 1988, p.5).

#### past experience of art therapy

Therapy is not an -ology nor an -analysis of the psyche, despite popular misunderstanding in North America. What follows is a generalized definition of the role of each. The actuality in the field is that these are areas that blend, one into the other. For the purposes of delineating the differences, a cursory explanation is necessary. My apologies if this offends.

Unlike psychology, which seeks scientific knowledge of mind, and unlike psychoanalysis, which develops methods to investigate and apply that knowledge to the workings of the mind, psychotherapy is treatment for tending to the psyche. In North America, in the years since Freud, 'psyche' has come to mean 'mind'; however, 'psyche' in actual translation means 'soul'. Freud



originally intended this reading, as did Jung (Nadeau, class lecture notes, 1995 and Singer, 1972). Psychotherapy was intended to be a taking care of the soul.

Though the phrase 'care of the soul' has a common currency in the 1990s (eg. Moore, 1992 & Hillman, 1996), this approach does not represent therapy in North America.

Art therapy from the care of the soul perspective and its literature simply are not easily accessible to art education. In truth, art therapy itself does not always have easy access either. The majority of the art therapy books listed at the University of British Columbia, for example, are found in the Fine Arts library, not the main or education libraries. To date, academic writing in this art therapy field comes from only a very few practitioners, though this is evolving. What literature does come available is sporadic (Dalley, 1984, p. xxv) and often self-referential. As a result, art therapy books and publications are limited, difficult to access and often expensive.

In the literature that does exist, art therapy's origins are often unacknowledged (Waller, 1991, p.54), despite art therapy's two respectable parent fields, education and medicine. While art therapy's origins appear somewhat elusive, we do know that, early on, art therapy split into two strains, the therapeutic and the diagnostic. This divergence resulted from practical applications of the therapy. Education spawned the more therapeutic approach, known now as "art as therapy". Diagnostic art therapy originated in medicine, and is commonly referred to as "art in therapy" (Dalley, 1984). Though "suspicions and misperceptions" (Dalley, p.54) of art therapy practice persist, research about either strain has been sparse; however, the "art in therapy" model

generates more literature in documenting its use as a medical diagnostic tool.

That the existing literature seldom mentions art therapy's origins (Waller, 1991, p.54) could well be because some proponents of art therapy originally used art for clinical investigations. Art was used as therapy with patients recovering from leucotomy.

Leucotomy, also known as lobotomy, found disturbing and questionable favour as treatment for war veterans post world war II. In Britain, there were some 15,000 patients given lobotomies in 1957 (Dalley, 1984, p.30)! Though treating these patients did much to raise awareness of art therapy in the medical communities, much of this 'therapy' was used post-operatively as a diagnostic tool: doctors used the art product as one determinant of the mental fitness of patients who had been given a lobotomy. This application of the practice of art therapy, unpalatable for some, caused a rift in the art therapy community. The diagnostic approach would become known as art *in* therapy.

Naumberg, the art educator mentioned earlier, eventually aligned herself with Adrian Hill, a war vet who 'discovered' art therapy for himself during his own hospital recovery. Somewhat surprisingly, she eventually moved to the United States to establish art *in* therapy there. Art *in* therapy is the approach used by most American art therapists and the primary approach now taught in universities offering art therapy programs here in Canada (Concordia and the University of Western Ontario). It is considered a hands-off approach and is not the approach i speak of, nor the approach from which i feel art education can learn.

To avoid association with the lobotomy, many practitioners tried to deny the medical origins, emphasising the original connection to art education instead. Art *as* therapy unabashedly acknowledges its educational roots and associations, and often. Art educators, notably Dewey, Read, and somewhat surprisingly for some, Eisner, are commonly cited in the art *as* therapy literature (eg. Waller, 1991 or Dalley, 1984). Herbert Read (1958) is considered a founder of the art *as* therapy approach, and his Education through Art a cornerstone.

(art) education through art (therapy)

Because art *as* therapy evolved into a discrete profession, though rooted in art education, the practice must allow for something — an exploration, a result — not available in our schools' art room. What that offering is deserves contemplation, definition and, perhaps, assimilation into art education practice.

Brent Wilson asks art education researchers:

Do we make a difference in people's lives? Through their contact with us and through the works of art we have them create and interpret, do we change individuals' purposes, do we change their lives? This is the one big study we need in art education. (1994, p.207)

Awareness of art therapeutic practices and how the art therapeutic strategies might assist secondary art teachers are largely missing from other areas of the curriculum. Approaching art teaching therapeutically allows students to reframe their experiences -- their inner earthquakes -- in a safe externalized fashion, thereby encouraging a healthier perspective on these experiences. In this way, using art therapeutic strategies in the classroom may change people's lives.

Change is a transformation from one state of being to another. Curriculum theorists, John P. Miller and Wayne Sellar (1990), posit that there are three curriculum perspectives: transmissional, transactional and transformational. Rather than being prescriptive, these categories allow us to identify the underlying philosophy of a given classroom. None of these approaches is discrete in actual teaching practice; however, educators tend to place a greater emphasis on one approach over another, depending on the content, aims, and context of their overall practice.

Still, the last orientation, the transformational perspective, is considered by Miller and Sellar to be the ideal approach to curriculum, as it seeks to open opportunities for the teacher and the learner to transcend their existing circumstances through an embracing of personal and social change. Art therapeutic approaches in art education situations allow for the transformation of personal experience. Art therapeutic approaches are important components of an art curriculum that purports to be transformational.

No more secondhand art (London, 1989) is a testament to the transformative power of art that integrates therapeutic understanding. Peter London, the author, is a contemporary art educator and practicing art therapist working within the art *as* therapy model. Using psychology of learning and outside sources as starting points, he advocates art as a vehicle for transformation, "enabling us to move from an inherited to a chosen state of being" (back cover); however, perhaps predictably, he cites only a smattering of art therapy texts (notably May, 1976 & Zinker, 1978) as references. London, as an individual, has done much to gain respectability for the use of

therapeutic techniques in art for individuals.

But these individuals are usually not students in secondary school art classes. The individuals he works with are more likely groups of middle class adult participants in a workshop situation, which is quite different from classes of adolescents. Students in schools would benefit from the transformative potential of the integration of (art) therapy into (art) education. And though London might agree, unfortunately, art education as a whole has otherwise largely neglected acknowledging the art therapy/art education relationship in research.

Over a twelve year period only one art therapy-related article was published in the Canadian Society of Education through Art's Journal -- and that article was by an American (Troeger, 1985)! Other research journals reflect similar trends, with related articles only rarely being published. Brent Wilson posits that in hoping to curtail public misperceptions of art as a non-academic course of study, art education research has shied away from topics too easily misperceived by the general public. I concur with his finding that art education research has stayed in the realm of the cognitive for too long.

Art teachers must stop creating ... nothing more than an apologia for the arts... The arts are basic... the only curriculum area that deliberately deals with the affective/aesthetic domain. (Wilson, 1993, p.28)

Art education research in the aesthetic domain abounds; however, as Baker pointed out (1998) the affective domain seems to have been deemed untouchable by art education research. And though art is a curriculum area that deals deliberately with the affective domain, Wilson states that the affective benefits of art are considered "intangible" (p.28). Researching art therapy

practice-- which has long focused solely on the affective -- is important for the art educator today. Art therapy remains unexplored by art education research.

Using the same skills for learning, media and techniques as the traditional art room, art therapy presents a means of heightening awareness of art's importance for the whole human's development. Research (eg. Gardner, 1994, Zimmerman & Clark, 1983) has shown that art develops the cognitive aspect of mind. But art also cultivates the intuitive or meditative mind alongside the cognitive.

Meditative mind is a term coined in part from the description of art making as meditative (p.1.6, 9) by one of the women who participated in this research. Though Kim does not use the word meditative per se in the following excerpt, she describes the process: "I think the form when I make it... And I just kind of disappear"(p.1.6, 9 & 1.9.10).

We will re-visit this term at various points in the research document. For now, meditative mind means the contemplative mind so immersed in the task at hand that the person is engaged fully -- mind, body, spirit and emotions -- in the activity. The self drops away. This immersed engagement cultivates a mind set Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi would call "flow" (1990), a state that most artists know well. London calls this the "subtle, creative mind -- the mind that is in touch with visions, imagination and memories -- [when] the conscious mind that normally dominates and masks it [is] silenced" (1989). Operating from an awareness of this benefit of art education makes for a very different perspective of art educational practice.

## **re-search**

Research ought to ask "What's it for? and who benefits?" (MacGregor, 1997, p.1).

### what's it for?

As stated above, research on art therapeutic techniques in the art classroom is notably absent in art education: the literature gaps. In fact, a paucity of research exists in the art as therapy arena itself. It's time to bring art therapy out of its medical closet and back into education.

For many researchers today the greatest gift they can give those with whom they interact, is consciousness of their power to act independently, to change their circumstances, if they choose, and those of the system of which they form a part... Research is undertaken to promote self-determination, and the researcher accepts (indeed embraces) the likelihood of that self-determination being translated into affirmative action.  
(MacGregor, 1997, p. 3)

Research into and exploration of the practices and benefits of art therapy would benefit art educators, by providing a path for them to move their practice towards affirmative action.

Working from a co-operative place, encouraging individual responsibility through self-reflection, building a community of trust, and creating a sacred space for art making are ideals promoted by art therapy that could be easily assimilated into the practice of art educators without their becoming diagnostic art therapists per se. As i elucidate in the section following, art educators who want to instruct in this fashion must do their own work, and be aware of their own limitations: in cultivating awareness and adopting methods from art therapy practice, art educators are not automatically bona fide therapists, nor should they be. But, despite this proviso, art teachers who adopt strategies from art therapy can use them to pull down the

traditional competitive structures of education, and transform them, literally, from within.

Research in this area would also introduce a more well rounded understanding of psychology to art education. Any psychological exploration of art education thus far has been an exploration from a medical model, with a scientifically clinical outlook. The early work of MacGregor and more recent studies by Gardner (1994), Kindler (1994) and Pariser (1995) are examples of this clinical (cognitive, behavioral) focus. But psychology itself has roots in both medicine *and* therapy. North America first adopted and has interrogated the clinical aspects of psychology. But now, interest in therapeutic approaches is being rekindled, both by the public and the medical community; however, with exception of Peter London, the voice of the therapeutic, of art therapy, has not really spoken consistently in art educational research.

#### who benefits?

Teachers might argue they are not counsellors or therapists. i would agree. We are not. That is not the mandate of the educator. Art teachers need not -- should not -- 'play analyst' and attempt interpretation.

One student of mine was indeed suicidal, making actual suicide attempts. Later, i asked him to write about some of his imagery for me, in light of my research interest. He was happy to oblige. He returned an assortment of images with the perfunctory knives and skulls that all art teachers generally associate with suicidal thinking, each with a note or two scratched on the back. While many of the messages were not positive in tone, the one image that he noted as being a display



of his desire to end his life was an innocuous one: a young man, with his back to us sits working at a drawing table. According to the student, this image alone spoke of his desire to end his life, to literally turn his back on it all; however, i have yet to show this assortment to anyone and have them interpret the suicidal image correctly. Only the artist knew for sure.

Rather than attempting to operate diagnostically like the clinical art *in* therapy, art education could borrow from art *as* therapy. Art *as* therapy emphasizes art making as therapeutic in and of itself. Process is more important than product. Practitioners believe :

art therapists cannot, indeed should not, 'read' or interpret any painting... The only person able or 'qualified' to interpret correctly is the 'artist', as the meaning of the painting has relevance only to his or her personal situation. (Dalley, 1984, p. xxiv)

No, it is not our mandate to heal our students; however, it is definitely within our mandate as educators to provide students whatever tools we can to assist them in healing themselves, in living their lives. We can offer art as journey work.

Others might rebut that there is no room in art education for this. If they do, then they miss the point. Yes, the curriculum is bursting, and, as Eisner pointed out, the art teacher is faced with a plethora of topics with little room to consider more. This may be why art therapeutic research has not been brought to the education table, why there is such an appalling lack of research in this area. More research into art therapy's influence in the art educational arena will show that this is not more 'stuff' to be taught. It is an important approach to teaching what 'stuff' we already have.

We can give the students we teach both skills/knowledge, and a taste of self knowledge. Joan Novosel-Beittel recognizes "the modern bias toward 'calculating thought' at the expense of 'meditative thought'" (1978, p.26). Integrating therapeutic approaches into art practice in the art room would re-introduce meditative or reflective thinking into the curriculum. Art therapy

in its emphasis on the patient as an active searching agent ... capable of self-healing and capable of self determination [is unique.] Its symbols are not the paraphernalia of the physician or the shaman but the vital creations of the patient. (Littlewood cited in Waller, 1991, p.ix)

Therapeutic art practices provide opportunities for developing meditative mind through the experience of art. In doing this, art education takes a step away from the modern bias towards calculating thought and a step towards cultivating meditative thought. When approached in this way, art education works to right our imbalanced culture. Art as meditative learning. Art as journey work.

In journey work, art is a process of reflective self-inquiry, through which students are asked to trust their unique vision of the world, to focus on their own inner voice. Transformative teaching and transformative curricula aim to extend learning beyond the merely factual towards engaged experience. Engagement in art as reflective self inquiry develops self awareness. And, in turn, this awareness can lead to self actualization, and through this, to the transcendence of the individual's personal state towards social involvement. Taught in this way, art honours the self connected.

The importance of education which acknowledges connectedness cannot be overstated. The life

of mother planet literally hangs in the balance. The metaphoric art muscle, well exercised and given nourishment, could defend us as scholars, artists, and environmentalists have advocated (eg, Abram, 1996; Fox, 1994; Gablik, 1991; Roszak, 1995). Emile Tanay, working with child refugees in Croatia, speaks to this:

I wanted to provide the children with the possibility of subjective control over negative experiences so I offered them ink, crayons, good quills, watercolours and a lot of paper ... We can all try to see deeper into ourselves and to heal the heart of the children. It is a small contribution for healing the heart of the world. (1995, p.8)

so?

In treating the affective aspect of art education as intangible, art educational research, ironically, has denied art its fully unique place, its idiosyncratic value to the curriculum. The personal, reflective thinking of an art education which incorporates therapeutic practice assists in the cultivation of meditative mind *and* in the attainment of more traditional art educational objectives. Cathy Mullen in "Some thoughts on saving my life: Art as biography" put it this way,

I see the process of personal artistic understanding as an important preface and complement to the study of other artists and their work. I see it as the bridge that connects the meaning of art making as an act of personal inquiry and understanding to the meaning of understanding the art of others. (1987, p.60)

As art education researchers, we have an obligation to make our subject relevant, and, as Mullen suggests, the way to personal meanings (relevance) is through personal experience (art).

Art education must take responsibility for the limited human experiencing in art. We can begin by exploring the methods and teachings of art therapy. (We try to speak it.) We can begin by recording its use in the art room. (We try to touch it.) If art is to be more than pretty pictures or decorated halls or painted school play backdrops, our obligation is to make students aware of all

of the reasons to practice art. Yes, for some it will be a skill, for others perhaps a way to make a living. But for many, it will be more than that. Art is a way of re-visioning our lives. Or, as one woman in the research put it, art is *"a way to make a life"* (SL, personal communication, 1996).

It is time to ask how transformative art experiences have an impact on students' lives. It is time to speak the unspeakable, to touch the intangible. If this sounds impassioned, good. It is.

**my voice: present tense**

Hmm. i am spouting off. i passionately believe in artistic process as healing, salvational, empowering. Art is a way of experiencing life, of making meaning. By folding the intellectual, affective, somatic, and spiritual into experience, art engages. Yes, i am definitely spouting off. *Again.* In the midst of these mini-diatribes i feel that i almost resemble an evangelical preacher a little too much for my own comfort levels sometimes. Nonetheless, i fall into this theme in my life and in conversation time and again, and frankly, i still feel incredibly passionate about it. So, here i am, spouting off again. What am i going to do about this? Is this just so much hot air?

Many times since i have embarked upon this journey, this particular quest, which we call the Masters program, i have realized that there are very few, if any, truly original thoughts of a spiritual/philosophical bent. Articulating the thoughts is often unique; however, one can spiral out and still have at the core some basic truths. The truths, the existential, i have found, are very simple, and very similar, regardless of the tack taken.

These truths are the interrelated truths of primordial peoples and echoed by people today in a many disciplines: comparative mythologies (Joseph Campbell, 1991; Jamake Highwater, 1994); quantum physics (David Bohm, in Harris 1993); science (Rupert Sheldrake, 1996); medicine (Christiane Northrup, 1998); spirituality (the Dalai Lama, in Harris, 1993, Thich Nhat Hanh, 1993, Matthew Fox, 1994 & 1996, Starhawk, 1982); feminism (bell hooks, 1994); psychiatry (Epstein, 1996); Jungian analysis (Marion Woodman, 1996; Jung, 1964); ecology (David Suzuki, 1996); environmental philosophy (David Abram, 1996); academics and social theory (Michel

Foucault, 1989); psychiatry (R.D.Laing, 1989); and art (Suzi Gablik, 1991; Robert Rauschenberg, 1993). Later in the document, the ideas of these people will return to the discussion.

For now, suffice it to say that these people strive to speak out against Western culture's denial that what each of us does to our selves or to each other we do to the whole. We cannot exist, despite what our present consumer culture would have us believe, pocketed away in isolation, as individuals unconnected. David Abram, in his wondrous book Spell of the Sensuous, put it this way,

our earthly environment has increasingly yielded a view of nature as a realm of complexly interwoven relationships, a field of subtle interdependencies, which, in John Muir's words, no single phenomenon can be picked out without "finding it hitched to everything else." (1996, p.85)

We are all related. Without relationship, we cease to exist.

In fact, what i proposed to say had been said and re-said over time by so many, i wondered two things. One, what good would it do to add my voice to the fray? And, second, why have we, as beings related, not heard and heeded those voices already? Was anyone listening anyway? i caught myself in a web -- of negativity. i literally tripped myself up.

Lying face down on the hill near 16th and Blenheim, i made an agreement with myself: all i can do is articulate my truths in a manner that hopefully will speak to some people, as perhaps nothing else has, to date. That's my hope. There is no real innovation here. Just a re-articulation, a braiding of life stories with philosophies with ideas with art. Life work. Soul work. Journey

work. Art work. Whatever the label, that is what i will attempt to elucidate. That, and how our students, our society -- all of us -- deserve to be made aware of these truths.

But i get ahead of myself.

myself: an autobiographical situation

My work in art education is the result of the journey that my life has taken to get me to this place of writing. But i am more than words on a page. With that in mind i speak to capitalizing my words on the page. Rather, i speak to not capitalizing some of them. For over a decade i have chosen in my personal writings to eliminate capitals entirely. When i entered into teaching, remembering to capitalize things when i wrote on reports or boards concerned me more than anything else on a practical level. In university i have been queried time and again: it is an issue in graduate work. So, i compromise.

As in my teaching practice i will accommodate myself here to the norms of practice, as much as is comfortable within the bounds of my personal integrity. i compromise in an effort to make myself heard/read. That is all. Too many broken conventions prevent others from access to what i have to say. So, at present i adjust. i will not be capitalizing any references to myself, either my name or the self-referential "i".

This choice, more than ten years in practice, was a conscious decision. The Christian convention, demonstrated here, of putting a capital letter on the beginnings of their God, but

avoiding the practice when referring to the god/esse(s) of some other practices was not comfortable for me, even as a teenager. Were these not words to allow articulation of a connection with a force, a way of being/thinking that was really, at its essence, the same? i thought so. So, i began by eliminating the capital in that specific instance. Over time, i dropped the capital from all my writings, because really, who was to say what or who had seniority over another?

This is the first step of a path that some would call a feminist, in that i was attempting to achieve some equality, in reducing the dominant hierarchical structure. But at that point, it really wasn't, not consciously, anyway. i was merely trying to live with a certain integrity, to make what small changes i could. Later when i read feminist work, i understood the relationship of my small steps within the larger evolution of awareness. We are all connected.

And, while you may read this document as a necklace of words as knotted and strung on a feminist-ecologist-philosopher-artist-spiritualist-teacher-addyourownlabelhere string, i prefer to call this, in all humility, just words written by myself.

Not that i have not searched for a nexus. i *have* interrogated what and who i am, but after years of doing just that i still resist being categorized: i am no pickle in a jar to be shelved. Nor do i look at my students, or my journey that way. We are each nexus to the paradoxes of our own lives. We are works in progress, on a continuum, to be revealed on the way.



my voice, revealing myself in past tense

*When i think of the culture from which i came, the image that comes to mind is cookie cutters. The culture of conformity, pervasive in its deliberate culturelessness, distinct as prefab housing. Unquestioning, oblivious, i grew up "white bread", Western, and suburban. The Joneses paced my parents' lives and as their children we were/are expected to keep up.*

*i remember much time spent under the painful pull of a hairbrush, my mother trying to work my hair, the hair we have in common, into what it is not: straight. Taming the mane. Straightening the teeth. All girls' schools. Catholicism. Proper behaviour. Expectations. Rightness and wrongness. A lot of things were about control.*

*Often decked out in matching apparel, ribbons and bows, my sister and i were close, age and otherwise. This sister's beauty got the attention, so that no one noticed when i passed much of my time in the secret solitude of my imagination, with my dog, by the creek in the bit of forest that remained (then) near our house. Nothing could tear me away.*

*Nothing except her running away from home. Catapulted from my solitary stillness to the chaos of front and center, i ended up caring for my two siblings, five and ten years younger, while just barely a teen. My parents fought for even keel. As i get older, i appreciate how difficult it must have been to attempt "normal" from day to day not knowing if a child is even alive. To survive, control was tightened, including a strict prohibition on the mere utterance of my sister's name. It was, we were told, just too painful. i decided then to prove to my parents they had done well, choosing to conform to what i determined their expectations to be: Ontario scholar, student council, athletic council, school president, class valedictorian...*

*i got engaged because i thought that was expected too. An impressively hand-crafted half-carat thirty-four hundred dollar ring, boxed and wrapped, was tossed across the room to me from its place under the tree Christmas morning. The Joneses would have been impressed. My father was, suggesting, bless him, we celebrate with champagne and orange juice. i refrained, saying, "i think i feel sick".*

*Art helped me recover. My high school art teacher had once said that despite obvious artistic ability i lacked motivation. Marriage impending was motivation enough: working through my emotional responses, i explored culturally accepted ideas about a woman's place in marriage through my art work, "something borrowed something blue." An insightful professor wrote, "Do you think you are telling yourself something?" (See figure 2) i was not ready and had no idea what to do about it.*

**figure 2** *The righteous woman will guard.... (from the Qua'ran)*



This is an image from the series i completed in university entitled "*something borrowed, something blue.*" Borders were created by placing actual wedding dress lace trim (each image was different) onto the photosensitized Arches paper. The text surrounding the images was excerpted from school dictionaries, and these definitions -- of a husband, a wife, a marriage and so on -- run into each other, thereby enclosing the visual. The text within, on the self portrait images, was excerpted from various sources, such as the Qua'ran and the Bible, which influence society's perceptions of a woman's role within a marriage.

*Looking at tuxedos helped. My fiancé balked ever so slightly, exasperated with the to-do — and the expense — of it all. i spoke of his hesitance when i dared not speak my own. His "maybe I'm not ready" was freedom: i returned the ring. i could now (re)define me. The question now was how.*

*i decided to seek out my sister and shoot her. On film. Months later, my plane flew into the red blood of sunrise half a world away, over Delhi, where i was to meet her. i realized then that i had no idea of life beyond that moment. i had worked so hard, never expecting to get there. i expected the plane to crash.*

*My bags crashed down, contents protruding, after, presumably, a search. i searched for my sister among the faces pressed against the Arrivals gate glass at Indira Gandhi International: perhaps i stopped looking, but hers seemed the only "white" face there. Not as pale as me, and not quite brown in that Indian ocean of faces. Dressed for a more Canadian October, i braced for outside, for forty degrees Centigrade. i thought it might kill me. In Ontario, we lament, "It's not the heat it's the humidity" and we are right. It's not the heat. i went through the gate. i didn't die. We embraced. Me, dry white-skinned from my culture, touching her, damp almost-brown in hers.*

*We stayed in the remains of a colonial past: an old raj palace, wasted and decrepit except for its gardens. Inhabited by loud coloured parrots, these green and purple gardens were tended by Divan Singh. He was surely ninety -- but i thought his name was Sing as in song he was so joyous. He served me only "bottledwatertea", dry toast and Vizlac for days. A "good" bacteria, like yoghurt, Vizlac tempers a stomach for change.*

*i did not sleep the first night for the voices, many, low, and the footsteps, constant, rhythmic. i remember being afraid but not.*

*Later, Divan Singh spoke of the history of the building, of the sometimes violent changes in Delhi in his lifetime, of the clash of cultures. Guards, he called them "chokyders" roamed the ramparts, offering the protection of the watch. Yes, i said, i had heard them at night, before.*

*He smiled. "That is good," he said, "They have not been here in years. You will be safe here. You will be fine."*

*i learned then of being safe, of holding watch within. By getting out, even temporarily, to explore other cultures, i learned so much about my own, about myself.*

*Looking at my photographs later in Canada, i saw myself mid-hike after three weeks without amenities: no electricity, no mirror, little water (figure 3). i begged my friend not to take that picture. In it, my hair, untended, untamed, lives for the first time. Different, beautiful even. i decided then to work at lessening the need for control and domination*

*and chose instead to work at fostering a growing awareness of the multiplicity of truths.*

*Awareness does not mean blind acceptance, but rather a striving for understandings. Without my past, i would not know the value of difference and change. Acceptance of "otherness" both within and without, will lead, i hope, to a respectful accounting of art as journey work.*

**figure 3** *myself after three weeks without amenities.*



note: a parent's voice

Your passionate "crusade" for art education strikes a deep chord with me. I certainly share your view that art addresses the whole person. Art has proven its worth beyond a doubt, over and over again. Art is not a frill but a thrill, a visceral, emotional (some might even say "spiritual") thrill. I'm beginning to wonder if there might be something vaguely threatening about this to the Big Education System. (J. Percival, personal communication, 1995)

working the system: curriculum foundation

In the transformation position (Miller & Seller, 1990), curriculum tends the inner life of the student. Art as journey work allows the teacher/guide to support the student/sojourner on the transformational learning journey. The student refrains from working to please the teacher and begins to work to please the self, breaking down the dominant power structure of power-over and replacing it with the power from within. Reconnecting the learners, their learning and their context to the curriculum in this deep way means re-discovering education as "wow" experience.

the "wow" experience

You are walking along, minding your own visual business, maybe in an art gallery, maybe somewhere -- anywhere -- else. Something grabs your attention, holds you by your gaze. You are breathless, from a non- physical blow to the solar plexus. Perhaps your heart races, perhaps you feel like crying, and, perhaps, you do. You are immersed, engaged in a "wow" experience.

“Wow” experience is not the “aha” experience of “eureka”. It is not the cognitive understanding of some heretofore elusive concept. No. “Wow” experience is visceral and intuitive: ‘knowing’

in a different sense. It is engaged experience.

Two "wow" experiences stand out for me.

*After enduring a day in some gallery in New York (i was but a sprite and a gallery was still something to be endured) i dragged behind my parents, and came across a painting of a starry night sky by an artist whose work i would come to love. Wow! i stopped dead. Right there. Boom! It was like audible silence. The place was crowded and noisy; i saw no one, heard nothing. Connected to the painting, i was aware of just me, the magic, and my seeing it. That is all. i have no idea how long i stood there, people making their ways around me, before my mom came to retrieve me. She likely explained about the artist and the work, but though i listened, i did not hear. i was transfixed. i looked back over my shoulder many, many times as we went to leave. Wow.*

*The other experience must have come later. i was not as shocked by the emotions, although the work is a paean to serenity, so perhaps the "wow" just differed in intensity. i am not sure. i am sure that i turned into a room dimly lit and ended up almost nose to paint: blues and purples and white and greens, soothing, washed over me. Amazing. Up close, colour. But when i stepped back (i had to sit down) it was waterflowers and trees and reeds and water. Three huge panels, much bigger than i was, set in a semicircle, enveloped my vision. This was reality, for a time. Wow.*

i tell my students that the most important thing about art is the experience. Experience is the "constant thwarting of ...closure" (Abram, 1996, p.49). Art opens by going "directly for the emotional response" (Lanier, 1972, p.314). Without experience, art ceases to exist. Art is a way of experiencing life, of making meaning. By folding the intellectual, affective, somatic, and spiritual into experience, art engages.

The engaged experience was rarely addressed in any art classes i took along the way. In fact, many perpetuated the erroneous idea of right and wrong in art. This is the result of a positivistic outlook; however, as a student of art, i just felt ignorant and invisible. Erased. My experience did



not count. In teaching art, i reject the idea of the right answer in art, and i *know* experience counts.

A wow experience could happen anywhere, in any medium. It could happen when making or when looking. The trick is being open to its happening.

Can school curriculum open to the wow experience?

### curriculum

Curriculum is nebulous, open to interpretation. Madeleine Grumet believes "curriculum is a moving form. That is why we have trouble capturing it, fixing it in language, lodging it in our matrix." (1988, p.172). Curriculum is not static; however, understandings of curriculum are often ill informed, dated, and disconnected from the web of the world around it. Curriculum consists of *more than* the substance (i.e. subject matter, courses and programs), the purposes, and practices used for bringing about learning, but many "individuals still only conceive curriculum to be a syllabus, or a textbook, or "content to be covered" (Miller, 1996, p.251).

Curriculum ought to question what to study? by whom? why? and in what setting? according to the "Transformative Learning" section of the course calendar (1995) for the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Successful curriculum theoretically braids "learners and learning, social forces and subject matter" (Doll, 1995, p.273), to create something akin to a wow experience.

The reality is that while education is touted as including exploration, study, observation, critical thinking and dialogue (Soren, 1993, p.130), decisions related to curriculum "focus on what the teacher should teach and what the students should learn" (p.130, my emphasis). We argue that we do not teach "The Subject" any longer, but still we negotiate the "what". This shows teaching still rooted in a dominant cognitive interest even though "Logos has... dried up the curriculum, [and] made us weary" (Doll, 1995, p.131).

In seeking to reconnect curriculum, with resonance and depth of meaning, transformative teaching (Miller and Seller, 1990) opens curriculum to wow experience. In the transformation position, learning is a process of self-inquiry (p.153) with "self-actualization, self-transcendence, and social involvement" (p.167) as the aims of education.

Presently, our schools "divorce school subjects from the guts and hopes of human beings" (Lanier, p.314) when "schools should be about ways of life" (Giroux, 1993, p.14), marrying them. Engagement and enthusiasm are the by-products of an education that speaks to the whole student (Miller, 1991), an education that challenges individual development. Social change is the by-product of the transformative process within the individual. The personal is political.

Education is not only an accumulation of information (facts) but also the cultivation of wisdom (experience). Though focused on the personal, the inner life of the individual student, cultivating wisdom is not the esteem-building exercises of years past. "We have to ask what the purposes of education are, what kind of citizens we hope to produce" (Giroux, 1993, p.12). Acknowledging



the potential of young people and affirming it does not, as many of us erroneously believe, abrogate us adults from our responsibilities for teaching them in the present. Looking towards a future makes little sense without also looking inward to one's self. The most critical step on the journey, is as foretold by the Delphic oracle, "Know thyself."

Art is a logical vehicle for journeying towards self awareness because the "sine qua non of the creative process is change: the transformation of one form to another, of a symbol into insight " (London, 1989, p.34). Art educators can move easily towards the transformation position because transformative teachers "see life as a process of being and becoming" (Miller & Seller, 1990, p.167), which parallels the process of art making. Art work, a process of creation, *is* transformation. Creating work, creating a life (for example, Audette, 1993; Richards, 1989).

Learning is the work of life, the journey to wisdom. Art has the potential to be journey work.

In my experience, some students dive into deep waters, others just skim. But even those students who choose not to open to the transformative process choose to be in a transformative classroom. Enrollment in my art classes attests to this: the 'dog's breakfast' (as the administrator referred to my solitary art course on hiring me) quickly grew to a full schedule. First, i dismissed this as a result of the students liking me as a person. And, besides, many art programs flourish. My students and my colleagues denied me this out, however. They said that something else was happening: something right, something they called necessary.

The courses travel through a variety of art media and techniques. Like life, there would be projects that would just not work for some, and others that would really resonate. i was open to creative 'takes': any assignment was negotiable. If something did not work for a student it was our job, together, to work through until it did. Evaluation was presented as a means of communication, as an opening of dialogue, not as judgement. Everything is adaptable to the particular individuals in a class in transformational teaching..

Can curriculum open to the wow experience? Sumara and Davis see that it can, when we teach/learn with the student in mind.

Like a work of art, curriculum is meant to direct attention, to provoke response, to rearrange the familiar so that it is understood differently ... [as teachers] we are able to manufacture magnificent lesson plans, to write exacting behavioral objectives, to produce detailed unit overviews-- all, of course, in absence and ignorance of the students we would eventually teach. (1996, p.2)

No longer an empty vessel to be filled with knowledge, the student is first and foremost a unique individual, a person with good days, bad days, a person worthy. In the transformational perspective one cannot teach the only subject, one *must* engage the student through experience. When i tell students stories of wow experience, of engaging with art/life, i say, the world is full of wow experience. Open to it, do not shut it down. If nothing yet has been a wow experience, that does not mean wow experience will never happen. Open to it.

A wow experience could happen anywhere, in any medium. It could happen in schools. The trick is being open to its happening. Enthusiasm and exuberance --the wow experience-- have a place in education. i believe that place to be the art room. i saw it happen in mine. Wow.

## interruptions

*My dog is lying on my lap now, awaiting the time when my fingers will leave the keyboard to stroke her. She will wait, her head draped across my elbow, her belly gurgling, until i have time.*

*She saved my life. Days after her arrival she gave me a reason to stand up to an abusive partner and leave. i could for her when i could not (would not?) for myself. In the black winter nights that ensued, she gave me reason to live: i had to get out, of bed, of the house, to walk her. i owe her.*

*Students came to my art room because they knew they would be able to do journey work. They knew they would find compassion and support and friendship along the way. After school, students -- some i did teach, some i never would -- flocked to the room. Just to be there.*

*i often did not get home until after seven. Every school day began at seven thirty. These long days all teachers know. i taught a transformative curriculum, and because of art as journey work's affective focus, i often came home exhausted, physically and emotionally. i would walk the dog -- far -- and then sleep. Sometimes i would have to "de-tox" emotionally and my dog would crawl onto me, over my heart, while i cried. She was the container for my chaos.*

*It nearly killed her. Blood, vomit, feces everywhere. If i had not seen the cats sitting on either side of her -- comforting her? -- i would have thought someone bludgeoned all of them. Intensive care at my vet's home, and all the long walks that kept her fit likely saved her. That and, perhaps the painting/prayer that i created through eight hours of tears (figure 4). We went through similar terrifying scenarios three times more, over the next months.*

*Wonderful things wove through the frightening. i came home earlier, and painted, with her head in my lap, until i fell asleep. i created thirty-odd works (thirty odd works?) in as many days. A new neighbour offered me a show at her gallery: we made the local news. Sales, t-shirts, cards, commissions, contracts followed.*

*My students experienced the frightening power of the creative "bender". We spent a lot of time talking about it. They realized art's overwhelming power. i realized i had to go.*

*i decided to move, i told them, my heart breaking, to go to school, where the weather was better for dog walking. We both needed time to reflect, to refuel, to heal. My grade twelves had been with me the longest. What happened in our classes was magical and important. i wanted us to go from this as pebbles in a pond, spreading what we had discovered out from the center, where we met. i promised them i would document our*

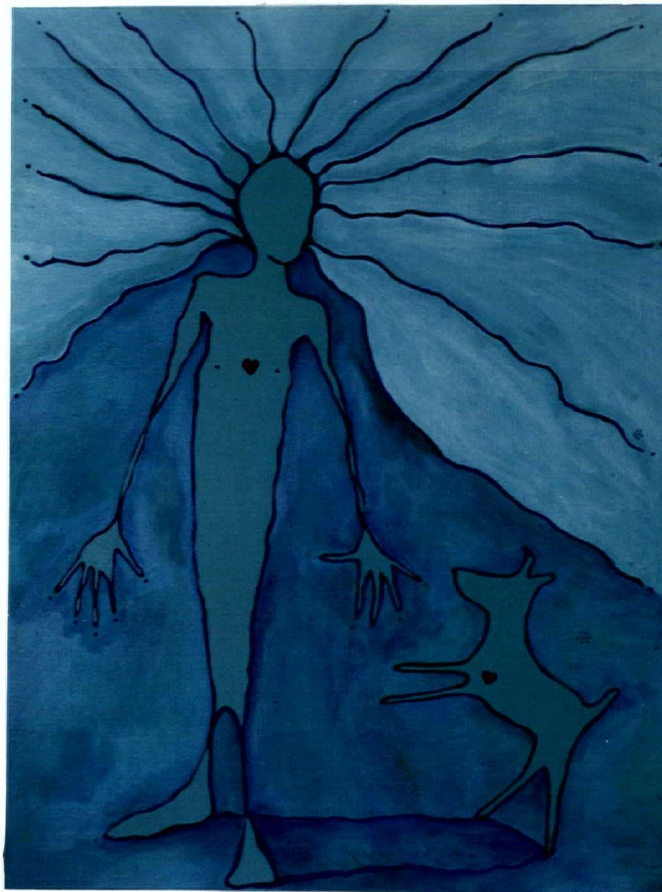
*experience.*

*My dog will never be healthy. She, more than ever, is the barometer for my life. Her life literally hangs in the space between us that i call relationship. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. Whatever we do to ourselves, we do to the web.*

*As we talked, many students remarked that learning in our class was "fun". i would smile and say that i hoped the depth of the learning might only come later, in the living of their lives... it might make more sense then. Of course, this where the re-search begins... was i right? Would our time together have an impact on the living of their lives?*

*Hmm. As i ponder, i pet the dog.*

**figure 4** *bond*



The painting/prayer i created through the eight hours of tears.

**To live for art is to live a life of questioning.**

(Winterson, 1995, p.160)

### **regarding the research: the research question**

*So, students remarked that learning in our class was "fun". i would smile and say that i hoped the depth of the learning might only come later, in the living of their lives... it might make more sense then. Of course, this where the re-search begins... was i right? Would our time together have an impact on the living of their lives?*

### **research methods**

Ron MacGregor, in "The trouble with butterflies" (1982), said

If the kinds of quasi-scientific research that have traditionally been used to try to pin down the nature of art making have not been very successful, it is not because they have been mistaken as much as they have been misapplied." (p.28)

i would agree. That's the point. Art educational research must be different because art is different.

### **regarding the research: situating the research**

Qualitative research is the most appropriate design when research in an area is to be grounded in the experience of the individual, or group being studied; therefore, i have chosen to do a qualitative research study. "In qualitative research methodology, methods, too, are regarded as an evolving process rather than a pre-existing set of techniques to follow, supporting this exploration of new knowledge" (Bresler, 1993, p.42). i borrow some techniques from a number of qualitative methods as the research unfolds: this is an interpretive process, informed by the philosophical orientations known as hermeneutics/phenomenology, using some key approaches of action research and smatterings of ethnography. In this way, i approach the research critically.

Art education researcher Liora Bresler found that research

related to teachers' knowledge pointed to a large gap between classroom teachers stated beliefs and their classroom practice. Teacher beliefs emphasized the notion of art as meaningful experience and arts instruction as providing students with tools for self-expression, and for the expression of their unique sensitivities. In contrast, their practices often centred around rote activities, discipline, and classroom management. (1993, p.42)

My research attempts to examine this gap, and the findings point to it directly.

The research provides an opportunity for development of in-depth understanding of the phenomenon i call art as journey work, and to document "our shared history -- not our identical experiences -- but our lived history of questioning and challenging together" (Miller, 1996, p.254). This research offers an intimate understanding of the life of a particular classroom (Bresler, 1993) through the stories and memories of three participants in that classroom, two students and a teacher.

i call my research process reflective research.

Reflective research resonates with Wanda May's views of action research, an "orientation to inquiry [also known as] *reflective teaching, teacher-as-researcher, teaching as inquiry, and critical praxis*" (1993, p.115, emphasis in original). In assuming as i do that teachers and researchers need not be dichotomized into teachers teaching and researchers theorizing (see Irwin, Robertson & Mastri, 1998, in press), i am in alignment with action research. May suggests that action research looks at questions of

shared interest that are not coerced by an outsider and a self-reflexive, self-critical stance among all members in the project who are interested in their own practice. Individual assumptions, interpretations, relations, and negotiations are of as much interest to participants as the topic of the inquiry... ultimately empowering to all the participants

involved. (1993, p.120)

My work involves only insiders in the interview process, and incorporates the reflexive self-critical stance above.

May suggests that looking at action research of the time (1993) may leave one questioning what the teachers involved in the action research really experience: “most importantly, what did they learn about themselves as teachers and about their own practice” (p.124)? She criticizes the “faint” “strained” and “unnatural” (p.124) teacher voices and “hesitant and limp interpretations and conclusions” (p.124), which are not authentic to teachers. i am interrogating my own practice. i include my own voice in the text. In being the researcher and the researched, i am attempting to address these concerns.

May says

Inquiry into our own practice centers us, grounds us viscerally in real place and time with real persons, begs our questions and possibilities, makes us responsible for what we believe and do. .. It helps us to envision and craft ourselves and our work. (p.124)

It also generates a unique tension. Because this research is intimate in its inclusion of the personal alongside the practical and the theoretical, it is very different than objective research. It is less than objective. It has to be.

Interrogating my own practice while teaching, while still in a position of power over those in my classes would be, for this intimate (less than objective) research at this point in time in education, impossible. In interrogating my own practice, i use hindsight and memory. The



information gathering of the ethnographer (fieldnotes, observations and thick descriptions) is useful here. Without being aware that i might ever need them, i often wrote/spoke critically about my own teaching practice, both to myself in my journals, and to others in correspondence. Snippets of insight, where appropriate, are included here, for veracity.

Robyn Stewart's idea of "Art as neo-narrative" (1996) was also inspirational. Neonarratives weave together theory classroom practice and culture. They are developed "from a narratological approach, incorporating autobiographical data and interview texts, through which experiences are shared within the contemporary world" (p.1).

The contemporary world of the interviews is related within the text by the extensive use of field notes. In the striving for richness of description, i echo the work of ethnographers, for thick description is one of the main goals of ethnographic research.

Both the neonarratives and reflective research are interview-based methodologies, in which participants are asked to focus discussion on key points. In neonarratives, Stewart asks her participants to focus on key experiences or events in their artistic development/experience. In reflective research the participants are asked to use first, their memories and secondly, their art work as the key points from which to reflect on their experiences in art class in high school. Stewart suggests that neonarratives are "designed to observe reality, treating the participants as natural philosophers, embedded in a cultural system and critical of it" (p.12).

The idea of reflective research is that the researcher maintains an ongoing dialogue with the people who participate in the process, what i refer to as a feedback loop. The idea of a feedback loop is related to the spiraling work of action researchers, from practice to theory and back to practice again. Though i am no longer in secondary school teaching practice, the feedback loop that might best describe action research still applies here: this loop reflects back into teaching practice through my teaching at the Faculty of Education and through the practice of those i teach. It also feeds into my reflections and understandings of past practice in generating theory.

The feedback loop i describe not only has the research taking place over a series of interviews, it also is looped by discussions previous to the interviews through to the following up during the writing up of the research. At any point of the process, the participants have a voice. This process honours the participants, as well as avoiding any regret or lost remembrance post interview. If a key point is missed, then they need only contact the researcher and articulate it.

For example, one of the women i interviewed did not want her name to be used, nor did she feel right about using a pseudonym, because that felt false to her. Because i emphasized that i wanted to work from a place of honesty and integrity in the re-search, she thought that a pseudonym might appear incongruous. After much discussion, she still could not decide. Weeks later, she opted to use her own initials. This felt most comfortable for her, and, therefore, what we agreed we should do. i honour her choice.

This process honours those who participate in it. The wishes of the participants are paramount,

and the participants are assured a voice in the final product. "Writing and voice are important parts of any communication of knowledge." (Geertz, 1988 cited in Bresler, 1993) Voice is a key issue in feminist research (Belenky, et al, 1986).

#### **regarding the research: concerns relating to the researcher**

Because the art room is perceived as 'fun', art teachers often hear that the students like *them*, and/or art, when their courses are responded to with enthusiasm. While there is an argument to be made for the importance of fun in learning, the dismissive nature of such comments is what interests me. Though saying art is fun is, in my opinion, flattering, it belittles the power of art. In the same way 'girl' holds within it a verbal pat on the head when applied to a woman over thirteen, 'fun' in art class denies that through the experience of fun there is learning going on. Real, valuable learning. This research is a step towards addressing this dismissal.

What came back to me over and over on this research journey was that any success journey work had was more a result of my individual personality than a result of a curriculum or a perspective. It is impossible for me to gauge the veracity of this statement other than to bring this issue to the women involved in the interviews. Their responses are in the findings. In the discussion, i recall comments of others who had first hand experience of what happened in an art as journey work classroom in an effort to address this concern.

To further address this issue in the interviews, i also asked my participants to compare the learning that went on in the journey work classroom to that which went on in other art classes

that they have attended, before and since. All of us, myself and the women i interview, have the utmost respect for the others who have taught them. Despite our best efforts, these places in the interviews prove difficult to navigate, because any comparisons could be perceived as critical in the negative sense. We want to be critical only in the constructive sense. And we try to be cautious and respectful.

i will need to be honest. It is impossible to be completely objective, but possible to be honest. Cautions and criticisms should be raised and discussed in the analysis. Flaws that are pointed out by the people i interview, of course, should be brought to light in the findings, at whatever point they occur in the chronological unfolding of the interview. These also will be addressed in the discussion.

#### **regarding the re-search: concerning the participants**

My research question means i could really only work with people from the art program that i established. Given that i want to honour the voices of those in my study, i kept my participants to a minimum (much to the chagrin of some of my former students, whose voices i cannot include). i invited two young women who i feel are credible representatives for the research. Had these two women been unable or unwilling to participate, others had expressed interest in participating; however, these two women agreed willingly and with enthusiasm.

i chose these two women because the manner in which they overlap and in which they differ gives some indication that art as journey work is transferable. They are different ages and were

of different social groups at school. They were also in different art classes: one student, Kim, was in classes with me on many occasions over a three year period, the bulk of her high school art experience; the other, SL, was in class with me only once, in her last year of high school. As will be described in the findings, these two women were/are very different, as were/are their life experiences. Regardless, art as journey work seems a common denominator for them.

Art as journey work seemed to resonate with these two women and art seems to have made an impact on their lives to the present. As will be unfolded in the findings, these two women used art to grapple with some challenging moments in their lives. These challenges were different for both: one worked through issues outside of her self (issues of an artistic nature, the separation and impending divorce of her mother and step father) and the other struggled with a crisis within her self (depression and an eating disorder).

Both also faced the future and grappled with life decisions. At the time i taught them, neither was sure of the direction of their future; however, both have gone on to study art on a full time basis, in different venues.

i feel the uniqueness of their two circumstances past and present, and the power of their tellings give credence and strength to the research.

speaking: one student's voice

*As you were fully aware of, i had been going through quite a difficult time when I was faced with depression and an eating disorder. Your encouragement to take my time and to explore my feelings in my art work*

*helped me greatly ... sadness and negative energy can be used to produce a positive... I know I will be okay, because I am starting to know who I am* (SL, personal communication, 1995).

### corresponding

i have an ongoing correspondence established with these women. They are aware of my purposes in going to graduate school and have proffered their opinions gladly along the way. i sent a letter to each of them outlining the study, and formally invited them to participate in the re-search. As i formerly was their teacher i was concerned that there might be some unforeseen ethical difficulties; however, these concerns appeared to have been unfounded. Given the existence of and the comfortable, respectful nature of our relationships, both in the classroom and beyond, previously and at present, i am not surprised at this. i believe that their participation was freely given, as they stated. Kim, in fact sent me a note saying to "Take care ... [and] thanks for making me a part of it" (Personal communication, May, 1998).

### participating

Both of these women are former students of mine. As a result, we have, at the very least, a past power dynamic by virtue of the hierarchy inherent in public schools. i had power over them as someone who established the curriculum and evaluated their work. i took measures in my classroom to counter this power-over dynamic as much as possible: journey work itself cultivates power from within, which is antithetical to the power over structure of high school.

Like both of these women, i too have been affected by my role as teacher. As i recorded in the fieldnotes, one encounter with the expectations i felt inherent in this role startled me. However,

though these women *were* my students, both had crossed the power dynamic lines previous to this re-search. i would call these women friends. In the findings, i acknowledge the debt of gratitude i feel towards both of these women for their support of my research and for my life choices. i feel able to speak as honestly to them as anyone. Kim even was aware that i was leaving teaching for graduate work before anyone else, even my immediate family, because i sought her feedback on whether the happenings in the art room that we were part of were unusual and worthy of research. She kept that trust. Likewise, they entrusted me with their personal stories, then and now. Both chose to maintain our on-going correspondence. i hope this ongoing conversation assists them in re-claiming some of this power imbalance on their own terms, to balance it.

Had i not the relationships i have with these women, this document would not nearly be so rich. Perhaps the intimacy of this research experience is so deep because the participants and my self are all women. It is possible; however, for the record, the two people who expressed their chagrin at not having been included in the study were male students.

As researchers, we know we affect who and what we research simply by doing the research. I believe that neither woman edited herself in the interviews any more than any interview subject might in being interviewed. In our discussions on sensitive issues i believe the women edited themselves less than they might otherwise have, had we not the established trust relationship that we do. When my mis-perceptions and/or assumptions are addressed by the women demonstrate that the women are not silenced by what power dynamic exists/ed.

Throughout this work i return to my journal writings from my time at the high school, and particularly in the findings section, i acknowledge how early on in the relationship at school, i, at least, recognized that i could learn from those i was hired to teach.

#### proceeding

i traveled to London, Ontario and spent an extended period of time (about one month) with these two women. During the time we shared there, we participated in a series of audio taped interviews The interviews were unstructured, to allow for the associations from past to present to flow freely.

#### **regarding the research: conducting the re-search**

i met with each participants on three occasions, at the location of their choice and convenience. Each audio-taped interview was approximately two hours long, varying somewhat as the dialogue determined. The guiding questions provided a framework for our discussions; however, the conversation was allowed a life of its own and allowed to flow where it would. Generally speaking, the interview questions asked the women to reflect on: first their present place in art/life; next, on the place they found themselves during their work in classes that used art as journey work; and finally the issue of teacher personality. They also pondered their future.

From London, i went to a secluded spot in Maine to transcribe the interviews. Upon my return to Canada, i had the transcripts printed. Because it was important for each woman to maintain a sense of control over her voice in the text, each was sent copies of the rough transcripts of our



discussions. At the time of the interviews, we agreed upon an amount of time (two months) which would be allotted for contemplation of the transcripts. Points of clarification, requests for deletions and so forth were to be made within that time. Additions to the text's conversation were subject to the same classifications as the actual interview text itself.

Analysis of the transcripts revealed the following interrelated themes. My work is therefore grounded in the revelations found in dialogue with these women. Whenever possible after this section, the women's own descriptors are used in this text when speaking of the key phenomena of art as journey work. These were classified by highlighting in colour codings:

- “working through”: therapeutic practices in the art education classroom
- solidifying the self: art as exploration of self and reflective thinking
- art as meditative inquiry

Once the women reviewed the transcripts, and additional information added and requests for adjustments honoured, the task of putting the thesis together began.

At the outset, each woman talked with me privately, at which time any issues or concerns about the research process were expressed and negotiated. One issue that we negotiated carefully, given the personally revealing nature of our talks, was how to navigate the issue of confidentiality. As the art work is also included in the research text, this is a critical area of negotiation. i abide by their individual wishes, and in no way will compromise them.

### informing

Data was collected from the audio tapes, their transcripts, the fieldnotes, and the images of their work. The research text was shared with the women as it progresses, with the hope that they felt able to maintain the integrity of their voices as 'my' work unfolds.

### **regarding the research: writing up of the research**

Just as the best research methodologies complement the research being conducted, so should the style and format of the presentation of the research document. This qualitative research study explores an unconventional topic in education, so my presentation is also unconventional.

Ideally, the research design assists in "[erasing] the unhelpful bifurcations of public and private, of self and other that remain so insistent in reports of research" (Sumara & Carson, 1996, p.x).

The following are steps i have taken to address this.

### voice

Just as the participants are assured of their voice in the final writing up of this research, so too, am i as the researcher. The writing up contains snippets of writing from a variety sources concurrent with the time we are investigating, as well as writing on the art of teaching from my personal writing from then (teaching) through (researching) to now (presenting). The writing style of this work is strongly my own voice, as May (1993) suggested would be most appropriate. Mine is the voice of the teacher-practitioner.

### textualizing

My participants' and my voices will ebb and flow with the material discussed. Polyphonic text(s) seem the most respectful approach to the writing up of the re-search. The text was inspired by the quilt making/writing of Irwin, Stephenson, Robertson, Neale, Mastri, and Crawford in their article, "Quiltmaking as a metaphor: Creating a feminist political consciousness for art teachers" (1998). In this article, the voices of each of the women were honoured. Each woman responded to whatever speaker/issue that she felt the need to respond to, or she opened a new, related avenue of inquiry and discussion.

The source of the excerpt from the transcripts will be found at the end of the selection itself. The citation will first indicate the interview, then the page in the interview transcript where this quotation is found, and lastly, the line(s) of the transcription quotation. So, a citation of (3. 10, 21) means that the quotation comes from the third interview, and is excerpted from the tenth page of the transcript on the twenty-first line of the transcription. In the sections dedicated to a particular woman, the numbers will suffice; however, where the transcription excerpts are used comparatively the speaker's name will be included to ensure clarity.

### individualizing

To further honour each person's difference, and because each person's input is valuable, each participating woman's words is represented by a different type font in the findings to underscore the uniqueness of each voice. Kim is represented by the Opacivet font, and SL by Arial Narrow.

Words taken from a written text of the feedback loop will be represented by the appropriate font,

*italicized*, to demonstrate both speaker and source.

Though some might find this technique a bit disconcerting visually, it is my hope that the finished text will have visual integrity in being reflective of the different women who participated in creating the document. Presenting the findings in this fashion is appropriate because narrative research implies that the person is most important. The document should visually support this.

Where my own story is interwoven throughout the research, i use the text font. Writing from my personal journals is the italicized text font. This is appropriate. My story is intertwined with the stories of these women, in the story of this writing. Women art educators posit that the autobiography is vital to teaching/learning and to research (eg. Baker, 1998, Bresler, 1993, Rahn, 1998, & Schoenfielder, 1998). "Qualitative research puts emphasis on understanding the perspectives of all participants raised the issue of 'voice' and challenged the idea that the traditional academic perspectives were the only legitimate ones" (Bresler, 1993, p.31). Feminist scholarship (such as Belenky et al, 1986) posits that personal truths, including my own voiced as author as well as the voices of the people who participated in my thesis re-search, are of the utmost importance. Equal importance.

### visualizing

i see this text as a "commonplace book" (Ondaatje in Sumara, 1996). It is a collection. Collected herein are stories, images, font changes and collected texts. i weave images, mine and my

students' from now and from the time before, into the text. These images interrupt the text, as necessary, and may or may not be spoken of/to. "In educational research daring to say something also sometimes means transgressing boundaries of form" (Sumara & Carson, 1996, p.x). i transgress.

Interspersed with the text of this research document are quotation-poems from Joseph Campbell. These are all taken from A Joseph Campbell Companion (1991) edited by Diane Osbon, and separated from the main text by their situation and the font (*Lucida Calligraphy*). i shared these teachings with my students in their OAC year, their final year in secondary school. i include them here in much the same way as i offered them to my students. i expect my readers to take what they want from these, and apply them as i expected my students would.

### crafting

The stylistic crafting of the paper has been called "picaresque"(MacGregor, personal communication, May, 1997), which is also both a product and a reflection of the process. Like footsteps, which carry an entire body along though they merely touch down on occasion, the text *is* somewhat picaresque. i expect my reader to travel along with the text, and to make whatever discoveries are to be made. In this way, like individuals respond idiosyncratically to an art work, each reader's reading may resonate at many different points along the path.

Qualitative research "writing communicates the emphasis on processes and deliberations rather than 'fixed truths'" (Bresler, 1993, p.42). Picaresque crafting is appropriate to the research: it

opens to process and deliberations.

### capitalizing

Eliminating capital letters must be addressed here in the methods section. i impose this convention onto two parts of the text: references to myself and the headers. i chose only these two areas because i want to be heard. i do not want those who open this document denied access due to the degree of its stylistic difference from the academic precedent.

Not capitalizing the self-referential 'i' is addressed in the introduction, in the autobiographical situating. Because using the lower case is still not common in academic writing, with jan jagodzinski a notable art education exception (see for example, Studies, 39 (1), 1997), explanations must be made before assumptions are. Some may incorrectly read the lack of capitals on the self referential as belittling myself. Perhaps they will read this as disingenuous, because this document bears a good deal of my own voice, my own strength. The small letter i may represent for some a false humility. In no way is this my intention. Eliminating the capital letter, for me, cultivates an egalitarian outlook. My personal writing totally eliminates *all* capitals to remind me of the equality of all. It does work to remind me to remain humble. The elimination did not begin or end with the self-referential capital letter as it does here, as i explained in the autobiographical situating. This is a personally symbolic gesture.

Because the capitals are also missing from titles in this document, this too must also be addressed. This adaptation results from the contradictions set up by my use of the lower case

only in the references to my self and not for others. In the same way, the headings are without capitals. These are more a stylistic salute to my personal writing style and a means of demonstrating that what i am aiming for with this text is a marriage between the personal and the academic. Indeed this is what journey work is all about.

### writing

My writing journeys. My form follows my function. My medium is part of the message. It rambles, and meanders and gurgles and spurts and splashes back on itself and passes quietly by. As a teacher I know a sentence fragment when I see it. As a teacher, I recognize and call attention to the run-on sentence. As a writer, I use the fragment to draw attention to a point. Like this. As a writer, I use the run-on sentence to echo the journey. An artist needs to know the rules to truly transgress the boundaries of the art. I know the rules of grammar. i choose to break them. i do not write to talk *about*, i write to participate *in*. Like any journey, it is not just the destination, but also the traveling itself that is of value.

*Follow your bliss.*

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. .

[to be continued]

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. .  
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*The heroic life is living the individual  
adventure.*

*There is no security  
in following the call to adventure.*

*Nothing is exciting  
if you know what the outcome is going to be.*

*To refuse the call  
means stagnation.*

*What you don't experience positively  
you will experience negatively.*

*You enter the forest  
at the darkest point,  
where there is no path.*

*Where there is a way or path,  
it is someone else's path.*

*You are not on your own path.*

*If you follow someone else's way,  
you are not going to realize  
your potential.*

(Campbell in Osbon, 1991, p. 22)



## **seeking and finding**

### Memory

is not a stack of facts that is fluidly passed on untainted. It is more like a ball that is bounced around among players, accumulating dirt and scars, bruises and patches... memories and identities, thought and actions are inextricable from one another. (Sumara & Carson, 1996, p.vii)

This speaks to my understanding of the research process. Although i have attempted through the research to seek out clarification and understanding, so as not to misrepresent the women or their meanings, this is still a memory. This memory contains my o observations, interpretations and the words and responses of the women with whom i worked.

### **the keeping of findings: where i lay out what i found**

Art making as journey work is a therapeutic process for the art education class room which allows for both reflective self exploration and the cultivation of the meditative aspect of mind. It builds awareness of joy in the learning. Highlights from the transcripts follow, which speak of these interrelated themes:

- “working it through” in the art
- art as solidifying the self
- art as meditative learning

These are unfamiliar terms in education. The unfamiliar is frightening. As a direct result, art as journey work threatens many. However, paradoxically, these are the means necessary to cultivate if we hope to change -- individually, education, and the world.

### **choosing the students**

Any student could benefit from this approach to art education.

i could have invited the acting out student, the withdrawn student or the student obviously in distress to participate. i believe that any of these would respond to journey work. Originally i thought i should ask the student in distress to participate in the research process -- i even asked one student; however, i chose not to pursue this, primarily because if the research focuses on student in distress, it runs the risk of being dismissed as "purely" art therapy, and would continue to be left outside the art classroom.

Alternatively, i could have chosen only students from my classes who were naturally talented artists in the traditional sense. Truly, the women i worked with are both very talented, uniquely so. But, talent is one of those nebulous terms (for discussion of talented art students see eg. Zimmerman & Clark, 1983). Too often traditional art education sees talent as a facility in representing reality two dimensionally. Developmentally, people who do not know how to draw realistically in grade school perceive themselves as being poor in art. So, the word talent means the ability to represent reality in drawing for young people also.

Though students talented in this traditional sense were in my classes and did respond to the art as journey work, the naturally talented artist is the student to whom current art curricula is presently addressed. Responding to the curriculum as it stands, some students will get therapeutic and meditative benefit from art but by accident, or by some experiential osmosis.

Rarely are these benefits of art articulated, either in the art room or outside of it. This might explain why those of us “in” art know its benefits as “unspeakable”(Madenfort, 1978) and “intangible”. (Wilson, 1993).

Journey work seeks a path between the traditional path (art as technique), and the less traditional path (art as therapeutic process). Because any student can access art, any student can access the wonderful “intangible” benefits of art as journey work.

### **meeting the students**

These two women could not be more different. When i met Kim, in high school, she drew and painted but lacked drive and organization. She had a very select group of friends and a strong sense of self. The other woman, SL, has been described by my colleagues and herself as "driven": she is consummately organized, whatever the subject, and very involved, socially and in the community. She felt she was less talented in the traditional sense than artistically gifted.

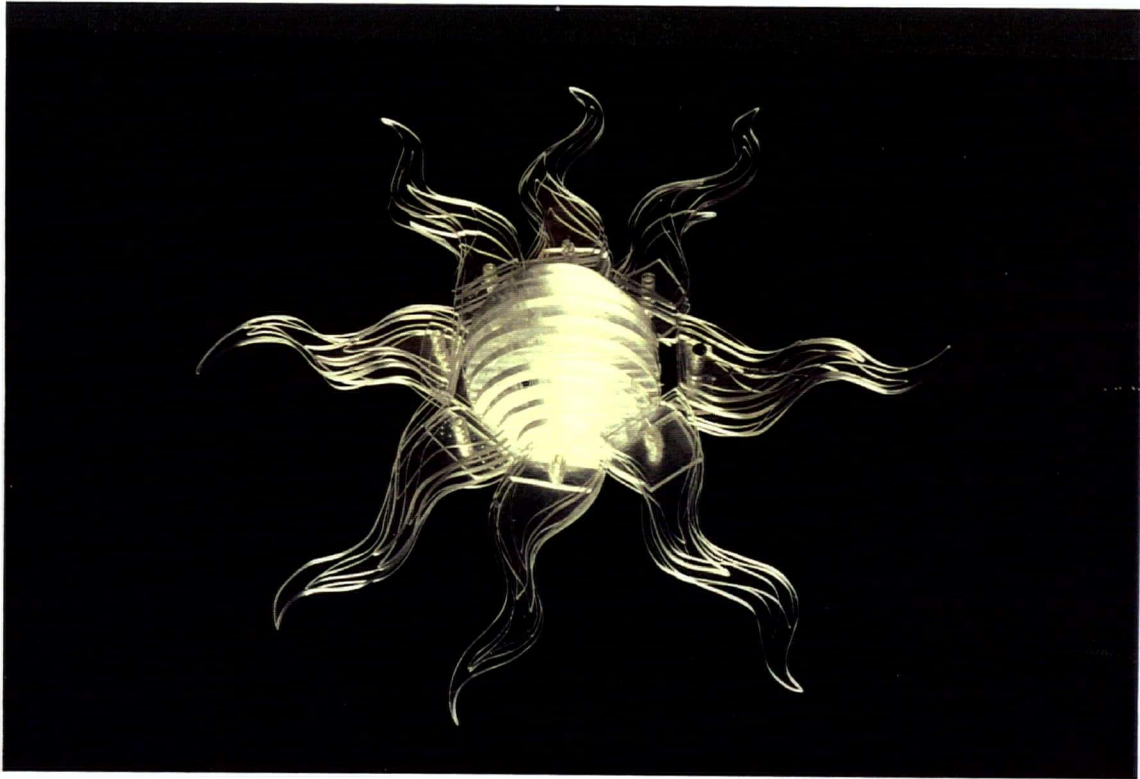
But both women are students most describe as "together". This descriptor is pertinent because these two distinctly different personalities demonstrate the relevancy of journey work to *all* the people in our classes, whether they are needy, withdrawn, attention seeking or together. In fact, together students often risk falling through the cracks in the support systems in education because they are not expected to have crises. Often no one notices the crises when they do occur. They are inexperienced in handling personal crisis by themselves and need a means of journeying through.

i enjoy talking with both of these women. i did years ago, when we connected in high school,  
and i do now. i looked forward to seeing them both again.

### **introducing Kim**

Kim was first in my class when she was in Grade Eleven. i had a few semesters teaching before this. A very creative young woman, i felt that Kim possessed a clarity of mind not commonly found in one so young. She was open with her life's process, and seemed to know herself. On a number of occasions, we acknowledged Kim was the student most closely mirroring the student i would be if i were regressed to my teenage years. Though she was by personality more buoyant, we had much in common. Well mannered, articulate and talented in every sense including the traditional, i expect Kim to go far.

**figure 5** *Plexiglass sun*



This piece demonstrates Kim's flexibility as an artist. It was created in Kim's first year at the art school she attended after our classes and prior to attending the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. She says, *"I felt it important that my foundation work was included as I believe it has a lot to do with where I am now and my journey to ceramics. While I am not in sculpture or etching I believe they still play a large role in my work today"* (Personal communication, 1998). See figure 7 for the etching of which she speaks here.

### **field notes from our first interview**

We met again, face to face after years apart, in a park where there are plenty of old trees. The sun set westerly with warmth -- the day had been hot and humid, but now was waning. Behind us, a band warmed up in the band shell. Their musical practice provided counterpoint to our reunions: we quickly set to discussing deep topics at length, while after much practice the band played only a short concert to a smattering of people.

Kim greeted me with a hey and a hug. We sat in the grass -- me in the shade, she in the sun. We chose the grass without discussion, without negotiation. *"It,"* i wrote in my journal that day, *"just felt like the best option."*

Fresh from a workout at the gym, Kim was tired not recharged. She said she had not pushed herself in working out. She wore a knitted vest flecked with metallic threads with corduroy pants. Her leather mules were eventually kicked off to sit cross legged, Buddha-like, in the grass. Thick auburn curls were pulled back off the clear skin of her face into a ponytail. Dark, cat-eye glasses, appropriately framed in a leopard skin pattern, hid her eyes from view. Nearer the end of the interview, Kim would peer over these shades to visually chide me for an erroneous comment. When she eventually removed them to reveal the face i knew, her eyes showed she had grown.

We discussed the formalities of the research process. Kim is not the pre-briefing type: she had only read through the documents that i sent her for dates and times, not details. i had expected this.

### our first interview

i know Kim as witty and direct. In light of this perception i have of her, i hadn't expected her be hesitant when i directed the conversation away from the technicalities and into the interview itself. She said that the interview was difficult for her, because, "I never ever talk about myself" (4, 1-2).

But when Kim does talk about herself, she strives to ensure clarity. Early on in our discussion, i comment that i hear a different inflection in her voice when she speaks of working in ceramics, of being a potter. i wonder aloud,

dm: Do you have a hierarchy of art forms in your mind? Like one's better than another?

Kim: [with emphasis] No, no, no, no, no.

dm: No?

Kim: Being a potter is a *very* difficult life. That's exactly what it is. (1.5, 24-27)

**figure 6** *Vases: Raku fired stoneware*





This exchange demonstrates how a teacher-student power-over dynamic is not at play here. In ensuring that she was understood, not only did Kim clarify her point, but she also uses her personal strength to equalize our exchange.

i queried how she felt about art. Kim said, "right now, I'm not concerned about marks. I'm more concerned about the experience" (5, 13-14). Then, she added, "For the last two years of my life I've been doing art every day. At school. And somehow it [art] *had* to have done something" (7, 18-19). What that something was we hoped to articulate.

After completing the program at high school, Kim went to the local school for the arts and currently she attends the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) in Halifax. At the time of the interview, she had just recently completed NSCAD application, and had, as a result, thought deeply about what art meant for her, and why it was important. Articulating these thoughts to another was still difficult, however, as this exchange demonstrates:

Kim: [Art]'d get me through.

dm: How? Can you explain that?

Kim: I think it's obvious why.

dm: See, but the thing is... to the people who aren't into art, it's not obvious. And those of us who are in art... we have to try to make it obvious. We have to try to explain it cause--

Kim:[interjecting] So they will understand. (12, 13-35)

For Kim, art means simply, "Doing things and then being proud of your work." (9, 6-7). In this way, she acknowledges the externalized product, "doing things" while attaching an emotional response

to that external object by "being proud" of it. Art's connection to the emotional self is not lost on Kim. Art is a subject that gives back.

Sometimes, art literally helps her make it through the day: "If I'm having a shitty day, I can sit down at the potter's wheel and I can feel inside of me if I can do it or not. But if I can do it and get through it, I will [be okay]" (9, 11-12).

Despite all of her talents, in high school she never saw herself as an artist, or making a future career out of art. "[A]s much as I knew that this was where I was going, I didn't. As much as I knew that that's what I wanted, I never saw myself as being an artist or anything" (16, 24-26). Regardless, the inclusion of art in the high school curriculum was critical for her, because art resonated:

I think [art is] absolutely important, but it's such a personal thing, in a way very difficult to explain...It's like saying to someone who's a scientist, why are you going to science class in high school? They would have had the same feelings that I think I would have with art. It's just a different way of creating.... I think everyone has a creative side and they have to express that somehow. And I think if you're not allowed to, you're just, you know, you're going to close yourself off somewhere and stop learning. (13, 2-6).

Art is, therefore, part of a student's total education for Kim "cause you just -- you can't go too far one way, you know? ... I like to learn, to learn different things, and stuff like that, but I think you can only push your brain so much in one direction" (13, 10-11). Art rounded out her learning experience.

But still Kim struggles with defining herself as an artist. This comes as no surprise when we realize that she feels making art exposes her innermost self. Because of this identification of art

with the inner self, Kim perceives art as a most challenging life path because of the inherent exploration of the individual self:

Because it's you... really what it comes down to is if art was a specific thing that you could put into one category, it would be the same. But I go to school with artists and I've never seen the same thing come out once. Ever. Despite the fact of whether you are trying to ... copy or not. Therefore, in my opinion, it comes from you. It's coming from somewhere within you where no one knows ... I feel completely vulnerable when I show some of them, of my work. Just because it's totally me; therefore, is that not, is that not, you know, letting someone else see your soul? Kind of. That's what I think. That's my opinion. (19, 13-20)

That there is a relationship between the artistic exploration and the exploration of the inner workings of the mind is important to Kim:

If I go [to NSCAD] and I don't like it, I want to go to a normal university and take psychology... The human mind is as fascinating as art...[so]...after I am finished at NSCAD, I want to get my art therapy diploma. And be an art therapist. (17, 3-13)

Art opens communication to the self. "It's me and the clay. Nobody else. And I'm telling it what to do and we're communicating." (9, 13-14). This closeness with her materials focuses her concentration, because "when I'm on the wheel I can only think about one thing: what I'm doing" (9, 19). This is the focused mind, meditative mind, where "once you start working on something to that extreme you stop thinking about other things and you start concentrating on where this thing you're making is going to go." (9, 20) In connecting Kim with her immediate sensory experience, art cultivates the meditative mind.

After her protestations that she did not often talk about herself, Kim proved very articulate. Kim

only agreed to be interviewed at this time because she was fond of me. Personally and professionally this was a crazy time in her life. She was gearing up for a major life transition, which predicated a move thousands of miles away, to Halifax. Also, as was revealed in the preliminary interview, Kim was to be the maid of honour at her good friend's wedding. The graduation exhibition at her school was opening, and, aside from being a major contributor to the show in terms of pieces presented, Kim was also a vital part of the exhibition's actualization. A busy time. i was, i am, very grateful.

### **field notes from our second interview**

Kim was, in her words, "a bit frazzled" by the time i met up with her for the second interview. The annual year end art exhibition is well known at this school, and is considered a major event in the local community. This year the exhibition's usual frenzy was exacerbated by the fact that the school would be closing for a year to conduct renovations. Over the last year school board officials and administration made attempts to undermine the program which has been the bedrock of Canadian artist-luminaries Jack Chambers, Patterson Ewen, Greg Curnoe, and others. So, there were stressors on these particular graduating students to present an amazing show.

i took a bit of video footage, focusing on Kim's work in the exhibition. This was to be a walk-through with Kim; however, because of the heightened pre-exhibition tensions, and the demands made on Kim when she was in that environment, it became a documentation without commentary. We chose to go away from the school to avoid being pulled back into the exhibition.

For convenience sake, we agreed the logical place to conduct the interview would need to be nearby. Proximity would allow Kim freedom from concern about the exhibition which would in turn provide the focus necessary for our discussion, while honouring the constraints life imposed upon the situation. We had decided to get together over the lunch break of the her art program. Many students were around. Finding space where interruptions were unlikely was a challenge. We chose the lawn of a church where students were close, but out of earshot and eyesight.

The weather on this day was beautiful: sunny and warm, with a slight breeze. Again, like at the park, i chose to sit in the shade of a tree, and Kim chose to sit soaking up the sun. We sat down to eat slices of vegetarian pizza. We fought the tendency to digress into the personal: we enjoy each other's company, and we had not seen each other for a long while. We did allow ourselves a digression or two -- even twice turning off the recorder when talk turned to include others, whose permission we did not have. Three other times we were interrupted: twice by friends walking past, and once by men selling some things from a large cardboard container.

On this day, i had just visited the high school of our common past, to see my colleagues, and to visit my old classroom. i left feeling quite unusual, and a wee bit "off"; however, despite our respective starting points, we quickly fell into dialogue that was comfortable and familiar. i turned the tape on mid pizza eating for, though i did not want to impose the taping process onto our conversation, i did not want to miss anything that might be pertinent to the research. Kim agrees, and the tape begins here.

### **our second interview**

In this interview, we talk more about the role of the teacher in the process.

Like the way you supported us in our art work. Like when I went through that rotten time and I couldn't draw and I couldn't do anything. You were like, "No, you can". [But] if you had been one of those teachers who would have just said, "You know, this happens. It's okay, but brush it off and get on with your life" I probably would have left [art] then. Right then and not gone back. Because it was hard for me and I couldn't figure out why. (2.3, 21-25)

When i questioned her as to the nature of the block that she experienced, Kim had difficulty recalling the particulars of the problem. Forgetting the intricacies of a problem or a crisis often

occurs when one has moved through the threatening situation to a solution. But she had no difficulty remembering the manner in which we worked it through:

If I think back to it, I don't know what it was. I knew it was just me feeling extremely vulnerable to outside... outside forces, I guess.... I think it was pressure from a complete and total lack of confidence in myself. (2.7, 1-9)

i recalled that she handled the block by trying to work through it by "moving into that feeling".

Kim disagreed. She remembered it differently: "I don't know. You said to just accept the fact that I wasn't doing it, and [that] when it was time to do it, it would happen." (2.7, 18-19) And, so, what happened? What worked for her?

It was the sketchbook thing... You making me work in my sketchbook. Like, the fact that doodles were cool. Like it was okay that I just sat one day with an idea. An idea could become something bigger. And these ideas weren't just doodles and I totally, like, now I totally see that. I completely agree with that. Kind of like, "Yeah, well, when i sit in class and doodle, that's just me. That's just me being completely bored, but that is me!" (2.7, 21 & 23-26)

An example of this occurred during the conversation (2.17) when i suggested that she use a current troubling situation in her art work.

d: So. It's interesting because [in this troubling situation] i am hearing a really neat theme for some ceramics here.

Kim: [laughs] Really?

d: Oh yeah, think of it.... There's a cool exploration there i think!

Kim: Yeah, but where do i go with it, that's the thing! Like —

d:[teasingly, adopting a silly matron voice] You go to your sketchbook love, and you doodle! [both laugh] (2.17, 7-14)

**figure 7** *untitled* Intaglio Print



As with figure 5, this demonstrates Kim's ability in still another art technique: intaglio printing.



Kim found her individual needs and process were respected through the journey work process:

... And like, I don't know, you invested time, not only in teaching us, but in, um, getting to know the student and the student's needs and how that can reflect in their [sic] art, and how that all relates. (2.3, 27-28)

She also felt that the teacher had a direct role in the working it through process: "I think you talk people through things and that makes the transition a little bit easier for them" (2.10, 32-33). In talking about the process, in opening dialogue, the teacher attempts to meet individual needs of the students. Kim offers an example of this, citing a comparison of critique processes between myself and my colleague. The actual transcription of this is contained in the analysis section . Kim is very careful to express first her respect and affection for this teacher, who taught her art in Grades 9 and 10. (He also has expressed to me his regard for Kim, as both an artist and a person.) So, the comparison comes from a place of seeking to understand difference, rather than to criticize. Kim suggests that in my colleague's class, a critique would rarely be conducted. If one was attempted, it was introduced in the most general of terms: "Today, we are going to conduct a critique." And with that he would begin.

Once this colleague expressed to me his awe that i would even attempt to do a critique with the Grade nine classes: he even sat in on one of mine, to try to understand how i got their participation. Kim explained that where she saw the difference was in my choosing to talk things through. I would verbally walk the class through the critique process, a process i would then model. That communication made all the difference, she said.

Kim felt that the journey work approach worked for other students as well as herself. In this

passage about another student in our class, she notes an occasion where i would encourage working things through in art with him.

I think you really got through to Bryan, I do... He's so scary to some people. Like he is "Just stay away from me, don't come into my world" ... and I think you kind of took Bryan and said "Use that in your art" and i don't know how you did it, but you did. And if i ever bring your name up,... it's just like [softly] "God!" ... He's still doing an awesome job... But, he could have got lost too.... And you know, like where Bryan fit in was in art, but I don't think he knew that until he was with you (2.3, 31 - 2.4, 3-4).

i asked Kim if art making is a refuge for her during difficult times, such as the break up of her family . She said that in times of uncertainty, "[Art] was the only thing that I had that was mine" (2.16, 16-18). Art helped her maintain a sense of herself through challenging periods.

But all this self exploration through art is not to say that the course work was not intense or challenging. In fact, the student's intrinsic motivation made the work all the tougher.

That was the thing with that whole project, ... [pause] I had to really look into myself to figure out what all that was coming from, cause nobody was going to give it to me. (2.5, 15 & 22-23)

Later, she added,

Yeah, it was rigorous ... But it was more your personal demand on yourself. That's even better than the teacher being on your ass. (2.21, 19-24)

Kim's biggest complaint today is that "Lately, I've been so scatterbrained, so it's really frustrating me. It's probably good that I haven't been on the wheel" (2.18, 25-26). Later, when pressed, she agrees that it's possible "That I'm scatterbrained because I'm not on it? Yeah" (2.18, 36 to 2.19, 1).

Despite being so busy she feels scatterbrained, Kim lacks confidence no longer. For Kim, the

awareness that art gave her some of her self-confidence comes only after years of reflection, the reflective thinking that she was introduced to in art class. Does she think art gave her self confidence? "I do now" (2.12, 38-41).

And though she may be unsure as to what career path she is on, Kim says that "I'm on my way there and I *know* I'm on my way there, which is good" (2.17, 18). She expresses an awareness here that suggests she knows herself. She knows that whatever happens she can handle it. This strengthening of her belief in herself comes in part from simply growing up and partially through spending quality time with/on herself, time that she gets largely, she says, through making art, and reflecting. "Maybe what it is, then, is in that time that I have, I treasure that time I have to myself. So, that time that I'm putting into creating [a] piece is obviously worth something" (2.18, 21-22).

The word "meditative" was used in our discussion to describe Kim's approach to art making. Did she experience other classes in high school as meditative or emotional or personal?

No. That happened more in art class ... Why? Because... that's what I wanted to be doing... because I knew that there was some part of me that had to be fulfilled by art. (2.22, 19-26)

What specifically needs to be fulfilled by art is unique to each student. Each exploration of self will be unique, individual, as each self is. Finger prints, footsteps. Kim acknowledges on numerous occasions in our discussion that, for a teacher to try to operate with an awareness of each unique perspective, and honouring where each individual student was on the journey does not happen easily or very often. In a school of thousands, it means striving to know hundreds. According to Kim,

That's where I think you were different... because you could look at everyone and say, "Okay. This is what you are doing and I tried to see where you are coming from. I don't really understand it, but let's work with that ... Like, "Let's see where you're going", not "Go where I want to go". And I think that's the way. It's very important. (2.4, 24-28)

For Kim, this important way is, in a nutshell, "Respect of the student... And it's such a hard time of growth ... Because you don't know where you fit" (2.4, 10-11).

She cites an example of disrespect. Notice that part of the way through, when she talks of losing ownership of her work, she changes from first person (I) to second person (you). This loss is potent.

When I was in high school ... I was going to do something, and it would be good and it would be mine and then [another teacher] would say, "That's good, Kim, but you should do this and that" -- All of the sudden it became her work... I drew it... but she didn't even give me the opportunity to explain where I was coming from... She just saw what *she* wanted to see and that's what would make it good, and then it becomes you pleasing someone else and not pleasing yourself. (2.4, 38-41 -- 2.5, 1-2)

Interestingly when she continues on to speak of the example which she feels is positive, she speaks consistently in the first person (I) throughout.

Whereas if you have a teacher who says "Okay, Kim", you know like, "what is it about this picture that *you* don't like? Or what is it that's missing?"... Cause ... I know there's something missing, but I don't feel I am full enough of knowledge to know what it's missing. So, instead of, say, you coming up and saying, "Kim, it's a cloud. Paint a cloud." and I'd be like "Nope. I don't need a cloud. I need something --" But, instead of you filling me with an idea, you're filling me with principles, ethics, and all the elements and principles of design to *lead* me to an idea. Instead of giving them to me yourself. And that's what makes people free thinkers, leading them, not showing them or telling them. (2.5, 4-12)

Was this, in Kim's opinion, as a result of my personality: my personal facility in developing close

relationships with the people i taught? Kim acknowledges that what we two have is a closer relationship than the average teacher/student relationship, but she is quite adamant when she says that this is not necessary:

I don't want twenty million personal relationships with my teachers. I don't think that's a good thing. But I think that what you do do is assess the situation. Because when you get a new class, every class is different, every student is different. You'd have to assess who the student is and what they're saying. (2.12, 15-16)

Kim believes this can happen without a "personal relationship". She cited examples of relationships i had with classmates when she believed i did not have a personal relationship but was able to honour their journey work. She insisted that it happens when the student's perspective is respected and the student's journey acknowledged.

... because it's yours. Because you take it. It's your idea. Like there was really no "You have to do--" like you didn't say "You have to do a painting" or "You have to do" anything. You could have taken anything you know, if that's what you wanted. ... take something and make it fit together and make it be something and then display it. Show it off to people. And that was the whole concept and that's why it came from inside I guess. It's you. (2.5, 28-30 & 36-38)

The personal aspect of art as journey work can be intimidating and even counter productive, when the artists over invests in the work, as the following demonstrates:

And ... if I hated a piece of art -- God, this sounds insane! It's crazy that I'm thinking it, but if I hated a piece of art, it had to be destroyed. I didn't like it, because, to me, it was showing a piece of me that I didn't like... I didn't want people to see that. I thought it made me vulnerable to the point of someone criticizing, not only me, because I criticize myself all the time, but criticizing my art and so I either had to do it really good, where people couldn't criticize it, or you know, I'd do it, but I didn't like it... And... when I had to show it to someone [intakes breath], it was like hurting me, being torn, pulled out, and ... [long pause] (2.17, 27-37)

So, for Kim art was much more than art. "I don't know what it is about drawing stuff like that. I just feel like "Might as well take my soul and put it on a piece of paper" (2.18, 13-14). When i ask if she takes

art to fulfill her self, she nods slowly. "Art was my thing.... I know that there's a better answer and I know that I have it in there somewhere, but [to give] it's just justifying" (2.22, 28-29 & 31).

Kim noted that one difference in the art as journey work class was the sense that art was relevant to the living of life.

To know that we're going somewhere and that, yeah, we can probably go somewhere. Most teachers in high school, even if they are art teachers, don't, [pause] don't think that. They just think you are taking art for art. (2.3, 11-13)

Regardless, she says,

I'm happy I'm still in art and I'm happy to say it, [because] I think that that really says something about a person. [It says] I want to explore that more and so and then I know that that comes from within me. (2.2, 12-14, 19-20)

For Kim the biggest thing was the experience. She was able to make art work through learning techniques. But she was trusted to use journey work to draw her own conclusions.

Just instead of being told, I was being led. And I was on in a way my own journey, with places to go and things to do, but I had to use my own self and my brain to get there ... I was using my own thought process to get to certain places. And I was still learning, and it was difficult, you know? [But] It was definitely a much more enjoyable difficult. (2.23, 10-12 & 16-17)

### **fieldnotes from our third interview**

The third interview was to take place at the art school complex also. We agreed to meet prior to the beginning of the first classes, when Kim who would be dropped off by her parent, and would, therefore, be at the school anyway. At this time (about 8 am) the complex would still be locked and in this way, Kim would be more readily available for dialogue. It turned out that she was given the car to drive herself in to school.

i arrived at the school at 7:20 am. i checked my supplies, and sat to wait. Finally the complex was unlocked, and still there was no Kim. i spent the interval drawing in my sketchbook, pleased that i had brought it with me. The morning turned from cool to warm, and finally in the distance, i could see Kim walking towards us at the school (there accumulated a group of students with me outside the doors). She looked strained, her smile of greeting flustered. She admitted to being flustered because she was late when she got closer, and apologized profusely. She said that traffic snarls, and attempting to avoid them was what got her in so late. i assured her that that was absolutely fine, that the wait was of little consequence. She wanted to know how long I had been waiting, and i said it did not matter, as she had arrived now. i enquired as to what we could do to alleviate her stressed mood. She said with enthusiasm that sitting on the ground somewhere, with a coffee would help a lot. So, that is what we did.

Sadly, the incidental traffic noise was so great that there are no audible record of this interview.

## introducing SL

I knew this woman by reputation when i met her.

*I continued to be very active in the fine arts. I played many roles in many plays and musicals — something that, for me, was a storytelling “rush”. Being other people, at another place, in another time, satisfied a need that I seemed to have. Music continued to be heavily influential in my life — I was still singing a lot and was up to my ears in piano repertoire. (SL, 1997, “ A personal art history”, p.3)*

She seemed so well-rounded that i felt daunted just by having her in my class. It was my first attempt at teaching the Ontario Academic Credit (OAC) course, which used to be the Grade Thirteen program. It was SL’s last semester of high school.

*Then, toward the end of high school, something happened that indirectly made the visual arts the most important art form for me. Early in 1994, I fell ill with anorexia. Everyone seemed shocked — me being the most. Something had taken over my body and my mind that I didn't seem to have any control over. I thought I was losing my mind. I seemed to have a lot to talk about that I couldn't put into words; and drawing and sketching events from my past — past pains (such as [the death of her pet] Licorice!), people I missed and things I didn't understand made more sense when I painted and drew them... Visual Arts was satisfying a deep need within me for self examination and storytelling. (SL, 1997, “ A personal art history” , p.3)*

i learned much from SL about life, and about my own teaching practice. In my journal, i wrote:

*a student is doing her OAC project on what joy is in her life: from licorice all sorts to the goldfish that she had that taught her of death. I can learn from her.” (February 20, 1994)*

i was fortunate to meet SL in my formative teaching years. The circumstances of our crossed



paths forced me to question what i wanted to accomplish from teaching and how that would translate in real life experience. i had to decide how i would work with a student struggling, literally, for her life. SL taught me that i was both a teacher *and* a learner.

More than once i have hung onto her words of encouragement since beginning this graduate journey of mine.

### **field notes from our first meeting**

SL was waiting for me at a restaurant near Victoria park. She was crisp -- angled hair, clean makeup, smart outfit. In a word, her style was classic, diametrically opposed to Kim's laid back, grunge, fashion sense. She looked every inch pulled together -- professional. This was by no means surprising to me, it was as anticipated as Kim's corduroy casualness.

Interesting contrast these two: SL had read all the material i had sent her, had pondered it and had come prepared with a list of questions; Kim had not read the document except for the date and time. SL had written to me twice prior to the research interview, returned all of my calls and even called me herself when she felt that she had not heard from me in a while. SL was very responsible, the kind of student -- the kind of person -- who, had any of my teaching colleagues heard out about her crisis, they most certainly would have trouble believing it.

We hugged hello.

We agreed to return to the park, for the sake of audiotape clarity, as this restaurant venue was busy. We got beverages -- iced teas -- and i got a focaccia bread. i had been talking with Kim for hours and had forgotten to have dinner. It was approaching evening.

When we returned to the park, the band was playing full out, and so we chose a far corner of the park, away from that spot where Kim and i had talked. Again, in an unspoken consensus, akin to what i experienced with Kim, SL and i selected a bench and sat down. Not for SL sitting cross legged on the grass. Whether this was due more to her cream culottes, her comfort level, or her personal preference, i can only speculate.

In communication style these two women were equally divergent; however, their styles were inconsistent with other aspects of their respective manners. They spoke differently, whether speaking through art, or through language. SL is magically illustrative and free in her art whereas Kim, as a potter, is more pragmatic, concerned more with function and design. For all her polish, SL squeals with glee on sighting baby squirrels and puppies, but not Kim.

### **our first meeting**

From the beginning, SL used the metaphor of voice to explain the reason she found art to help her so much in her growth. She speaks of the externalized art object in the following exchange:

dm: You mean the art is the medium through which you talk about [developing self awareness]?

SL: Yeah, yeah.

dm: Why do you think that works?

SL: Because I think, especially if it's two dimensional art that's pretty acceptable also... I think art is -- maybe not to everybody but in some sense if I were to show someone and they were to say "Show me your art" "Okay, I'll show you and I'll tell you why". It would be different than sitting down with someone and saying "Do you know I have an eating disorder? Did you know that?" [laughs] It's just more of a -- I wouldn't say more subtle but more of a -- [pause] just a more acceptable way than just verbal means I think. Words are difficult to digest. Not always, but in my case, I'll say. (1.13, 6-15)

It is perfectly obvious to SL that art allows for opportunities for reclaiming experience and revisiting difficult times strictly by the fact that the art work itself is an external object, something to look at, because "words are difficult to digest".

Later I asked if she meant "accessible" more than "acceptable". At first she indicated that she was not in favour of considering another word here, which lead us into a four or five minute discussion on the merits of the word choice. She heard me out, but in the end, though she accepted my points as valid, she never did decide that accessible was the better word.

SL talks of the difference between herself and the more traditionally talented artists often:

SL: i think in high school I was happy to have you, someone who said well, don't worry as much that you "can't draw" that, just try to... I don't remember if you remember the things that I made.

dm:[laughing] No. I just picked your name out of a hat randomly, SL!

SL: NO. I meant like the little book [of watercolours]... Being able to do something in that form. Whereas [a colleague] would say "Do a watercolour". [Pause.] Well, okay. But I could never consider doing a book... it's been so great just to have that sort of freedom to say "Okay, I'm doing a print, and... I'm just going to draw things *this way*." ... I don't have this "I can't draw, I can't draw", like, you know: "Okay, I'll get this over with and I'll do the next thing... I'm just free to do it kinda thing. (1.5, 17-29)

In our feedback correspondence later, SL revisits this passage, trying to clarify this high school art experience

*I think the frustrations with high school art courses came from a lack of encouragement to explore and validate my own artistic voice. I was struggling technically, but until my OAC art course, I'd never really had anyone ask me why I thought the technical was so important. With a newfound emphasis on forming my own artistic language, I was able to begin to grow as a visual artist. I think part of the frustration also came with the comfort of my abilities in music and drama. With these two arts, there is a language that (although not as concrete as math or science) exists. I could use the pre-made languages of scripts and scores to build my own. With art, I felt as though I was starting from scratch, and that what I had to start from didn't hold up to other people's. Now, I know that I had a strong language base of my own to start from, but I was never encouraged to find that base [before OAC]." (feedback 1998, 3.8-18)*

My first year [of university]... I met a prof who said, "You get it!" to me.... And I wasn't somebody who can paint anything and I'm not somebody who can draw anything, but she'd explain an assignment and the people who could draw anything and paint anything would say, "Pardon? What are you talking about?" And I'd start working. (1.5, 11 & 13-16)

She continues later in this vein,

I think that's the difference between very aesthetic, very technically talented, very worthy of artistic praise people, but they're not -- but they don't have a connection between what they're doing here and what is going on there. (1.6, 22-24)

SL feels that art was a valuable course in the curriculum, "[Art] allowed for talking about myself where drama obviously doesn't" (1.9, 1). Even in comparison to the other arts available, art offered something unique.

When we discussed how art helped her develop her self awareness, I questioned SL as to how art helped her. Was it the making?

Oh absolutely. Or just being... just being the type of person to think about it... [The type of

person] who will think about, is willing to think about – not a better, just a different kind who's willing to think about the reasons why or willing to [pause] figure out how to tell people why or wanting to tell people why or not being afraid to say why or to show why. (1.12, 36 - 1.13, 1-3)

Through art SL digs deep, to find out about herself. In attempting to explain this, SL spoke of the reflective benefit of approaching art as a meditative practice. She has difficulty articulating it.

SL: You asked me what's important. Yeah. Just comfort, or, just happiness. Just getting it. Just getting it.

dm: Getting it.

SL: Yeah, just getting it.

dm: Getting...?

SL: Getting why I feel a certain way or – just getting it. Just, "okay, i got it" or "I know why" or "I think why" or "This might not be why, but it will be funny, or it will be fun". You know? (1.10, 28-31)

SL finds that the way that art allows her to think, to reflect and to transform experience is its most beneficial aspect. i asked her if it was most important to have the thing at the end to talk about or to go through the thinking process of putting it together or are they equal? She replied, "I think to go through the thinking process" (1.11, 4) a statement she opened up later in her written feedback to the transcripts:

*On thinking in art classes. The point I was raising is that art, like any other course, to do it well requires thinking. For some, this thinking may only be of ways to use a medium to produce an image – hard work in itself. For others, like myself, this thinking was a different "kind" of thinking. It involved the arduous process of digging deep, and trying to translate what I found inside into something as tangible as an "image". To come up with an image to represent what's going on inside is something even more difficult than coming up with words. So, unlike a math, science or English class where there is already a concrete "language" to work from – whether it's words or symbols -- the visual arts doesn't have a language all its own. It shares all types of languages. The difficult part is coming up with an artistic language that becomes simultaneous with your own voice. (fb 2.37-3.4)*

The process is so vital for SL comments, "the process is actually joy tangibility" (1.11, 6). Nice phrase.

### **field notes from our second meeting**

For this interview, SL chose the location: her work space in the basement of her parents' home.

We agreed to meet after her work day, giving her some time in between, to have a break to "shift gears".

When i arrived at about seven in the evening, the sun was still shining and the day was still warm. SL was waiting on the front porch, playing with a string, which on closer examination revealed itself to be a tie out leash attached to a kitten romping in the garden. She wore a pair of overall shorts and a t shirt. She had no shoes on her feet. Still she looked polished in her casual attire, though certainly more comfortable more relaxed.

A colleague from the high school, which sl had known as an OAC English teacher, had driven me over, so the two of them spent some time chatting. As my colleague drove away, and we turned to go in, there was a confab in the garden. A baby bird had come to rest on the grass after a short time airborne, and its mother was squawking in alarm. i am not sure if she wanted to alert the wee bird to the fact that the kitten was in the vicinity, of whether she wanted to warn the kitten to stay away from her wee one. Regardless, she made a racket. We assured ourselves that her alarm was in vain: the kitten's tie out was short enough to avoid harm to the little bird. And so, we went inside.

On entering her parental home, i noticed immediately that my demeanour shifted. i always worked to maintain a respectful relationship with those people in my classes, and yet in a

parental home, i felt a mantle of expectation fall on my shoulders. i tried to play that down.

Her mother greeted me warmly; however, when we had completed our pleasantries, she asked SL if she could ask me something. The nature of the request was unknown to me; yet, her formal manner concerned me. Was it a concern with the research? i got nervous, anticipating a problem. My concern proved unnecessary, as the question centered on assisting a family friend who was moving to Vancouver (where i have been living) in getting settled. Whew! Why did the potential of the question cause me such concern? i felt a bit like the mother bird: alarmist. But, the string was short, things were okay, protected. Perhaps because i try so hard to maintain integrity and privacy and fairness, i feared i may have missed a concern that was big enough that i would have to be confronted with it. But all was fine.

Downstairs, i had to set up the camera, which i had not taken the opportunity to work with and acquaint myself with earlier. Big error. Assumptions again: i assumed that, since i worked with cameras before that figuring this one out would be relatively easy. Error.

### **our second meeting**

Unlike Kim, who felt that talking about herself was awkward and uncomfortable, SL approached this process much like she approaches her art making: with enthusiasm. It is critical to her process, she says, to continuously ask herself "Why do you bother" (2.6, 1)? The interview process was, in this way, not unfamiliar territory.



Here, for one image, she attempts to articulate why.

SL: I sort of took Picasso's line drawing of the female figure and did two of my own body and then I decided to really explore in depth the area of my body that I was self-conscious about. So, i really explored with depth with shading and that sort of thing. So, I have shading with blue and that sort of thing to tone it or sorrow or just like range of feelings about something or an uncomfort [sic] or a discomfort with the edges of my body. Sort of a blurring of the edges.. So that's what I did. And there was just, two things here I don't want to show. i don't want to talk about it. And here [in the artwork] I was more open about it. My self coming back ... And all of these body portraits, I did show them to that eating disorder group. (2.13, 31-37 & 42-43)

i asked how the images were received in that therapeutic environment, the eating disorder group.

SL: They received them well. But I think "well" as in they were excited to see the kind of art work I did ... More so than how it was therapeutic [for me].

dm: And how did you explain to them it was therapeutic?

SL: Just ... about the blurred edges and taking the time to focus on something you don't want to look at or you don't want to touch , you don't want to feel, that kind of thing." (2.14, 4-9)

The difference may be in the doing of the work, rather than the seeing of it as experience.

SL was talking about being comfortable with being in the world when she focuses on the edges.

Just focusing on the edges and where the edge stops. Like where your body stops. And where you're not having a clear perception. Like I went to this focus group once and I laid on the floor and [the counsellor] said, "Okay, put your hands in the air. Everybody put your hands in the air. Now move your hands apart and gauge how wide your hips are." So, everybody's like, "Okay. Probably this wide." [she demonstrates] [The counsellor] said, "Now, put your hands down, next to your hip. Just put them down." everybody just whacked the floor and was like, "Oh my gosh!" They didn't realize how much further out their hands really were. So, [art] was just about that. Like "Close your eyes and focusing on where the edges were". "Where do I stand?" That kind of thing. (2.14, 29-37)

But approaching the art this way for SL does not mean that she is not critical of the work as art:

I'm not happy with the technique but it's just around the edges or defining edges or of the body and

not looking but closing my eyes and focusing on what's up here [in her mind] instead. So, I'm putting my hand to my head [in the image] but it's the lyrics to a Tori Amos song: "Circus girl without a safety net, raise your left hand for the assignment, tuck those ribbons under first my left foot then my right behind the other." Yeah. Just sort of going forward, sort of moving forward, sort of out of the nest... focusing on moving forward, taking a leap of action. I'm taking a leap, to do the job. I'm ready. (2.14, 20-27)

Another time, her assessment of her work forced her to throw out a piece. i asked her why.

I just hated it. I didn't hate it. I didn't hate it, but it's a lot more in the photographs. Like it is just not a good drawing. Pieces of it were, but it was also... very defined. [The professor's instructions were:] "I want you to have four types of collage. I want you to have a piece of your body morphing into something else. I want you to focus on the skin." He had all these guidelines... I guess I don't like someone telling me to cut and paste. (2.15, 20-24 & 34-35)

Her criticism in this case comes from not having ownership over the expression of her artistic voice.

i suggested to her then that perhaps she just "hates it" when somebody tells her what to do with her work. Yes, she agreed, "I think that's it" (2.18, 1-2). At issue is ownership of her work. Without ownership, she is unwilling to even contemplate keeping a piece. It feels dishonest.

Ownership is empowerment. The student has control over what is said by the art product in the journey work approach. SL said she may not know how a piece will be received by an audience, but she is clear on what she was trying to accomplish in the work's creation: "I don't know how this is going to be received, but I – any bit of it anybody asked me about, I knew why I did it" (2.17, 3).

Not only does she know why she does something in a piece, she identifies so much that her work

usually would fall under the descriptor "self portraiture". An example:

Okay. This drawing... was about making a map. We talked a lot about mapping and sorts of artists' mapping and mapping your life, that sort of thing... So what I decided to do, which is extremely relevant to how my life has gone so far is a map of my body and what I need to be healthy. ... this is a self portrait. (2.11, 30 - 2.12, 26)

As a woman dealing with an eating disorder, her autobiographical work, often has themes related to food and eating. In the piece she speaks of above, the issue is eating, but eating healthily. This is growth: a transition from the little licorice all sorts and the cookies she was using as imagery in high school. Looking back, she agrees there is this real shift (2.12, 41 to 2.13,2).

One of these earlier works, about the death of a pet fish, Licorice, has images of a young SL dancing across a fishbowl with licorice all sorts for gravel. In the water, a fish slowly fades away. She used the creation of this piece to work through her emotions

about Licorice dying and trying to find the source of the pain. Where it [the pain] transfers into your body or how it transfers into your memory of other things. (2.19, 1-2)

SL speaks of externalizing the problem and re-framing past experience by working out her feelings in her art work quite often. As we talk, she realizes her *need* to do this working through.

I think I was just trying to identify feeling that way [the pain associated with the source of the eating disorder] before, so, knowing – I think also – I just thought of this – by identifying the feeling [of] way before, I knew that I could get through [this time]. You know, by looking back and saying "Oh that was just the most awful thing ever" and, somehow, I made it [laughs]. (2.19, 14-16)

So i asked her whether she takes an emotional event, such as a friend's grandmother dying, her

own grandmother dying, the drowning of relatives or the death of a beloved pet, to create an external object.

Oh, for sure, yeah! Like, I think the, a lot of times the sort of spiritual art, the ideas that I take to think about, a lot of it comes with the thinking inside. (2.10, 1-2)

SL uses the emotional event as the spark, and the “thinking inside” of meditative mind to assist her in the therapeutic re-framing of past experiences. The therapeutic in art education. Art as journey work at work.

i wondered if the experience she had in art was different from the experience she had in other classes. She answers, comparing her experience of art as journey work to other high school art classes:

But, I mean, if I had had – and this is not a personal slam against anybody or anything – but if I had had this [eating disorder] sort of problem in Grade Eleven art, [with a different art teacher and a different approach] no chance that art would have been therapeutic at all. (2.20, 31-33)

Speaking of one of her present favourite instructors at university, SL comments on the stylistic similarity, one that resonates with her "Yeah, he was another person who was very, "Don't do a drawing. Tell me about something. Tell me. What? What? What's this about" (2.9, 22-23)? Indeed.

### **field notes from our third meeting**

We met at the graduation show at Kim's school, after our both taking time out to tour the exhibition. She was pleased to have had the opportunity to catch up with some people from school that she had lost touch with after leaving high school. She was pleased that she was welcomed by many former schoolmates who now attend this art school. In fact most of the award winning students of this year's exhibition had come from my classes. Of course, one of these students was Kim, who won a number of honours for her work in ceramics. Another was a student who, according to people in our high school, students and teachers, thinks "different" (3.17). He therefore was pegged as "stupid", as SL recalls it. As of this exhibition, his work is taking off, with a gallery purchasing some pieces to show in Montreal. Both of us left feeling quite gratified: she for the time to get caught up, and to learn what things people were up to artistically and otherwise, and me in a parental way, pleased and proud of the accomplishments of so many of 'my' students.

The final interview took place in the living room area of my friend's home, where i was staying. i needed to be at the apartment to tend to the dogs, my friend's and mine. i was to be out the remainder of the day and my friend was out of town. SL agreed to have our third interview here, without hesitation. She claimed that for this interview having the dogs around would be a good thing. Though she dearly loved her new kitten, she said, she missed being around dogs. They are a comfort to her.

SL was comfortable in this environment. Perhaps the dogs helped. Likely they did. My dog,

sunny, curled up beside her and stayed close by for the duration of the interview. SL touched on some tough issues in depth, and was open and frank about the role anorexia and bulimia played in her life. Much of the time her feet were curled under her, and she often played with her dress's hem, particularly when the conversation revisited the difficult topics.

i admired her candor and her courage.

### **our third meeting**

SL described how she viewed being sick in high school:

... if this is going to happen, what an opportune time to be sick ... I said I can't think of a better time than now, because this [adolescence] is when I have the opportunity to change things... it's a perfect time, because I have all the outlets and I'm putting away a whole chapter of my life and if it's ending badly, or if it's going this badly right now, then I know I can finish and then I'll be finished." (3.6, 14-20)

i pushed a little, suggesting that, ultimately, the battle was an artistic battle that she was waging as well as the other. She interrupted, quickly, and with conviction, "But, I think it's all the same" (3.11, 33-34).

SL thinks that the most important aspect of the art process for her was the introduction to meditative thinking. For her that was what she will always benefit from.

So I think that just sort of changed just a way of doing things or discussing your self, or a way of understanding better that can keep going. And it's not about finishing this project, it's a way of thinking. That's going to keep going. (3.24, 26-28)

And how was that thinking different from the thinking she did in other classes? "Thinking as a

process, instead of an answer" (3.24, 38-39).

We looked back on one work that we had missed in her studio, a book that she created in her senior year. Images from this book are embodied within this text. Figure 7, which follows, is a reproduction of one of the pages, SL describes another below, as she reads its written component:

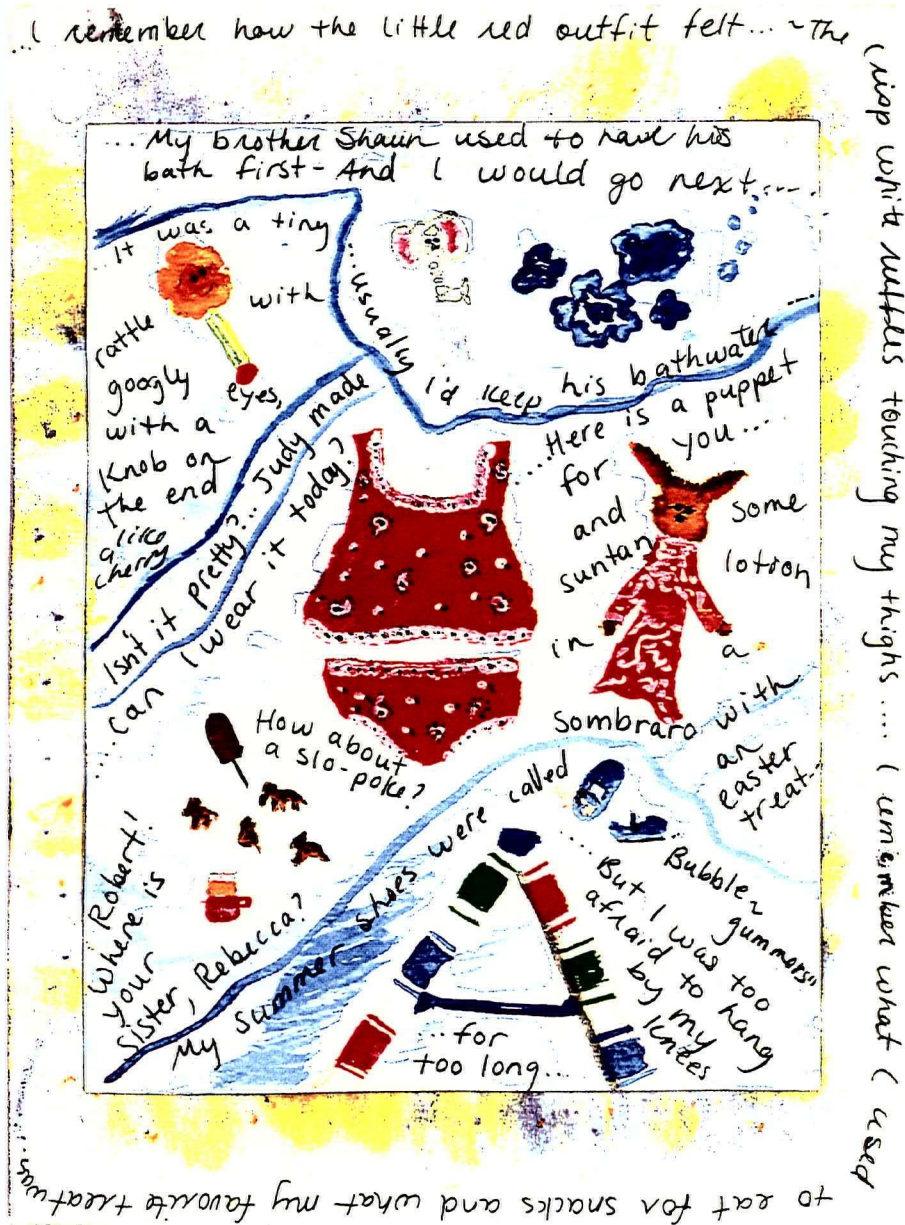
I'll just read the front cover, 'cause that's sort of what it's about, I guess. It just has my name, [then reads] *"born 8/26/75 she lives still and loves her life, but most of all, she cherishes her memories in her mind and in her heart from when she was very small up until she got tall. Her world is full of laughter and joy, sometimes pain, but mostly warm feelings and imagination."* So, I think what I was doing here was sort of taking specific memories that were good – you know, remembering times that felt good or things that were good or fun or something, from different points of my life. And doing little drawings. So, the first page ... has like a red station wagon, our family station wagon, and me in a little pool [she turns the page]. Yeah. And the first page is what I remember from being a toddler, I think. [pause] Hmm, hmm. Yeah. I think when I started to have problems with eating and emotional problems I was so, suddenly I was remembering things I don't really think about, even as much any more. (3.2, 1-13)

Not surprisingly, given the number of years in between, her high school work differs from the work she does now in university.

I think the art I do now is [still] personal in the sense that it's what I'm thinking, but a lot of the work I do now is a lot less about life events and more about me now... more about what I'm thinking now or what I'm enjoying now instead of remembering things., 'cause I have dealt with that [the problems of the past] and they've gone away. Or it still comes up, but it's not as literal. (3.5, 9-12)

For SL, "Everything's different. I am too. [long pause]" (3.5, 37). She has grown and her work reflects that. The reflective exploration has led her to create work that speaks of the present moment. Facing the present moment with confidence is one of the aims of therapeutic work.

figure 8 I remember how the little red outfit felt...



This work shows the SL uses art as journey work to integrate her past experiences with that which concerned her in the present moment of making the work. She says (p. 105) that she took specific moments of her life when she felt good, in order to recall what those feelings felt like through reflecting on her past.



SL spoke about how the exploratory, therapeutic approach of art as journey work differed from the art classes she had earlier in her career as a student.

In Grade Nine art, too, you probably want to try and do, you know, five different things. But those different things that you try when I think about it ... the different things you try are realism, realism in this media, realism in that media. You know what I mean? Lots of realism! (3.12, 18-21)

Instead, SL found the art as journey work class allowed for

A validation of your self ... trying to [pause] trying to figure why you're doing something ... what we had was ... different for sure... Different in the sense of in relating what you are doing to who you are. Not what you are doing to what you have to do. (3.22, 21-31)

In her approach to art making now, SL feels that "It should always be in what you are doing, a bit of yourself." (3.23, 27-28)

We finished. The tapes ended at a good and appropriate place; however, i felt that were it not for outside forces we could talk for much longer. But such is the way with friends. We had gone to a place of intimacy that I am grateful for. i told SL how impressed i was with her strength, her courage. i am proud of the strong woman she has become, and even more impressed with the work she is doing. i hope we will stay in touch. i am grateful for the interviews: they were affirming and important for me, i hope for all of us.

### **academic voice: many voices, striving to understand**

So, simply put, i feel art education is a vehicle for transformation. Thus far i have presented art education as primarily an agent for personal change; however, transformative art education can also be an agent for social change. This section links the internal to the external. The psychological working through of the individual artist has a sociological impact. By creating new metaphors through which we might re-imagine our culture, art is antidote to the sick society we find ourselves in. To underscore the breadth of this statement, in this next section, i deliberately pull in sources from outside art education.

This section must be broad, though the mantra in education, for student and teacher alike, is often the narrowing "focus, focus". Subject focus, unit focus, lesson focus, thesis statement. Blind to the larger perspective, we continually isolate to specialize. Sometimes to our detriment. No, this section must be broad.

Unfortunately, our society of specialization does not work and is not working: unemployment and under-employment are pervasive. As the Dalai Lama said at the 'Art Meets Science in a Changing Economy Symposium' in Amsterdam, "When you become specialist, outlook becomes very small" (Harris, video, 1993). Attending the same symposium was quantum physicist David Bohm, who worked with the likes of Albert Einstein and J. Krishnamurti, and who, for years, has argued the theory of implicate order and wholeness. The difficulty today, he says, "is this fragmentation" (Harris, 1993). Art educator Arthur Efland suggested some twenty years ago that education as it exists is ineffectual and that the time of tinkering around with the component

parts in education, specifically art courses, had passed (1976, p.43).

Voices, many voices, cry out for change. Why do we persist in our deafness?

where i sit...

i did not listen when Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche, a Tibetan teacher living in exile in Nepal, spoke sagely to me at Kenying Shedrup Ling monastery in 1988. The West, he said, has long been focused on the body, using the mind as slave. He spoke of technological advances as good, desirable even, but wondered why western mind seemed to be serving the technology rather than the other way around (personal communication, 1988). He lamented, as others after him, that our "anti-mystical ... civilization has denigrated the value of creativity" (Fox, 1994, p.117).

Tibetan culture, long socially isolated and spiritually focused -- Rinpoche would call this philosophically centered -- can complement the West, for they find themselves metaphorically yin to our yang. Lack of concern for the physical, the things of the body, has left Tibet overrun by another, and its people scattered around the globe. Rinpoche said all of this must change, that if we did not recognize the need for change, and embrace it, the universe was moving in ways that would force us to (personal communication, 1988).

where i sit up and pay attention

Shortly thereafter, while i was still traveling in Nepal, the stock market crashed in New York. i paid little heed, being a skeptic, and, frankly, felt no personal impact. Today, i believe that to

have been the beginning of the shift. Like so many of us in North America, i too have been laid off (London Middlesex Board of Education notification, dated March 26, 1996). Forced re-examination of priorities begins. Now i am listening: his words have my full attention.

It took seven years for me to pay attention. The rest of us cannot afford to take as long to hear the words of change. The 'rogue primate' (Livingstone, 1996), the domesticated human being, has but one decade, possibly two, to turn our global course around, according to the collective warning of over 100 eminent scientists, all recipients of the Nobel prize (Suzuki, citing the Society of Concerned Scientists, lecture notes, 1996). Ten years.

Before i write further, i must admit here to not being Buddhist, though Rinpoche did compliment me on my "Buddhist mind" (personal communication, 1989). While flattered, i said politely that i am, in the words of my journal, "*not a joiner*". i like being open-mindedly Canadian, flitting like a bee in search of satisfying pollen, from flower to flower. Though some might see this as my being unable to commit, i believe the seeking keeps me honest in that i constantly reflect on my own path while using my commitment to personal growth as a compass. Rinpoche understood. He smiled and said, "There are many paths to the same destination, some just take longer than others" (personal communication, 1989).

#### cultures as paths

i reflected then on the multiplicity of truths, the importance of cultural perspective, and how it informs the environment in which we live. Culture is an elastic term. It, by turns, is defined as

cultivation, the act of developing by education or training, the refining of intellectual and artistic taste, or a society characterized by the above (Webster, 1974, p.181). Culture is "human intervention and free will; us" (Dissanayake, 1988, p.23).

A living process, [culture] is not simply a self-contained abstraction, an immovable monument that withstands the assault of time. Culture lives and dies. It changes and grows. It is the act of a group of people imagining themselves, because cultural and individual identity is not innate but created and invented out of mind and spirit and aesthetic emotion. (Highwater, 1994, p.3)

Differences between cultures are often recognizable in the arts. Art is accepted as a cultural phenomenon, indeed in most cultures art is not art at all but is loosely translated as "cultural performance." Because art is so bound to culture, "we expect [these] manifestations to vary from culture to culture" (Dissanayake, 1988, p.4). Cultural context influences art, for "artists produce their work in particular places at particular times" (Parker, 1990, p.3).

To look at culture as a living process -- to look at art as a reflection of that process -- is to acknowledge its inherent mutability. To be immutable is to stagnate.

#### roadblocks: getting bogged down

Western society has long presumed its perception of culture to be the perception of culture.

We forget that while our perspective serves the purposes ...in which we are primarily interested, there are other perspectives that are more intelligible and better adapted to the communicative purposes of the ... arts. (Coomaraswamy, 1956, p.46)

The progenitor of the domination which impacts our lives and our universe, in ways which threaten the very existence of both, this way of presumptuous thinking precludes our culture

from sharing the wisdom of other ways, other worldviews. This way defines culture through the arts, rather than letting the arts evolve through culture. It has not always been thus.

Erroneously perpetuating this thoughtless thinking, "art education encompasses both the visual and verbal records of Western civilization from prehistory to this afternoon" (Fehr, 1993, p.xiv) but too often it ignores other cultures' perceptions of what art is for. Ellen Dissanayake reminds us that

the human species has had an evolutionary history of about four million years. Of that timespan, 399/400<sup>th</sup> s is disregarded when it is assumed that 'human history' or the 'history of art' begins, as it does in our textbooks, about 10,000 B.C. (1988, p.5)

Seems we in art education have been teaching a certain singular cultural perspective, when, in fact, cultural

identity is always in flux among ethnic, racial, age, professional and other markers...Even whiteness... is not a monolithic identity but is layered with shades of difference. (Behar, 1995, p.22-23)

### journeying vs. going to school

One consequence of the Western bias in our thinking "has been the [viewing of all] art in the Western way: as though it consisted of pictures on a museum wall, as objects simply to view" (Leakey, 1995, p.104). Objectification of art denies humankind real engagement with art.

Engaging with both the art product and the art process is using art as journey work.

Rudolph Steiner embodied similar philosophies in the Waldorf schools. Like him, i feel that honouring the inner self, both the calling of spirit and the grounding of soul (for discussion on

this see Abram, 1996, or Degler, 1996), is necessary before one can attend meaningfully to the world. Steiner was more poetic: "we must have experienced the divine within ourselves before we can hope to discover it in our environment" (Steiner, 1975, p.7). As educators we cannot make this happen, but we can make room for it to.

Also, and not surprisingly, given that the scope of its student population is broader than most educational institutions, "[t]he concept of a 'journey' must be stressed in both Studio Work and the Research Workbook" (I.B. Teacher's Guide, p.27) of the International Baccalaureate Visual Arts program. Otherwise, rarely, if ever, is this journeying through art comprehensively addressed in Western art education. Access to either of these programs is limited -- off-limits to many -- when all students would benefit from this approach. "The true seeker who longs for self-realization journeys wherever the soul leads" (hooks, 1995, p.18) but narrowed thinking denies alternative ways of being by imposing one.

#### in culture: looking with a critical eye on the schools

If culture is a way of being, and if one is enculturated in the society into which one is born and acculturated with each movement into a different sphere of influence (MacGregor, lecture notes, 1996), then one's awareness of cultural training is critical.

Cultural transmission is the passing of information from one individual to another by behavioral means: by teaching, learning, imitation, practice, reading. Any individual can teach or learn from many individuals, and the rate of transmission (evolution) may be fast or slow (Bonner cited in Dissanayake, 1988, p.23).

Without awareness of cultural transmission, one is but a victim of circumstance. "School exists

to transmit a cultural heritage ... knowledge, beliefs, values and patterns of behavior...prized by the society that established the school" (Efland, 1976, pp.38).

The unchanged does not just stay the same. Stilled water dies the slow death of stagnation.

We can't solve the paradigm shift with the former paradigm or models of education. And if you look at the stagnation of our work world and its professions, whether you are looking at health care providers or priests or ministers or artists or politicians or business people or economists, all along the line you realize they have something in common: they all went to school. (Fox & Sheldrake, 1996, p.186)

Efland pointed out twenty years ago that school art at that point "has remained essentially the same for forty-five to fifty years" (1976, p.43). Sixty-five years without change in a subject area seems astounding, until one is forced to recognize that

the school's manifest function is the cognitive development of [the student], socializing the individual into accepting the authority of the school as a prelude for accepting the authority of other institutions. Once [the student] accepts the authority of the school, [the student] is able to accept the authority of the corporation, the military, and the welfare bureaucracy. (p.40)

Hierarchic and bureaucratic, some argue that schools exist largely to keep themselves in existence (Gatto cited in Kawasaki, 1993, p.131). Frequently a tool of transmission for an oppressive, dying culture, schools discourage the journey work of the individual student in encouraging unquestioning conformity. "Think of the word school and you'll understand -- fish swim in schools" (p.130). In cultivating conformity, schools are complicit in dominant culture. Art as journey work is a means for schools to effectively reduce this complicity.



acculturated: what we teach now

What is this culture that schools are so determined to transmit?

Overall, a "lack of feeling is what is cultured in this society" (Laing, cited in Foucault, 1989, p.160). Isolated, disconnected and almost entirely cut off from sensory experience, human beings today, numbed into complacent malleability, often need ever greater thrills to affirm sentient existence. Traced back at least as far as DesCartes' splitting of mind from body, this denial of feeling promotes rational as good, and emotional as not so. Education teaches primarily to the students' heads alone, as a result, often neglecting the rest.

Metaphors speak of the split. Spawned by decades of debates about Western culture, the following commonly used metaphors articulate the nature of our Western "schizo culture" (Foucault, 1989). Currently these limited perceptions are being slowly opened to interconnectedness, interbeing (Thich, 1993), and the primal view that "everything is related" (Dalai Lama, in Harris video, 1993).

Because the "coming generation absorbs the values represented in contemporary [culture]" (Campbell, 1993, p.143) and perpetuates them, we as educators ought to familiarize ourselves with the images of culture that are being projected to our children.

### **common current cultural metaphors**

Be forewarned: this is a hard list to travel through. Because this list is a list of ideas, it is difficult in that, at times, you may feel any one topic is left somewhat unexplored. This list only touches on some of the dominant metaphors. i encourage investigation of the works of the authors cited. I invite you to add your own metaphors to this list. And, in order to underscore the number of voices who are discussing a given topic, this list contains many quotations. i recommend spending some time on each section so as not to get overloaded. Ponder.

Finally, the reflections of Western culture offered are not pleasant. These metaphors speak of our culture at its most dominant. Remember that the antidotes follow, there is hope.

So, first the list of six metaphors of Western culture, numbered, but in no particular ranking order. The numbers are affixed only to relate these with the respective art antidotes later.

#### **metaphor #1: machine culture**

In this society, showing emotions is considered a weakness or a sign of instability. In order to be considered 'normal', you have to go to school, you have to become some sort of machine, or robot. Many people in society, as a result, never get a chance to express themselves, to express their creativity. (Harp cited in Foucault, 1989, p.169)

Technological advances should, as their proponents suggest, free up time for us to be creative; however, the converse is true. Computers, a "simple machine which could in principle carry out any conceivable calculation" (Gardner, 1985, p.17), began as Alan Turing's attempt to echo and elucidate the functioning of the human mind. As they become more and more prevalent,

humankind becomes more automated, impersonal and isolated, less connected.

Life and work without creative impulse,

[reduces] human beings to machines. This is the model that we have been operating under for the last three hundred years or so -- the idea that our minds as well as our bodies are not creative organisms but machines. (Fox, 1994, p.117)

Machine culture has no room for the unexpected, explorative process of art. Schools inculcate cogs: cogs are not creative. Without thought to the ramifications, nor the cost to human existence, the creative has been banished (Fox, 1994, p.207).

### **metaphor #2: consumer culture**

We live in a consumer society, despite the fact that "to multiply wants is to multiply man's [sic] servitude to his [sic] own machinery" (Coomaraswamy, 1956, p.49). People consume over 400% more now than in 1900. Families are smaller now, yet houses are about 50% bigger, to house what 'stuff' we accumulate (Suzuki, lecture notes, 1996). Accumulating goods is perhaps the measure of success today, so the fears of forty years ago have materialized. Slaves to the economy, we scrimp to serve it and spend to spur its growth. The economy, a human construct, should serve people, not the other way around.

In our culture, "advertisers ... cultivate needs by hitching their wares to the infinite existential yearnings of the soul" (Roszak, 1995, p.74) and have been alarmingly successful. In fact, statistics show that incredibly "young Americans [now] believe that being a good parent means

providing lots of goodies rather than spending time with their children" (Roszak, 1995, p.74)!

Another study showed that, for many of us "shopping meets, albeit poorly, a host of non-material needs" (Kanner, 1995, p.90). Consuming cannot satisfy, for in not quite satiating our desires advertisers have fodder for future fortune.

We buy into this metaphor, and have for decades. Our exaggerated standards of living and equally depreciated standards of life are "based on the idea of `progress'" (Coomaraswamy, 1956, p.62). The greatest thing people can do singlehandedly to turn the environmental crisis around, according to David Suzuki, is simply not buying on impulse (lecture notes, 1996).

### **metaphor #3: rape culture**

The progress spoken of is a product of a competitive culture. Fostered by a need for "power over" (Starhawk, 1982, p.1), the rape culture (Buchwald, 1993) metaphor has nothing to do with passion, however perverse. It is about violence. "Mainstream popular culture force-feeds us a steady diet of stories of domination and violation, which leaves us starved ... for hope" (Campbell in Buchwald, 1993, p.145).

Statistics from the Allan Guttmacher Institute of the United States acknowledge that, based on police reports, more than one rape occurs each minute (cited in Buchwald, 1993, pp.7-9). Only one rape in five is reported.

In the broadest of senses, `rape' encompasses both sociocultural and environmental concerns.

British Columbia demonstrates just how pervasive this metaphor is. Many peoples call the earth 'mother': clear cutting her forests is rape. There is no love, no worship in this blatant example of a vast array of devastations, insatiable in the taking and without reverence.

#### **metaphor #4: toxic culture**

Reverence for the earth is also missing in the toxic culture metaphor. People do not walk lightly on this planet, as our ancestors did, largely because there are far too many of us walking.

Oblivious to the scale of our impact, we have become the most numerous large mammal on the earth. Other mammals, such as coyotes, who only have as many pups as there have been deaths in the pack, live within the means of their habitat (B.C. Humane Education Society, 1996).

Humans, however, adapt, to perpetuate their devastation (Suzuki, lecture notes 1996).

We live in a toxic culture, not just environmentally but spiritually as well. If one's work is to succeed as a part of a necessary process of cultural healing, there must be a willingness to abandon old programming -- to let go of negative ideas and beliefs that are destructive to the planet and to life on earth. (Gablik, cited in Fox, p.209)

#### **metaphor #5: schizo culture**

Environmental toxicity fuels our fear of the world. Urban living keeps us disconnected from the earth. People live contained all the time: from apartment building to parking garage to car to parking garage to office and back again. What happens out there has no impact in here... we are split again, disconnected. The Cartesian split as "schizo-culture" originated with Michel Foucault's investigations of penal and psychiatric institutions (1989). His ideas have been adopted and adapted and applied to education.

"We think of art and work as incompatible, or, at least, independent, categories and have for the first time in history created an industry without art" (Coomaraswamy, 1956, p.61).

Efland suggests that the Arts IMPACT Program in the Columbus Public Schools, which uses art therapy to minimize "the psychological cost of institutional repression" (1976, p.41), reflects this schizo culture. School arts can exist to prove that the institution of the school is humane, but

[t]he dehumanizing of entire groups occurs daily in our schools. Nothing that happens inside the school walls is independent of social context; in fact schools are driven by that context, healthy or not. (Fehr, 1993, p.187)

### **full stop: taking it all in**

If schools cannot operate independent of their socio-cultural context, then these pervasive negative cultural metaphors can prove discouraging. Schools are embedded in the culture, and "art as artifacts ... tell us something about those cultures within which they originate" (Efland, 1976, p.39).

Prevalent negative cultural metaphors notwithstanding, things are not desperate. There is hope in re-visiting the artistic process. "[U]biquitous, ... integral,... and pleasurable" (Dissanayake, 1988, p.6), art counters the negative metaphors. In What Is Art For?, Dissanayake's presents a case for the ethological view of art, a bio-evolutionary view which

presumes that art contributes something essential to the human being who makes or responds to it -- not in the usual sense of being good for [the] mind and spirit (though these benefits are not denied), but beneficial for ... biological fitness. (p.8)

Fundamental to the evolution of the human species "Art might profitably be viewed as a prior, biological [phenomenon]" (p.4), that has "survival value in a Darwinian sense" (p.6), which must not continue to be overlooked. Not surprising then, that art is noticeably missed when it is not in the curriculum (Efland, 1976, p. 37). Though marginalized, art is already in and a part of our culture, and art responds to all of these negative metaphors. Why is art, that primordial communication, still being neglected in education?

### **(art) lessons from the past**

John Berger suggested that, "If we can see the present clearly enough, we can ask the right questions of the past" (1988, p.16). We have, albeit cursorily, looked at some common negative cultural metaphors of our present. Time has come to ponder art's role as integral to our existence as when, for example, our ancestors lived, for "it is shortsighted to presume that those previous hundreds and thousands of years did not influence our species in significant and recognizable ways" (Dissanayake, 1988, p.25). Perhaps we need to question the past.

If our culture sees itself as a machine, art can arguably be the spirit. In a world of empty consuming, art is sustenance; in a rape culture, art is redemptive; for a toxic world, art is the healing balm; in a split culture, art unites us. Just as the negative metaphors are part of our culture, so too are these art lessons, the more positive aspects of art represented hereafter.

Perhaps in drawing attention to these healing aspects of art, art can move in from the margins to act as an antidote. In this way, our Western culture might become more balanced.

#### **art lesson #1: art as spirit**

Artistic behaviour "predates by far what is usually considered to be the history of art" (p.8).

Creating is humankind's "fundamental urge" (Harman & Hormann cited in Fox 1994, p.117) and that "urge ... was apparently irresistible" (Leahey, 1995, p.101), even for the pre-Paleolithic period people:

We may never know what the Tuc d'Audoubert sculptors had in mind when they fashioned the bison, nor the painters at Lascaux when they drew the Unicorn, nor any of the Ice Age artists in what they did. But we can be sure that what they did was important



in a very deep sense to the artists and the people who saw the images in the generations afterward. (p.118)

Students, indeed many of us, "want an education that is healing to the uninformed, unknowing spirit" (hooks, 1994, p.19). And "what the arts were for [in the past]... is what we crave and are perishing for today" (Dissanayake, 1988, p.200).

### **art lesson #2: art is sustenance**

We are taught to crave by our culture. Regardless of what we are sold by advertisers, "[t]ransformation cannot come from ever more manic production and consumption in the marketplace" (Gablik cited in Fox, 1994, p.208), because "shopping is a less than satisfying substitute for making things" (Kanner, 1995, p.90). "[P]erhaps the most outstanding feature of art in primitive societies is that ... [i]t is difficult to separate art from the life that contains it" (Dissanayake, 1988, p.44). We could learn from this. Indeed, evidence of this integrated, more balanced approach to life and art can be seen in many First Nations cultures even today (Irwin).

Art was considered essential to life in many cultures. Without works of art as sustenance the human being would simply be no longer.

Works of art, regarded as food can only be thought of as "luxuries" when the patron's appetites are excessive; man eats to live, and can only be thought of as greedy when he lives to eat. By works of art the self is nourished. (Coomaraswamy, 1977, p.72)

Art here is no frill. It permeates every thing that is done.

### **art lesson #3: art is redemptive**

Art transcends violence, transforming it. Through art we can imagine a future without violence. Cultivating a "rich tapestry of redemptive images ... will facilitate our healing from the destruction and devastation caused by centuries of violence" (Campbell, 1993, p.142) because to declare "war on violence is to replicate the culture that has to change" (p.151). Alternatives to the violence in our culture can be sought in the redemptive imagery of art.

If the dream of a new paradigm about violence is to be realized, we need... [a]rtistic production [that] reflects the beliefs and values of its creators; diversity of creators will lead to a variety of alternatives. (p.150)

In the re-imagined world, diversity will be celebrated, rather than denigrated.

### **art lesson #4: art as the thread that ties us**

"Whatever may be known to you and me in common can only be stated by either of us each in our own way" (Coomaraswamy, 1956, p.70). One common language of the world is art,

"powerful to those who understand it, and puzzling to those who do not" (Leakey, 1995, p.118).

[A]rt is the act of the individual, but the expressive impact that art induces in the group is not created by the individual artist. It simply flows through the artist. It is not the work of art that is universally expressive. It is our response to art that is universal. Art gives us a sense of connection with a collective mentality. (Highwater, 1994, p.310)

Connectedness contravenes the split, schizo-culture. We are all related. One wonders, to paraphrase Robert Rauschenberg, why we can't look at the whole world as one big painting (Harris, 1993)? Our earth is oppressed. Now that "mother planet is facing limitations... human beings must work together to the common aim" (Dalai Lama in Harris 1993). Our "collective

project has, in fact, presented itself. It is saving the earth" (Gablik cited in Fox 1994, p.208).

#### **art lesson #5: art is holistic**

The principle distinguishing factor between holistic education and other forms of education is that holistic education is non-dualistic. Holistic education then, is not child-centred but child connecting. Through holistic education the child is connected to knowledge, the environment, and to the cosmos. This means that we need schools and programs that are based on connectedness and unity rather than fragmentation. (Miller, 1991, p.19)

Education must be more than exercise for the mental faculties. It must address the whole self ...  
the inner self.

Creativity is the link between our inner work and the outer work that society requires of us. Creativity is the threshold through which our non-action leads to actions of beautification, celebration and healing in the world. Creativity is both an inner and an outer work. (Fox, 1994, p.115)

Art is "interbeing" (Thich, pp.3-6), which, like Friere's concept of praxis, speaks of "action and reflection upon the world in order to change it" (hooks, 1994, p.14). Look inside the self, act outside the self: "visionary insights can be revealed within the context of the everyday, the familiar, the mundane" (hooks, 1995, p.138).

#### **journey work: art as the stuff of life**

More than an expression of culture, art is the stuff of life. Over time, art's stuff has shown itself to be most potent when it is socially relevant.

Art education programs must resonate to the lived experience of all students by providing them a visual language through which they can express themselves with images that demand society's attention, images that jolt cultural preconceptions. (Fehr, 1993, p.xiv)

Art cannot be socially relevant unless it is personal, deeply so. All students "want knowledge that is meaningful... [Do] not offer them information without addressing the connection between what they are learning and their overall life experience" (hooks, 1994, p.19). It is time for us to allow art to define our culture, not the other way around.

### **art education as a practice of freedom**

Why is education afraid of the perspective shift from the power-over of dominant culture to power-from-within of journey work? Can a connected curriculum happen without students who are empowered within? What can educators do? What hope is there for art education? The question for the art educator is, of course, given the nature of the culture in which we find ourselves and longstanding traditions of repressive hidden curriculae in educational institutions (Efland, 1976, p.40), how do we allow for those deeply personal art processes, the journeying, to occur?

When art education is the practice of freedom, the "student of art must do more than accumulate facts" (Coomaraswamy, 1956, p.30), the student of art must cultivate wisdom. This is journey work. Students of art as a practice of freedom are expected to make use of the information gathered within the confines of the classroom far beyond the bounds of the institution, rather than filing it away. Only "education that encourages critical consciousness will create a climate where thinking can change and paradigms can shift" (hooks, 1995, p.42).

"[A]rt education's potential as a cultural force in general is linked with the dismantling of

oppression in particular" (Fehr, 1993, p.xiv). Art educators have perpetuated the culture of domination long enough. "School art [is] not [yet] a pedagogical tool for teaching children about art in the world beyond the school" (Efland, 1976, p.39). It should be.

## visions

Sometimes the simple things are the most difficult.

Art should be, then, a place where boundaries can be transgressed, ... Art is and remains such an uninhibited, unrestrained, cultural terrain only if all artists [and we are all artists] see their work as inherently challenging to those institutionalized systems of domination (imperialism, racism, sexism, class elitism, etc.) that seek to limit, co-opt, exploit or shut down possibilities for individual [teacher and student] creative self-actualization. (hooks, 1995, p.138)

As art educators we must foster imaginings of a new way of being, one that is interconnected, respectful and holistic because "art is one of those rare locations where acts of transcendence can take place and have a wide-ranging transformative impact" (p.8).

Already we have what it takes to begin, as human beings, according to Dissanayake : "A knowledge and understanding of fundamental human nature, and a respect for it, could guide our behaviour and serve as a model for a truly 'humane' -- though individually varied -- life for all" (1988, p.200).

"Before we can live it [though], someone has to *imagine the possibility* of freedom" (Highwater, 1994, p.281, emphasis in original). Through art we learn that

work ... from an unfettered imagination affirms the primacy of art as that space of

cultural production where we can find the deepest, most intimate understanding of what it means to be free. (hooks, 1995, p.138)

Education as the practice of freedom, as journey work is "one of our culture's most under-utilized means of enlightenment" (Fehr, 1993, p.2). Art education must lead. Our leaders can follow. What are we waiting for?

## teachings

*i did not come to teaching secondary school art, it came to me. Yes, i did have a genetic predisposition to teach (did i mention that my mother is a teacher?), and yes, when i was at teachers' college i used to poke at issues provocatively in class (i felt i had enough experience at that point to speak out), and, yes, my professor asked if he could please send a paper of mine in for publication (i certainly had taken enough art classes to have an opinion). Yes. yes, yes. It is true. i said yes.*

*The universe listens when you say yes, and the universe answers. He must have called about five times and i avoided the phone. i stayed at my aunt's. i visited an old boyfriend, i let the machine get it. i thought maybe if i made him wait, he would just stop calling, but he persisted. i knew i would have to call him back.*

*But, i wasn't sure what to tell him. The truth was, i felt teaching would get in the way of art making, but i wasn't sure if that was a reason to turn down the job. i picked up the phone, diane major, artist, and i hung up the phone artist-- and teacher. The universe asked me to walk my talk.*

*And i will, i will, just don't ask me to stay on the beaten path.*

## poking provocatively

For many, the word "art" brings to mind the painting or the sculpture or the performance:

something beyond us, out there, removed from us in a very real way. The process of art making is removed further still, and artists have been complicit in this, leaving art making akin to magic.

i see my work as an artist-educator as demystification. Art making is necessary, not solely the domain of the magically gifted few, nor separate from living our lives. Art is the stuff of life: getting dirty, mucking about, messing up, creating. Mystifying the process perpetuates archaic power-over structures that deny the power within, that deny difference, uniqueness individuality. Mystification is antithetical to the educative process: it is learning to behave, not learning to think. Art is about thinking, about waking up to the world. Who benefits from our sleeping?

### **analysis: being alive is the meaning**

i have to be honest. Yes, my dog was the barometer for my life, but she was not the only one who was affected by the intensity with which i taught. When i left teaching it was not solely because i wanted to do research. Research was something that others had encouraged, something they suggested might be of benefit. Me? i needed also to take care of myself, to save my own life.

This deserves explanation.

The first tumour was the size of a grapefruit. What we do the web, we do to ourselves. It had burst soon after the end of the abusive relationship, only days before surgery. Okay, i thought then, i am on the right track, things would be okay, for a while anyway. i was not expecting to hear the loud whisperings of cancer again.

From my journal:

*i must work to eliminate the fear. To attain an equilibrium... i must release excess tension.. Re-learn to relax... i can. i am lucky to have Julie for a doctor. Lucky to have support. ... damn i am scared. Will the rain ever slow? Oh, and i am lucky to be loved by so many... Blessings. (February 16, 1994)*

And, then,

*i feel like i am being prepared. i feel a cleansing of the old yuck for new, non-yuck. i notice bumps — large — they are tender, but not lymph nodes. Also an impacted zit on my chin and eczema at my hair line/neck's nape. Bitten fingers. So much TENSION and some anger. A need to be alone and yet a fear of aloneness. Feelings i have not had in years. Something's got to give. i must begin a search out of this labyrinth.... everyone*



*needing me — i've got it set up so that when i need,... well, no one pays attention.*

*KEEP YOUR OWN COUNSEL.*

*My body is wracked. Getting wrecked. I want to stay whole, focused. HAPPY. That could well mean leaving this line of work...What if this is cancer?? Is this job sucking the life out of me? Is my trying to be nice eating me up from the inside? i say i'm tired of being strong, but do i have any idea how to give over some of this stuff? (February 18, 1994)*

i was scared...Okay, okay, things looked bad. Maybe i could never have children, maybe i would need further tests, maybe ... One never really knows. All i could do to manage the condition was to manage my stress. In my last year teaching, my own life had become imbalanced.

What in my life was causing this, no, allowing this to happen? i ate well. i exercised. i knew i was a good teacher, i knew that i made a difference. But now, if i was to be any good to anyone, i needed to make a difference for my self. i knew that. i needed to work this through in my art.

We are all on the journey towards death. What we do on the journey can make a difference

**figure 9** *vesica veritas: womandala*



This piece was the beginning of a series entitled “vesica veritas” or the vessels of truth. The impetus to do the series came after i created this piece as a means of working through my emotions after learning i had pre-cancerous cells inside me.

*What you have to do,  
you do with play.*

*Life is without meaning.  
You bring the meaning to it.*

*The meaning of life is  
whatever you ascribe it to be.*

*Being alive is the meaning.*

(Campbell in Osbon, 1996, p. 16)

### **analysis: bringing meaning to it**

In doing this research, i was curious to find out what exactly happened for students in an art as journey work class room. Re-visiting the experiences was important to seek understanding, not only from my perspective, but from the perspective of those people in the class room with me. i wanted to know if the people i worked with understood the things i had tried to share with them. Did journey work have an impact?

When i first left Ontario, i wrote to a number of students, asking them what they thought of this, did they think i was barking up the wrong tree? Some students did not respond. Others called and we enjoyed conversation(s) exploring this topic. Still another's parent wrote in reply to my enquiries; her words are recorded earlier. SL, after a page and a half of pleasantries, writes:

*In your letter (by the way, I love the Ben Hodson image on the card!) You asked for my thoughts and opinions on the subject of the art teacher as a facilitator of soul work. You asked if perhaps you were barking up the wrong tree — I assure you that you are not. I can only give my opinion, but I think it is a valid one. To go along with my thoughts, i have included some colour photocopies of my watercolour book that I did in OAC (I have no slides of larger work to give you sorry!)*

*As you were fully aware of, I had been going through quite a difficult time when I was trying to complete my last semester of high school. Aside from the decisions about of what to do with my life, I was faced with depression and an eating disorder. Your encouragement to take my time and explore my feelings in my artwork helped me greatly. You let me know that pumping out art for "artsake" just wasn't the point. Although I knew that, it was your encouraging hand that let me know it was ok to go through artistic down and dry, and that sadness and negative energy can sometimes be used to produce a positive. I'll be forever grateful for your "validation" of my artwork. I know now, and understand, that mimicking an object or producing the most accurate colours is not necessarily artwork. It is a thought, a desire and practice which make a good piece of artwork.*

*Thus far, in university, I have employed my heart, my dedication and my active imagination to produce work that has been, on the whole, successful. Although it lacks sometimes in technique, or in a fully fleshed out thought, it is a part of me that is honest and is open to be seen and felt. I know that people have enjoyed my artwork. More importantly, I have enjoyed my artwork. I have enjoyed sharing it with the friends that I have made and the people in my family. Just today, I a friend said to me that she knows what is mine — my name need not be on the piece. To me, that is a very*

*important comment. I know that I will be ok, because I am starting to know who I am. And yes, it is through artwork that I have come to this understanding. My voice, my hands and my feet have also contributed. I know that I have to be an artist of some sort. I don't care what i do to make a living, I care what I do to make a life. I need colour texture, story and imagination.*

*High school ( and university) are very important stages in one's life. An artist of any level needs to be encouraged by teachers to look deep inside. A student won't be doing any justice to anyone to follow a story format, memorize a theory or mimic an object if that is all they can do. Although this may be important to some; the soul is the most important. I learned this perhaps not consciously, and ended up in the spiritual battle of my life. Artwork was one of the ways I began to regain myself.*

*In a nutshell (and I could write pages), this is how I feel about the art teacher as a facilitator of soul work. Looking back, the things I recall about high school aren't the things I did for the sake of getting a mark. The academic triumphs for me are the short stories, the plays, and the artwork that allowed me to be myself. In all of these cases, I was encouraged by my teacher to be creative. In other words, i was encouraged to live as I am and no other way.*

*God bless you in all your endeavours. I hope this has helped to answer some of the questions you proposed. If you ever feel flustered or discouraged with your work, just remember all the students' lives you have touched through art. Your examples and emphasis on self respect and self-expression never went unnoticed.*

figure 10 Norman is an artist...



In this image (figure 9), SL speaks of a favourite uncle, Norman, who is an artist. She juxtaposes her brother's blase art criticism of hard edge painting: "I could do that without even trying" with the work ethic of this artist: "He would sit for hours and draw...". As SL says in figure 1, "Each image," she writes, "has so much more behind it.... without the past we cannot move into the future... without a knowledge of what love is.... what happiness is..." The positive artistic role model that her uncle represents is obvious: she states plainly here that she admires him. The female nude is perhaps less obvious. Given her inner conflict -- the struggles with eating disorders -- the inclusion of female nude should not surprise. However, the woman in fact represents SL's aunt, who met her husband, SL's uncle, while working as an artist's model. SL here portrays positive self image, a woman both comfortable with her physical self and health-conscious (the aunt that offers "vitamins... [when SL is] sick"). Art was a way of remembering past feelings and re-visioning the future.



### **never unnoticed: the students of art as journey work**

What effect did the art as journey work curriculum have on the students in my classes? SL reminded me in her letter (above) to remember all of the students touched by art as journey work. Journey work requires the teacher strives to be aware of the individual people in the classroom. And, if the number of willing participants for this re-search process is any indication, journey work was indeed a positive, life-affirming experience for a number of the students in my classes. Interestingly enough, after i left the school, a surprising number of my students sought to continue on in art as a full time pursuit, in some form or other. i was fortunate enough to visit the graduation exhibition for the art school which showed the work of quite a few former students — and a few who surprised me.

My cousin and i were in line at the exhibition to purchase a small painting. One of the young women who worked the sales booth asked for a name to put into the computer to hold the painting. i gave mine. She looked up quickly, “Why do I know your name?!” i shrugged. She continued on, tapping her pencil to her lip “Where...?” Others stood waiting. i said that perhaps because i had taught a number of her colleagues ... maybe she had heard my name around. “Yes!!”, she said with enthusiasm, “You’re the art teacher!” And she carried on, satisfied. We were in a school full of art teachers, so... while i was a tad embarrassed, i was nonetheless touched by her comments. Seems that the journey work approach has meant something to the students. This is confirmed in the interviews and research process.

For SL, art is not just an accoutrement, art is integral to her life.

*the approach that we took was a stepping stone to the acceptance and validation of myself as an artist. This stepping stone has allowed me to move on to an acceptance of not only being creative in an 'art' sense but an acceptance of living creatively. An acceptance of living the way I do. A validity of working through things as a process; including an artistic process and a spiritual process. I learned that artistic process is part of the end result — just as the process of spiritual examination is just as important as the concrete conclusions you make in the end. (Feedback, August 24, 1997, p.1)*

While Kim said that art as journey work empowered her.

It forced me to go through and do something that I wasn't sure I could do. And I did it and I was happy that I did it and, uh, I did well at it. I gives me confidence now, knowing that I can get that again. (Kim, 2.24, 14-16)

### **in class: critique process**

Much art education research promotes the critique process; however the research of Sybil O'Thearling and Cynthia Ann Bickley-Green with its focus on at-risk youth is pertinent to this discussion because of the esteem-building aspect of their investigations. In their work, O'Thearling and Bickely-Green posit that an art critique must contain only positive feedback (1996, p.25). My interviews lead me to believe that the situation is different in a regular art classroom. Though students certainly benefit from positive feedback in a critique, they also benefit from learning to navigate constructive criticism. SL tried to explain why she did not benefit from positive comment-only critiques: "We'd just go through whatever we'd done... [but] nobody ever said what they didn't like about each other's work" (3.9, 27 37). Learning how to be constructive in criticism, and learning to receive criticism as constructive are beneficial offshoots of critique process, an important component when art is journey work.

dm: [Another art teacher] used to come in and watch me do stuff. Like, for instance, he



said, "Oh, you do a critique with the Grade Nines? I would never do that." And i'm like, "What? What do you mean you would never do that?" He was like, "Well, ... it would get all nasty and out of control".. I mean, I never had a problem with it, any of my critiques.

Kim: It's because when people look at [the art teacher] ... I think he would probably feel like they're not open-minded enough to listen to it and take the criticism. And [the students] would feel like "He's just criticizing us" Whereas the way, I think the way -- it's that you approached it differently. I don't know. That's the thing. I really liked both you and [the other art teacher].

dm: But, it's not a matter of 'like'.

Kim: No, no. But you both impacted me. In different ways... [pause] But I can sit and remember everything you said and different things you taught us, but I don't remember what he did, which means he didn't really impact me as much... His art theory was very good. .. and he was a very smart man... And he really was very nice to me... [Anyway] if you were trying to have a critique, with the Grade Nines, you'd be up front and very honest and say just "Okay, we're just going to talk about this. Don't worry about it, don't feel susceptible, don't feel you're being criticized. We're just going to talk about your work. Because when we talk about your work, it will help you get through the things you're wondering about your work." Whereas [another teacher would] probably come in and say, "Okay, today we're having a critique. Okay then? Go!" And I would be like "Aaaaah!" ... I don't think he felt he needed to explain, because a critique is a critique. But I think you talk people through things and make the transition a little bit easier for them.

dm: That's another interesting observation. Yeah. So, my big mouth paid off. [both laugh] (Kim, 2.10, 7 - 2.11,1)

Kim extends this idea of open communication into her relationships outside the school environment. What follows continues directly from the text above.

Kim: Yeah! It really does... I find the older I get, instead of , if [one friend] pisses me off, running to the other one and saying [expletive deleted]. I'll just say... "What's going on with us? Why are we doing this? Let's talk about it." ...It's just being very open and understanding where you're coming from so that people can understand you. And you know, you get it out and over with and that's it. Then people have less anxiety about it. (Kim, 2.11, 2 - 4)

Anxiety lessens through art as journey work, where the student can learn to turn off the internal critic. The critique process allows the student to deal externally with criticism. Students further

separate their selves from their work. Recall that Kim acknowledged that when she drew or painted she identified so closely with the work that she felt torn apart by even sharing an unsuccessful piece. It is interesting that she now works in clay. An artist never really throws away an unsuccessful clay piece, the clay is constantly reconstituted. So, despite the fact that

I'm *in* the clay when I am doing it... I'm there and I invest time in this piece... if the piece destroys itself, it must have been to be. If it breaks, if it cracks in the kiln, if it falls apart on the wheel,, if I am being an idiot one day and it flies off and is destroyed, there's something about that piece that wasn't right... But if I can salvage-- I can take something and make it into something from being in that state and it goes somewhere then, to me, that's worth it. (2.18, 24-32)

Here the young artist demonstrates that she has learned to externalize experience: she can separate self from product through learning to navigate criticism of her work. When she says she is "in the clay" she means more that she is present in the moment she is working on the clay, meditatively, and therefore is invested in the clay work in that sense. This is not an over-identification with the product of her labours. In learning to navigate criticism of her work this way, the artist can remain integrated as a person, and not become torn asunder by criticism, especially when that criticism is directed at art work containing personal investment, such as journey work.

The student learns to turn off or tune out the internal mental critic by developing the meditative mind and strengthening the inner self. Without this,

we feel existentially empty, denied, hungry in life... We have our eyes and heart and hand not on what we are doing, but elsewhere on some distant goal: the show, the compliment, the sale, the glowing review. Not fully present or in touch with our own actions, uncomfortable in our own minds, and dissatisfied with our current station in life, we become a self divided. Our work becomes forced, self-conscious, pretentious. It lacks the natural grace of an uncomplicated mind and a clam spirit. (London, 1989, pp. 74- 75)

But students who enter into the art making process as meditation -- what Csikszentmihalyi would call “flow” (1995) -- are completely engaged, immersed in their making, as Kim describes above. This process trains the mind to focus. A focused mind does not entertain contrary thoughts, it is absorbed in one alone, engaged. In this way, creating is a distinct process from evaluating the creation. In turn, recognizing this distinction opens the mind to further creativity because the internal editor does not shut down ideas as they are conceived.

Art as journey work is a way that our students can remain in touch with their humanity in a technological world. Students learn to reflect, to contemplate, to ponder. It invites questions, rather than demanding answers. It could even be the way out of the mess we have made of the planet. And it is definitely a way of the future. In their book of conversations, theologian Matthew Fox and scientist Rupert Sheldrake conclude that developing a human world capable of navigating the environmental mess we have made in our decades as the self-professed stewards of the earth means re-imagining education focused on art as meditation (1996, p.208). The front cover of a recent Utne Reader declares that the “21<sup>st</sup> century’s most important invention is going to be your self” (Anderson, 1998).

### **revisiting the themes**

Therapeutic practices in art education allow the student to learn and practice re-framing experience through the work done in school, in the art room. Re-framing past experience is a key objective in therapeutic practice, allowing a person to revisit an emotion or an event with a new, empowered, perspective. “Externalizing the problem” (White & Epston, 1990, p. vii) is

considered the “single most important domain ... opened” (1990, p.vii) in therapeutic practice recently.

When the distinction of the problem can be clearly separated from the distinction of the person, it becomes possible to carefully examine the dynamics and direction of the interaction between persons and problems. One can address a crucial question: Is the problem gaining more influence over the person or is the person gaining more influence over the problem? (1990, p.viii)

Creating art work allows the person more influence over the problem, because creating art work externalizes experience. For a university essay entitled “A Little Less Weight” SL spoke of her desire to externalize her battle with an eating disorder, her desire to lose just a little weight.

Through her art, she chose “*to take an interior thought/ feeling/ few/ desire and transfer it into a tangible, exterior object.*” (1997, p.2). SL continues in her essay to describe the actual sculptured-drawing, “A little less weight” (figure 10):

*The objects that I choose to represent are things that do not weigh ‘very much’ — but have great emotional and physical significance. For example, my hand, my cat, an egg and a bean, a plant [she is vegetarian], a book, a DNA strand and a small tear drop. The strength and identity of my body would be greatly diminished if I were to lose these things...I hung these small sculptures with fishing line and painted it grey... I wanted the ‘strings’ to be visible, in order to show my attachment to these things... What is represented in this sculpture is a significant part of me.* (1997, p.3)

The actual art product is evidence of externalized experience. In providing something outside the self upon which to focus, the art product allows for easier discussion of the difficult, and, often, the interior. It is one way of making meaning of life.

**figure 11** *A little less weight*



The external object (the artwork) contains the internal experience (the emotion) and both creating it and discussing it allow opportunities for the re-interpretation of experience. In my art room, we talked of 'working it through in your art'. In the research the women used this phrase often in describing their art-making process. i asked SL if making an external object, making art, helped her transcend the emotional part of the event she is working through.

SL: You mean, like, it goes? It takes away from it?

dm: No, no, no. It helps you move through.

SL: Oh, absolutely it does, yeah! Oh, for sure. (SL, 2.10, 4-7)

"Working it through" primarily leads to an exploration of the self. "In both art making and [therapeutic] grief work there are losses and creation, destruction and reconstruction, and a reformulating of meaning and patterning" (Baker, 1998, p.87). By embracing the opportunity and the encouragement to work through key emotions and issues in art making, students often find that they embark on a reflective journey through their life's events. Baker offers her experience of The Arts as a means of making spiritual and psychological meaning of life that facilitates survival and makes living worthwhile (1998, p. 87). At its essence, the process of creating visual art from personal experience is a path towards knowing the self. Often it begins the journey that leads to the inner self.

What do i mean by self? There are a number of meanings for the word, and in this case, i am not suggesting that i or anyone can determine how to go about defining the self for another. Nor am i advocating that art educators present the students with a prescription for any one way of being

in the world. My suggestion is that we do the opposite: we give our students the opportunity to discover their own individual joy tangibility. Knowing the self is an idiosyncratic exercise. I am suggesting that students be allowed the opportunity to determine for themselves who this self is, and how that self can be in the world. Journey work is but a means of finding their way to this self, of aligning the external life with the inner self.

Anyhow, this was about having an eating disorder. Just not feeling good emotionally, and just trying to find reasons why, because home life was good, pretty good. Everybody has problems or whatever. School was fine... Friends were pretty good. Nothing overly awful. And just trying to figure out what the source of this pain, this horrible pain, was. And so, I went back to something as early as my first fish dying. And he was orange and black and his name was Licorice. And so I tied his name into my obsession with food as of late, as of this point. And, with, uh [pause] especially with liking licorice all sorts a lot... it says, "The bench was hard under my bum but I couldn't stop crying. Everything has to die, he said, that's just Mother Nature" And it's funny in retrospect. I realize why I wrote the bench was hard... I was sitting at the piano and the way I was going to deal with this was to play the piano for, like, two hours. I was only seven. Just practicing my scales, or something. And my dad was like well, you've got to talk about this, you can't just sit there. So, that's why I said I couldn't move and I couldn't stop crying. I just was totally distraught. ...And on the leaves it says... "Like childhood, licorice fades and dies. That's just Mother Nature." The idea how a candy will dissolve in water and the fish sort of fades away. And so then it has me in sort of a bathing suit, on the top. Which is also, you know self conscious body... me at different ages just hopping along on top of the water... trying to find the source of the pain... the overwhelming feeling of distraught... I think the reason I thought of this was because that was the last time I could remember being just so torn apart.... I think I was trying to identify feeling that way before ... I knew that... by identifying feeling that way before, I knew I could get through. (SL, 2.19, 23 - 2. 20, 15)

Baker comments at the outset of her article that

It has been said that 'expression' is a dead issue in Art Education, and that 'expression of feeling' is the weakest of the aesthetic theories. Moreover, 'that's only therapy' is a common, dismissive, derogatory criticism of some artwork. (1998, p.87)

But reflection on the individual outer journey is integral to the solidifying of the inner self. How we live life must be pondered as inner life is cultivated. This is reflective thinking.

Transformation occurs when how we live is adjusted to resonate with our inner self.

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In order to reflect, one not only needs to take the time necessary but one also needs to learn to be still in that time. Art opens education to reflective thinking. It is the place for learning what Kim called “meditative mind”: to be / still / in that time.

Meditative mind is not meditation per se. Meditative mind is what meditation practitioners would call beginner’s mind, where one learns to be more fully present in immediate sensory experience. Kim puts it this way,

Once you start working on something to that extreme, you stop thinking about other things and you start concentrating on where this thing you are taking is going to go....But what I like about it is I -- get on this kind of meditation state. Like it’s me and the clay. Nobody else... we’re communicating. And I just kind of disappear. And I think that that has really helped me just kind of let go of things because, I mean, ... I think too much...And that’s what ceramics makes me not do (Kim, 1.9, 10-19)

**figure 12** *Kim’s Nesting bowls*



This is not practicing meditation, but it could be a step towards cultivating a meditation practice.

Meditative mind is more about self awareness as a by-product of engaged learning. This self awareness comes from sitting in the present, as reflective thinking requires. Through this, one becomes aware that within us is rarely still: the mind is full of active thoughts, what Zen meditation practitioners call the monkey mind. In focusing more on the cognitive aspect of mind, the cognitive development of young people, public schools often foster an environment antithetical to cultivation of the meditative mind.

Kim continues speaking about the need for her to have all of her being engaged in her learning.

dm: i think the interesting thing i am hearing is that you've found a medium that you feel doesn't snag you in the way some of the other ones [like drawing] did, so the process of going into that sort of focused meditative thought --

Kim: It's easier.

dm: Easier, yeah. Because you're not caught [Kim: Uhuh] on the way into that... That's one of the things that i'm trying to talk about... is exactly that. Art gives us the opportunity... to have that meditative learning happening...if only temporarily, you know? It allows you to transcend --

Kim: [interjecting with enthusiasm] I think it's so important! I do... And I don't think I've ever been able to balance that because I have never had the opportunity to... I need to use them both [the sides of her brain]... I think it is important to address both .. Really. (Kim, 1.9, 26 to 1.10,16)

Inner thoughts are not always factual, but they *are* learned. Advertisers hold conferences on selling to the most vulnerable: children. In Giving Kids the Business (1998), children are viewed as a cash crop waiting to be harvested. In a televised interview, one advertising representative at a sales seminar misleadingly entitled "Kids Power" stated that, in his opinion, "antisocial behaviour in pursuit of a product is a good thing" (Simon, 1997). Incredible? Sadly, no.

If we continue to allow business to replace civil society, advertising will replace cultural functions normally ascribed to writers, musicians and artists. Our dreams and desires for a better world are no longer articulated by JFKs nor generated through personal epiphanies — they are now the intellectual currency of Pepsi and Diesel. We used to have movements for change — now we have products. Brands may befriend us, console us, and inspire us, but the relationship comes at the highest price imaginable — the loss of self. (Bigge, 1998, p. 16)

Kim put it this way, when she talked about how art solidified her sense of self: At first, she found even

talking to someone is an effort... It's frustrating, because so many times it's not that we don't want to see these people, but we see them and we're like "Hi, how are you?" and that's really all I have to say to you. Cause I know you, and I'm going to acknowledge that, but I don't have anything to say to you...But now, I feel like I can talk to people and... I have things to talk about and when they ask me about myself I have things to tell them. And I'm happy about the things I tell them... Because I was in pottery. Because I know that what I am doing *is* where I want to be going. (2.14, 8-20 2.15, 15-18)

The bombardment of advertisers' you're-not-quite-good-enough-but-buy-this-and-you-might-be message is aimed squarely at the young person. Kim comments on her battle with outside influences:

But I'm trying, I'm really trying. Um, I was a tv head for so long. I don't — I try not to watch it [now]...My mom used to watch it and when we move to Halifax [to attend NSCAD] I'm not owning a television. I think it can destroy you real fast.... just turn on the tv and zone out. (Kim, 2.7, 15-18)

The potential for searching in "I don't know how" has been replaced by the more stagnant statement "I can't". Negative self-talk is no longer the domain of the student with low self esteem: business ensures that an entire generation has esteem so low that it fuels an entire economy.

Neither supportive nor productive, negative internal dialogues work against the development of a strong sense of self. In art, negative internal conversation is known as the inner critic. Those in therapeutic circles speak of inner tapes. Tibetan Buddhists speak of “numtuk”, or mind noise. Meditative mind allows the young person to recognize that an inner dialogue is going on, and through that recognition, take steps towards reclaiming one’s inner environment: power from within (Starhawk, 1982). One way to this reclaiming is to work it through in art: art as journey work. The directed concentration that comes from full engagement, or “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), in art making is a means to focus one’s attention on the present moment of being. Single point meditation. In one study of ways of knowing, the authors speak of the people in the study as turning inward to listen and then finding the ‘still small voice’ within. From this place one begins to recognize the ridiculous unsupportive nature of much of the inner dialogue and (hopefully) eventually transcend it, effectively silencing the internal critic, the tapes, the numtuk.

The spiral turns in again here. The process returns to its place of origin: working through their lives through art, students can cultivate self awareness and that awareness allows for the focus of the meditative mind, which in turn leads to courage in working through. With each turn inwards, the process deepens.

That was the thing with that whole project, that OAC project that I did. I’m still impartial about how I feel about the aesthetic value of the piece. There are certain things I really enjoy, but the fact is that I took an idea and followed it through and I worked and made a whole piece, like a whole thing that fit together, Whoa! Like, that’s an accomplishment! And I wouldn’t have done it, if you hadn’t made me. And it was the assignment. And that was my challenge. And I couldn’t believe that my challenge had not only to do with, with like, I don’t know, — I don’t know the word — with academics. But it wasn’t only an academic challenge because this was my OAC art. I wanted to

make art. I wanted to learn. I wanted to do this. It was probably the most important thing to me but at the same time [pause] I had to really look into myself ... and that's what pushed me through. And because I did that I think it really helped me. [pause] Yeah. (Kim, 2.5, 15-25)

### **finding voice through finding self through art: feminist art**

Journey work is feminist art in that it offers our students an opportunity to tell their personal stories, to have voice in their art. In Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) posit that developing a voice is integral to self actualization for women. Being able to have opportunities to speak, to use one's voice, to express opinions and offer perspectives is important to one's individual sense of self.

In a university paper entitled "A personal art history" (1996), SL puts it this way, "*I seemed to have a lot to talk about that I couldn't put into words*" (p. 3). In my observation notes, after our third interview, I wrote that

*SL had difficulty speaking about some of the things that we touched on, even though she is clever and articulate generally. Instead, she defers to her images. She often relies on a description of the work to make a point, further illustrating — and I use the word deliberately here -- what she wants to say, rather than attempting to put things into words.*

One project SL describes epitomizes this transference of voice to her art. For this assignment, she makes art a language:

What I did here was a drawing assignment...What we had to do was make up twenty-odd symbols that symbolize your life. The idea was to group them into three categories, like [in her case] nouns, verbs, adjectives. So, what I did was make up as symbols a bunch of nouns...person, place, thing.... This is water, and sun... this is family, and up here is animals and food and shelter. And then what I did...[was] make them into, like, tarot cards... I had twenty-one cards and then I had someone randomly shuffle them and I picked twenty-one combinations. My purpose was to sort of talk about fate, and how often these things come up. Or make sentences out of them and

see how many times the same kind of sentence came up, to see if there was any sort of thing with that. So, that was just to show people my process... (SL, 2.2, 25-36)

From there SL went on to generate her piece. She thought reflectively on the implications of the art/word/symbol combinations that arose in repeating patterns. This project is an excellent example of the social consciousness that can arise out of reflective thinking through art.

So, twenty-one sentences. ... I'd actually write the sentences over and so what you had to do when you'd come look at it was kind of push down to see what's underneath...[the] tracing vellum...For example this little curly [symbol] was 'stinky'. So, then I just went through and what I got for that one was water, raging and stinky... So, I had water, raging and stinky. It says "any water can be polluted, even the most raging waters can be stinky." (SL, 2.3, 3-8)

In her feedback SL speaks about her use of text in her work, which addresses the side issue of voice:

*The visual arts doesn't [sic] have a language all it's [sic] own. It shares all types of languages. The difficult part is trying to come up with an artistic language that becomes simultaneous with your own voice. (fb, August 24, 1997, p.1)*

Kim speaks of having a voice in the classroom.

And that's the thing here....it's like a friendly pressure. Saying I understand you're having problems, but do it and then ask you questions and they say, okay let's give it another try. Instead of ignoring you in class and not being able to talk. You didn't do that. You make us talk. (Kim 2.12, 24-26)

And while i bristle at the word "make" i understand that Kim is trying to say that she was not silenced, but invited, encouraged, and safe enough to speak. Or at least i would hope so.

For SL, having the opportunity to express her own voice (art), rather than expressing the voice of another (drama, music), is inextricably linked to her seeing art as tangible expressions of joy.

dm: One of the overriding themes i got from the work that i've seen of yours to now is that it will ... had this uncanny sense of joy to it, and given the personal battles that you were waging, i was so impressed with that. .. You had a joyful vitality to them that we don't see very often

SL: Just fun — Yeah, that's the thing, because people who wouldn't know that I was dealing with this [eating disorder] or that I was thinking about this... it's got this happiness with getting it or being able to talk about it, so it turns them into happy things. Just being able to talk about it.  
(SL, 1.10, 32-40)

### **teaching practice**

For the student, journey work seems to be resoundingly positive. What about teaching art as journey work? For instructors journey work can be somewhat imposing. Researchers have found that "the interest of the teacher is to 'protect the conditions under which each student in their own way can find their own way'. Perhaps this is also in the interest of research that purports to be interested in emancipation and transformation" (Smith in Sumaras & Carson, 1996, p.x).

And that's the thing. It's the teacher. It's always the teacher... (Kim, 2.4, 4)

We journey with our students as teachers, whether we acknowledge it, or not. But, like Schoenfielder, i do not advocate that "all educators share their deepest personal problems in the classroom" (1998, p.150). In fact, in many cases the best we as teachers on the shared path can do is "help make connections." (Rahn, 1998, p.129) But, when we reveal our selves to our students, when we "share what matters to us as well as listen to our students' concerns" (Schoenfielder, 1998, p.151), we are participating in what Friere calls "co-intentional" education. By this Friere means that the teacher and student are "both Subjects, not only in the

task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge” (1970, p.51).

Not only must the teacher care deeply about those s/he teaches and want to assist in their unfolding, but teachers who espouse the journey work perspective must also recognize that they operate from a curricular perspective that curriculum theorists call transformational.

This has implications for the entire school ecology.

Not all teachers in a particular school will adopt this orientation because not all teachers can, yet. Full scale adoption of the transformational perspective is, because of this, presently not realistic or possible. Curricular perspectives are defined by academics. Real teaching practice interweaves curricular perspectives, with one or another coming to the fore as the dominant or pervasive approach. Rarely does the transformational perspective form a curricular foundation in the public school system. Adopting the transformational perspective would, therefore, require a change in orientation, and orientation change is a large scale implementation dilemma (Miller & Seller, 1990, p.245).

A single teacher operating from a new perspective would be a workable adaptation: implementation on a smaller scale. A first step. Regardless of how desperately i personally feel education needs a transformative outlook, i think if change in the system is to be precipitated, it may best happen one teacher at a time. The one teacher who can best accommodate such a perspective shift is the art teacher, because, no matter the perspective creating art is the process



of transformation: it transforms the materials, if not the individual. The risks inherent in the transformation and the requisite creative energy are all familiar terrain in art.

Miller and Seller warn that the transformational perspective can be perceived as manipulative and "when used in classrooms, some of these strategies have been psychologically threatening and have unnecessarily invaded the student's personal privacy" (1990, p.170). They do not elaborate. i agree that challenging the learner to "stretch" requires a delicate dance on the part of a sensitive instructor. Respect for the individual student is critical, as both SL and Kim pointed out time and again. But, because art is usually an optional course, it seems a logical place for introducing transformative ways of teaching/learning to the school ecology: a student threatened could opt out. A teacher of art as journey work seeks to "spark an idea" (Rahn, 1998, p.135) that may be explored by those within a shared, sacred space. This exploration through critical reflection offers students ways to re-view their experience.

In my experience, because journey work requires that a student be accepted and respected for where that student is at that particular point in time — wherever that might be -- few students felt the need to drop out. My course was rigorous, and did require the personal investment of self-exploration, but students need only venture as deep as *they* determined comfortable. The teacher is a resource "through continual research and awareness of his or her students' interests" (Rahn, 1998, p.129). For SL, this made art as journey work different:

SL: Different in the sense of in the relating what you're doing to who you are, not what you're doing to what you have to do.

dm: Perfect. Thanks. You got it. That's what i was trying to do... with the course. That's

why i am thanking you. I'm like aah. Yeah. It's so cool.(SL, 3.22, 28 - 33)

In light of her individual place, her battle with the eating disorder and the work she faced around that, SL needed an extension of her graduation year art class. This meant that she and i had to make arrangements to meet together over the summer months. This next excerpt originally is slightly confusing as midway SL uses "you" as the pronoun for the student and for the teacher.

SL: You know I could've had something slapped together... but i was encouraged not to. Like I'd say "I want to do watercolours."... Instead of you saying [in response] "Well, okay, why or what?" — you know, instead of you saying "Why?" because I said I wanted to do watercolours, small: "Why do you want to do watercolours small?" [Instead] It was like, "Okay. Well, what are you going to do with them?" It was sort of you [student] make a statement about what you want to do, [and] you [teacher] didn't usually question why you [student] wanted to do that, but you [teacher] just questioned where you [student] were going to go with what you [student] wanted to do, kind of thing. Or draw a self portrait, you know, of me as a kid. Not, "Why are you doing anything about that" or "How are you going to do that?" [or] you know, "Why don't you do it now, then you can look in the mirror?" {Rather] it was just like, "Okay, well, how are you going to put it together?"

dm: Uh huh. Uh huh.

SL: So, ... it was like a validation of yourself as an artist... Different that way... They allow for some intervention of your self. (SL, 3.22, 34 - 3.23,14)

And, in order to teach effectively from a transformational perspective, without manipulative intent, teachers, according to Miller & Seller, "must first work on themselves" (1990, p.167). i would argue that teachers must *always* work on themselves, transformational educators especially. bell hooks speaks of this in Teaching to Transgress: "I do not expect my students to take any risks that i would not take, to share in any way i would not share" (1994, p.21). We are each a work in progress. Students *and* teachers.

Educators must, as a result, reveal themselves — their *selves* — to their students. "Autobiography

in teaching encourages students to value their own experiences and to discover their own voice.”

(Rahn, 1998, p.128) This will prove challenging for most of us, as exemplified in the following anecdote i shared with Kim,

i was at a summer school thing for teachers [to get additional qualifications] and i, uh, i laughed. i have a very bizarre laugh, right? This woman, she was laughing too, and she stopped and she was just horrified. She was like, “You don’t laugh like that at school, do you?” ... she just couldn’t believe that i revealed myself [even] that much. (Kim, 2. 11, 6-10)

As instructors of art, we must be prepared to take risks (and to open ourselves to mistakes and failure) by working things through *with* our students on occasion. Schoenfielder recounts how her students realized that

taking risks and chances was possible, and not always deadly...that their teachers are human beings who experience hopes and dreams and even sadness, just like they do... [and] that they did not need to accept the passive role imposed upon them by society or the traditional education system (Schoenfielder, 1998, p.150).

SL twigged to risk taking as a major difference in art teaching approaches when we discussed whether she thought the progress we made in art class was as a result of my personality, or not.

SL spoke comparatively about my teaching and that of another art teacher in her experience:

SL: I would say he has a very similar personality to you. He is very good. In fact, he wants to know if there’s something wrong, he’d want to know if you’re concerned about something.. You know what I mean, that kind of concern? Concerned about students doing well, and simply being there or caring about art, right? So, how different is that? I mean, really?

dm: And i think the other part of it is if i heard someone had something wrong, i’d say to them, so how are you going to put that into your artwork? Why not use your art work to do that? ... I don’t think he would ever do that....i don’t think he does the emotional content in art thing, ... or he just doesn’t want to go there with students, which is fair.

SL: Do you think it’s a risk? I mean, to put yourself on the line? Like, for getting involved, right?

dm: Yeah, and as a teacher, in order to have students reveal themselves to you, you have

to be revealing to them, you know? So, like, if i'm, like when [the veterinarian thought] she was dying [indicates her dog] i came in and told my class. It was tears and it was ugly and it was embarrassing, but i needed them to know why i was a head mess that day.  
(SL 3.20, 39 -3.21, 16)

Students "need models of thinking as a human, imperfect, and attainable activity" (Belenky et al, 1986, p.217). We must allow ourselves imperfection. We must model imperfection. This is difficult even to fathom for some. When art is journey work, it is essential that both the art educator and students are aware of this process. "If we don't give them a chance and take chances ourselves, we are simply perpetuating stereotypical biases that we as feminist educators have fought so long to overcome." (Schoenfielder, 1998, p. 150)

Art as journey work is not the only way. Truthfully, journey work in the hands of a teacher who is half hearted or inexperienced or lacking passion or without the gift of self reflection would not be much different than art in any of its present guises. No, this is not the *only* way. But it is a revolutionary way.

### **what about the "personality" issue?**

According to Kim,

It's the teacher. It's always the teacher...

dm: Now when you say it's the teacher, do you think that it's personality? Do you think that that's all it is?

Kim: Oh, no.... Like anyone could have been given what you taught us, but it's just the way you went about it. ... Like, "Lets see where you're going" ... And I think that's the way. It's very important.  
(Kim, 2.4, 4-28)

Was the success of journey work more a result of my individual personality? i brought this question to the people being interviewed and to one other who had first hand experience of what it was that went on in the art program I taught. My new colleagues in the Faculty of Education, not knowing me well, not having seen the journey work in action seemed to think it likely was personality. Me? i wondered.

Kim and i talked further,

No, because if you say that then how is it that you managed to relate to [she lists some other students] when you had them? Because in social — like if you think about it that way, because socially I can see like I can sit here with you and completely get along with you in talking outside the classroom... [A certain student] used to frustrate me and I used to get so ticked off with him, and you'd be like, "Well, why don't you explain what you're saying?" And, "why don't we see where you're coming from? So that we can work with what you're saying" Because there's no use in trying to force him to think the way we think and there's no use in trying to force us to think the way he thinks because we're too , on two totally different — and that's personality!~ But you still got through to them....

dm: I don't know. No, I don't know... But i guess that's the thing that i wrestle with is, i think, "yeah, i guess part of it's like being a patient person" or whatever, but i think the other part of it is knowing like the way i approached art was to respect the person's art making. So, if [his view] was different from mine I still tried to respect what he made.

Kim: Oh, absolutely! And you did!

dm: It was his personal journey. And that's why I am saying it's not personality,

Kim: [impatient] NO! Exactly! It's not personality... I am totally agreeing with you! (Kim, 2.8, 11-20)

i had to admit that there seemed to be more at play in all of this than merely my personality when so often in conversation someone describes interconnecting intellectual, somatic, artistic and spiritual as SL did in describing her work:

And this one is called "Canker is a disease of plants... cancer is a disease of animals" and it is a line from James Joyce's novel Portrait of the artist as a young man. And it's one of the verses that Stephen Daedalus has to repeat in school... you know the spelling between the canker with a k and cancer with a c, but I decided to take it a little more literally than that and talk about, you know, how things die, pass on. And plants die. And everything dies and passes on. So, what I did here was wanting to mimic manuscript illumination, which talks about spiritual things and life passing and that kind of thing. So, I used etching to do that. And it's a straight etching: there's no photo-etch to it. And so around — I wanted it to be decorative, but I also, everything is symbolic for me. The sides: these weaving strip of little dog bones — they're really tiny— they're not how a dog's skeleton looks but they're doing jumping jacks and smiling and that kind of thing and little flowers up through there....It took a long time. And then ... trees and winding shrubbery, and then... again the little dogs jumping and things and then there's another strip [of images] that's got utensils and bowls just talking about sustaining life... And his problem dying was he was not able to eat or go to the bathroom... so then in the centre sort of suspended by threads is a cocoon and inside of it is me as a mortal being. I especially wanted to put hair so you could tell. And that's my great grandmother who died a year previous to this, and, uh, a little dog skeleton. I'm holding him on my lap... there's just a really empty space that's got fish in it. I wanted to have water and stuff close by. And then over here, which is very tiny, there's another little town... and there's a church on top of the hill and there's a little graveyard underneath and flowers and that kind of thing. [her voice is very quiet now] So. That's that one [pause]. (SL, 2. 7, 24-44)

This description demonstrates an artist braiding the technical, the aesthetic, the emotional and the intellectual. Perhaps there was some of my personality, some of the teacher, in the evolution of this work, but I doubt it.

Deaf students came to our school to attend some hearing classes, in an effort to cross cultures. I was fortunate enough to have had the chance to teach a number of these individuals, and often as not I had the same woman translating. This colleague underscored that what I was trying to do in my classes was innovative and succeeding. Such an aware and concerned person should be the blessing of every classroom. She was eyes observing my fledgling teaching practice as much as she was voice communicating with the deaf students. She was a gentle but critical mirror and she worked hard at keeping an open and honest communication with me. I value her input

highly. Without it, i would never have attended graduate school: i was ready to dismiss the high energy level in my classes and the depth and quality of the work that came from them as products of fortuitous circumstance, such as the collection of personalities of my students. Her voice suggested that perhaps, just perhaps, something really necessary was happening instead. Her word for my art classes was always "necessary".

i ask Kim about this:

dm: Do you remember Joyce? Our translator? Was she in your class? I think she was in your class?

Kim: Did she break her wrist or something?

dm: Yeah. She used to say to me all the time that i earned the right to teach people. That... respect...wasn't a one-way thing.

Kim: No, it wasn't.

dm: And i think that was a good way of explaining it.

Kim: I think so, too. I really do. And I wish more people could teach like that, but most people don't. They don't have the patience to. I don't know, I don't know. It's quite a thing that...I mean, it was fun while it lasted and we enjoyed ourselves and that was great. But now when we start looking at it, it's like, yeah, you did have a big influence at the time on a lot of us. But nobody really thinks about it at the time... Cause I knew you had an impact on my life, but i didn't know how. ..

dm: And that's the thing though, i try to let people do their own thing in a contained space. And i think i was pretty successful at it. At having thirty-two individuals in the class at the same time. (Kim, 2.9, 13 - 2.10, 5)

Perhaps it was personality, but i doubt it. Kim argued that it was not. She put it this way,

I wouldn't have gone [to art school, on to NSCAD] if it wasn't for you. And that class and what it took me through... And I think it's the same with a number of the people that showed up here [at the art school], cause you took a lot of us in a similar direction... you knew what it could do for

us in fostering our little beginnings. Like you planted the seed. (Kim 2.24, 22-32)

i was embarrassed, and self-conscious. To deflect this, i teased her. The conversation continued like this:

dm:[teasing] Oh, now my little sproutlings are now little seedlings! i can't handle it, you'll be trees in no time! [laughs] And you'll be so happy to be a tree! [laughs]

Kim:[seriously] I am a tree.

Let there be no mistake. "I am a tree" speaks volumes. As far as Kim is concerned she is who she is, and where she is because of her own journey work. i just showed them a way. They took it.

### **a way: beginning in the end, end in the beginning**

SL was at one point very involved in all the arts. i often wondered why she ended choosing to work in art. She tried to explain how art and other arts classes differed for her, and touches on the intangibility of it all.

It's really hard to explain. Maybe the creativity or energy it takes to be something else is similar to the energy it takes to put like something [she realizes she is gesticulating with vigor, so she leans into the microphone] I'm pointing to my head [both laugh] something you know from here [her head] onto paper. It's the same kind of energy to take that and project to somebody else, like to try that way. It's different. It is different. And I suppose applause is different or — It's a different kind of thing. It's different, I don't know. [exasperated] It's hard to explain. (SL, 1.9, 5-10)

Kim wrestles with the fact that much of what we are trying to talk about is so difficult

(unspeakable), because it is so hard to 'put a finger' on it (intangible):

Because, and the thing was, and you showed us that there was more to art than just, than just, like, art history books and painting and — I don't know. I don't — Ahhhh! I have this thing but I can't exactly put a finger on what it was, but it was the approach, and the — I don't know. I don't know, it's hard." (Kim 2.3, 5-8)



Like journey work can take a young person through the hard times to strength, so too, does this re-search effort take us through the hard (to explain). SL continues,

For me, the most important things are the things that are intangible. You know, relationships with people, or feelings...or things that don't make sense or you can't explain... Things that I can't express in any other way, than to show you or to try and show you... So, relationships with people or people that have died that I never knew but somehow feel that I know, or relationships with animals... (SL 1.10 13-20)

We are all related. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. Whatever we do to ourselves, we do to the web.

Let this be a beginning. A beginning in the end, an end in the beginning.

**She saw all things...  
All things true,  
and all things false,  
all things turned against life  
and all things turned toward life,  
all things seen only through the eyes of that  
which weighs the heart with heart,  
and not with mind alone.**

**.  
.  
.**

**but the most important question  
in order to see into and behind,  
to weigh the value of all that lives,  
wooooooooooor  
aieeeee th'  
sooooooooool?  
wooooooooooor  
aieeeee th'  
sooooooooool?**

**Where is the soul?  
Where is the soul?**

(Estes, 1995, p.502)

### **what have we learned?**

Through this research, i asked if transformative art experiences, such as art as journey work, have an impact on the lives of students. In attempting to understand how their lives have been affected, i wondered what might be revealed by revisiting them, the students of art as journey work, students who learned to work through life's challenges in their art.

Transformative art experience appears to have had a positive impact on the lives of the women i interviewed. Not only did art as journey work resonate with these two women, but art also has had an impact on their lives to the present, in the very least because they both now structure their lives around art and art making.

These two women used art as journey work to grapple with some challenging moments in their lives and within their selves. Though the major challenges were different for both — Kim grappled with and worked through issues outside of her self (issues of an artistic nature, the separation and impending divorce of her mother and step father) and SL struggled with and worked through a crisis within her self (depression and an eating disorder) — both also faced an uncertain future and wrestled with life decisions. These women used art as journey work as a way of navigating the various challenges. They worked through these things in their art.

That the art as journey work had an impact on their lives cannot be overstated. They both would state categorically that art is vital to their lives, even today — SL has said art saved hers. The fact that both have gone on to study art on a full time basis, in their unique fashion and different

venues, is a testimony to art's enduring importance in their lives.

i went into the research with seeing a relationship between internal and external existence: the personal is *more than* political, it is ecological. Whatever our students do and whoever they are is more than just a representation of their inner selves but also a reflection and a prediction of the contexts they found/will find themselves in. To assist in unfolding this inter-relationship, i first discussed the intangible elements in art education: art's ability to honour the personal; to nurture the affective; and to braid the cognitive/affective/somatic/spiritual/intuitive intelligences. The women's stories introduced in the findings section elucidate these points. Then, i return to the literature to take a cursory look at the dominant culture through the presentation of some common cultural metaphors. i relate how art purports to act as antidote in responding to these metaphors. Finally, i endeavour to braid these interests together. My research presents evidence that contradicts the dominant direction of education, a direction that art education is following. Because of this research, i suggest that the dominant direction is worth questioning.

This research implies that art education, particularly art education that operates from an awareness of this interconnected perspective, is vital, to the balanced holistic development of the person. In this information age, educators need to ask "Are we training the whole mind or are we just training [a] part?" and interrogate further, asking "How would you go about training the whole mind" (Fox & Sheldrake, 1996, p.187)? If a person is a microcosm of the environment, the implications are far-reaching. Research investigating the educative impact of art learning on all the aspects of the personality — spiritual, emotional, and bodily learning, not just

mental/cognitive activity — should be supported and encouraged. Art education, research, and advocacy must continue.

Advocating for art to the school community and beyond might include overt activity, such as discussions to articulate art's benefits to others, especially those people who might lack of art experience. Art educators can defend and promote hands-on learning *as well as* new technologies, because “what we create ourselves, what we make ourselves, we remember” (Fox & Sheldrake, p.205). Hands-on art education and new technologies are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. Art educators cannot remain silent on the value of hands-on art education: our students, our subject area, and perhaps even our planet's fate hang in the balance.

Art education research could look at the use of art as therapy in the schools. A representative of the British Columbia Art Therapy Association could not recall any teachers who had gone through their program with an eye to going back to use what they had learned in the schools. She said that only one or two art teachers had trained with them; however she said their goal was not to use the training within the school but rather to venture into private practice elsewhere.

**so?**

So, art education research dismisses the affective value of art education at its peril.

**what could we learn?**

Long term comparative studies could be undertaken into art as journey's effect on the students

who partake of it. Because art as journey work is intended to be a response to consumer culture, a comparative study tracking attitudes, such as avarice levels, of students within art as journey work classes versus those outside of them (other subjects, other art classes) could be conducted.

Research of alternative models of education, outside the existing paradigm, would offer new approaches to art teaching. Requiring that the teacher position her/him self differently, perhaps as mentor rather than as instructor, these new approaches would likely be cooperative, rather than competitive — such as peer group work to get “people to educate each other” (Fox & Sheldrake, p.196) — and may include, though not exclusively, the apprenticeship and/or workshop models.

Art education research could continue to learn from aboriginal peoples, their cultures and their holistic approaches to education, because “[these] cultures lasted tens of thousands of years. Ours was ready to blow up the world after three hundred. We should draw from what’s there” (Fox & Sheldrake, 1996, p. 197).

In the classroom, teachers could encourage students to adapt assignments to personal interests and exploration. Classroom design could be reconsidered to ensure that it fosters safety. Times of contemplative silence built into classroom practice could be made available for the inner explorations of journey work. Curricula could be revamped to include projects that further encourage self reflection.

Because art as journey work embraces some art therapy techniques and exercises, faculties of education which offer art education courses and/or specializations could introduce art therapy components to existing courses or add art therapy courses to the course selections offered. Alternatively, these faculties could require some art therapy courses or experience from the student teacher applicant in that person's art education and training. By this requirement, faculties of education would acknowledge the value of the therapeutic and send a strong message of the value of this unique aspect of art education to the aspiring teacher as well as the community at large.

Faculties of education, school administrators, teachers unions and parents ought to encourage and foster teacher personal exploration, personal growth and wellness. This might be done through the teacher training process, as stated above, but should be especially considered when outlining the expectations for development of new teachers entering the profession. Support structures for the teaching practitioner who chooses to teach transformatively ought to be in place, for it is a demanding and exhausting curriculum.

### **personal implications**

Woven through this research, i recognized a second, less obvious research question. Through this research, i have, in fact, been interrogating my own teaching practice. In so doing, i am asking myself whether my teaching practice did what i hoped it would do: i examine the gap between what teachers say and what they do. This interrogation has not been overt, though it is a powerful — lived — subtext nonetheless. So, what *have* i learned from the re-search process?

What have i gained?

As i noted in the document, i fell into teaching as a profession almost by accident. Now, i commit to it by choice. When i was teaching and feeling so very overwhelmed, i thought i had to take my gift and put it in a new box. The box and the gift fit fine, i realize, but how i carry them will make all the difference. i finish this work aware of what i must do to tend to me — my inner life — as i teach with the depth i feel is necessary.

In the end, my parents have unquestioningly supported whenever and however they could, despite not understanding. They recognize how important art is for me, and i am grateful that their fear did not ultimately hold them back from striving to understand. When confronted with their fear and misunderstandings, i was disappointed that i could not articulate art's importance to them for me, for my life — an inarticulateness echoed, in discussions of art's intangibility particularly, in many places of the research. Now i wonder if perhaps that art's unique gift is not intangible though it has been untouchable. Perhaps it is not so much unspeakable as unspoken.

Through this research process, i have found my voice: i will speak. i will continue to dialogue about the merits of transformative art education. i commit myself to striving for balance, both within and without...

And, i recognize that this journey continues...



*A bit of advice  
given to a young Native American  
at the time of his initiation:*

*"As you go the way of life,  
you will see a great chasm.*

*Jump.*

*It is not as wide as you think."*

(Campbell in Osbon, 1991, p. 15)

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