VISUAL CULTURE JAM: 
ART, PEDAGOGY AND CREATIVE RESISTANCE

by

DAVID G. DARTS

B.A., University of British Columbia, 1992 
B.Ed., University of British Columbia, 1996 
M.Ed., University of British Columbia, 2002

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF 
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF 

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of Curriculum Studies)

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

2004

©David G. Darts, 2004
ABSTRACT

I seek to understand the role that art education might play in the development of socially engaged students. Informed by theorists in critical, social reconstructive and visual culture art education, I explore how engagement with social issues through the examination and production of visual culture impacts students’ understanding and awareness about these social issues. I also examine how this engagement influences students’ understanding and awareness of the social roles and cultural functions of art/visual culture.

Located within a Visual Arts 11/12 classroom in an inner city Canadian high school, this study addresses omissions in the educational literature; specifically the paucity of data supporting the conceptual connections being made among the art/visual culture, education, and social issues. While art and art education are regularly promoted by educational theorists as catalysts for social and individual change, few studies have concentrated on high school students working in classroom settings.

Working as an artist/researcher/teacher over the course of three months, I adopt a relational approach to the study, which is informed by a/r/t/ography, hermeneutics, visual ethnography, and action research. This pluralistic methodology includes a rejection of hierarchical conceptualizations that portray research as something that is done to students, rather than with them. As such, the students are actively involved in the collection of visual data, including digital video and photographs. Data collection also includes ethnographic interviews, student written responses, field notes, and critical research reflections. Art making is used throughout as an important component of the meaning-making process.

Conceptualized and created as an academic assemblage, this dissertation is a contiguous fusion of research images and texts. It concludes by outlining how engagement in social issues through art/visual culture can increase students’ understanding and awareness of those issues. It also shows how this engagement can provide an increased comprehension of the connections between art/visual culture and the sociocultural sphere. The dissertation ends by illustrating how engagement through the production of art/visual culture can empower students with a sense of social agency, voice and hope.
VISUAL CULTURE JAM: ART, PEDAGOGY AND CREATIVE RESISTANCE

DAVID DARTS
DEDICATION

For:
Eileen Margaret Darts - Sexy, Creative, Smart.
Julian Steele Darts - Fearless, Funny, Cute.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT......ii

DEDICATION......iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS......vii

DON'T PANIC......1
Artist/Researcher/Teacher's Statement.....2
The Frame....5
Methodological Notes: There Are Methods to My Madness...10
Contextualizing Images...13
*Telling* Stories: The Shaping Hands of the Artist/Teacher/Researcher.....20

ART EDUCATION FOR A CHANGE.....26
Artful Teaching in the Secondary School...27
The Social Lives of Art Educators.....29
What Does This Mean? Identifying the Quest for Meaning in the Art Classroom......33
Art, Education, and Society....38
Art Education in a Democracy.....40
Visualizing Society: Art Education in a Visual Culture....44

VISUAL CULTURE JAM: ART, PEDAGOGY, AND CREATIVE RESISTANCE....46
Political Edutainment....48
Critical Resistance: Art, Pedagogy and Opposition...54
Visibly Shaken: The Oppositional Power of Art...57
The Art of Culture Jamming....60
Creative Resistance: Critical Cultural Production in the Classroom.....66
Notes....71
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BRINGING EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH TO LIFE</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/r/t/ography</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between and Amidst</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The A/r/t/ographical Whole is Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renderings as Theoretical Spaces of Knowing and Being</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Power of the Visual</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-Searching: Hermeneutics and Educational Inquiry</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tricks of Interpretation: Acting Creatively and Responsibly</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting Action Research: Collaborative Inquiry in the Classroom</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEAD GAMES: ARTISTIC AND EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating Awareness and Understanding: Learning about Visual Culture</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Each Other</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Roles of Art</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic Agency and Voice</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to In-Form/Educate</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GETTING A HEAD START: IMPLICATIONS AND PROMISING DIRECTIONS</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Headway: Increasing Students' Awareness and Understanding</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Social Issues Through Visual Culture</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads Up: Students’ Understanding and Awareness of the Social</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles and Cultural Functions of Art/Visual Culture</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking Heads: Creating Agency and Voice Through Artistic Interventions</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Voices: Generating Student Voice</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let's Put Our Heads Together: Students as Teachers</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Your Face: Students as Researchers</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Voices in Our Heads</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heading Towards Sociocultural Participation: Some Concluding</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Games DVD</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Interview and Written Response Questions</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX C</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artists' Statements</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
thank you!

acknowledgements

Thank you to Eileen Darts, my best friend and partner in life and love, for her support and encouragement and regular supply of chocolate chip cookies throughout this exciting and strenuous scholarly endeavor.

Thank you to my son Julian Steele Darts for teaching me to see the wondrous beauty in the everyday and for keeping me silly in the face of danger.

Thanks to the wonderful students and art teacher at my research school!

Thank you to my parents for their devotion to me and to each other, and for not following through on their threats to send me to military college in the ninth grade.

Thank you to Dr. F. Graeme Chalmers for his honesty and sincerity and for believing in the importance and relevance of my work.

Thank you to Dr. Karen Meyer for her wonderful mentorship and caring big sistership, and for showing me how to walk through the world with integrity and grace.

Thank you to Dr. Kit Grauer for keeping me meaningfully employed during the last three years and for helping me to have “way too much fun” during graduate school.

Thank you to Dr. Rita Irwin for generously sharing her boundless wisdom and knowledge with me, and for cheerfully answering all of my pesky emails.

Thank you to the students, faculty and staff of the UBC Faculty of Education for their guidance, friendship and support. Thank you also to (the soon to be Dr.) Jacqui Gingras, my colleague and friend and fellow email philosopher.
In many of the more relaxed civilizations on the Outer Eastern Rim of the Galaxy, the Hitch Hiker’s Guide has already supplanted the great Encyclopedia Galactica as the standard repository of all knowledge and wisdom, for though it has many omissions and contains much that is apocryphal, or at least wildly inaccurate, it scores over the older, more pedestrian work in two important respects.

First, it is slightly cheaper; and secondly it has the words DON’T PANIC inscribed in large friendly letters on its cover” (italics in the original, Adams, 1980, p. 3).
LIKE MANY CONTEMPORARY scholars, researchers and artists before me, I have come to re-cognize the complex and hermeneutic relationships that exist between words and images, writers and readers, performers and audience, artists and viewers, researchers and research participants. As Jessica Hoffman Davis (1997) writes, "at the heart of the aesthetic experience – a primary condition – is a conversation between two active meaning-makers, the producer and the perceiver of a work of art. This conversation results in a co-construction of meaning in which both parties play pivotal roles" (p. 21). In many ways, this notion of the co-construction of meaning echoes Richardson's (1997) description of the allegorical and dialogical qualities of life stories.

The story of a life is less than the actual life, because the story told is selective, partial, contextually constructed and because the life is not yet over. But the story of a life is also more than the life, the contours and meanings allegorically extending to others, others seeing themselves, knowing themselves through another's life story, re-visioning their own, arriving where they started and knowing the place for the first time. (p. 6)

What follows is an academic assemblage, a digital-sculptural juxtaposition of texts and images, graphics and graphy, understandings and overtures, insights and outrages. I was inspired by the readymades of Marcel Duchamp, the collages of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, the assembled sculptures and experimental texts of Kurt Schwitters, the cut-ups of William Burroughs, the avante-garde compositions of John Cage, the aphoristic hypertext-graphic media scriptures of Marshall McLuhan, and the sociopolitical audio collages of Negaviveland. This dissertation has been cut and pasted from the visual artifacts and cul-
tural materials of my everyday lived experiences over the last five months as an artist, researcher, and teacher. As you begin your journey with/through/in this academic assemblage, I encourage you to read/view/interact with/co-construct it from the inside out. Like eating an Oreo® Double Stuf cookie, I invite you to lick the icing first and work your way slowly outwards toward the chocolate wafers on the outside. For as you shall see, and similar to Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot (1983), I feel the need to “tell the stories, paint the portrait—‘from the inside out’” (p. 7).

I also feel the need to forewarn you that the findings I’ve uncovered, the images and portraits I’ve generated, the research artifacts I’ve collected, the quotes I’ve amassed and stories I’m about to tell, are incomplete, fragmentary and jagged—purposefully lacking in complete conclusions and finished suppositions. Like Mieke Bal (2001), who asserts that quotations stand for the utter fragmentation of language itself, I believe that the sound bites, ephemeral images, cultural symbols, video clips, semantic signs, and commercial breaks of our everyday lived experiences represent the ambiguous, fragmented, and hybrid texture of contemporary life itself. Bal explains:

This concept of quotation turns the precise quotation of utterances into the borrowing of discursive habits, and as a result, intertextuality merges into interdiscursivity. This interdiscursivity accounts for pluralized meanings—typically ambiguities—and stipulates that meaning cannot be reduced to the artist’s intention. (p. 272)

Thus, through this academic assemblage, I have attempted to embrace and honor the fragmentations, ambiguities, interdiscursivities, openings, and loose ends that I believe are inherently embedded within the research process. Although I have done my best to re-member—bell hooks (1995) reminds us that “[t]he word remember (re-member) evokes the coming together of severed parts, fragments becoming a whole” (italics in original, p. 64)—the multiple and shifting fragments, the philosophical flotsam and jetsam, the data and research debris of the last six months, I readily accept that my re-memberings will ultimately remain unfinished, partial, incomplete. Like Mieke Bal, I too have come to accept that the meanings revealed and generated within this ‘research text’ cannot be reduced to my own intentions.

I believe these hermeneutic understandings of stories, artworks, etc. (e.g. as hybrid spaces of connection, sites of conversation, places of co-construction of meanings and identities) can also be directly applied to research—both to research texts and to the process of inquiry itself. As Springgay (2002) asserts:

Art as research intends to disrupt previously held assumptions about what it means to know and to be. Contemporary art in particular challenges the master-genius narrative replacing the conceit that knowledge is contained within the work of art with a new understanding of what meanings audiences bring to the work of art. In this sense creativity is not an individual act distanced from viewer, but rather the locus of creativity moves from author to one that creates a presence with the audience. (pp. 10-11)

According to James Olthuis (2000), being in the presence of creative works necessitates that speakers/authors/artists and hearers/readers/
viewers are always in the process of "be(com)ing" (p. 147). He posits that:

Every story, test, artwork is an invitation, a gift with an appeal. No work, in other words, is complete in itself, finished, closed off. It remains open, offering space and leeway for response, filling in, joining with, connection. This is a two-way movement. Not only does the story/text/artwork ask to be received and integrated into the world of the hearer/reader/viewer, but it also invites, even implores, the respondent to tarry and linger with it, following up its leads into the world it opens up. (p. 147)

This dialetical notion of active co-participation between producer and consumer in the creation of a story or artwork echoes the methodological approach to research advocated by Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997). In The Art and Science of Portraiture, she provides an excellent description of the differences between listening to and listening for a story.

The former is a more passive, receptive stance in which one waits to absorb the information and does little to give it shape and form. The latter is a much more active, engaged position in which one searches for the story, seeks it out, is central in its creation. This does not mean that one directs the drama or constructs the scenes. It does mean that one participates in identifying and selecting the story, and helps to shape the story's coherence and aesthetic. (pp. 12-13)

As such, I designed this academic assemblage to trouble notions of scholarship that conceive of readers/viewers/audiences as merely passive consumers. As Eric McLuhan (1997) once wrote (in describing his father's approach to scholarship), "[t]here's no participation in just telling: that's simply for consumers – they sit there and swallow it, or not. But the aphoristic style gives you the opportunity to get a dialogue going, to engage people in the process of discovery" (p. 45). Accordingly, please accept my invitation to join in the dialogue, to fill in the blanks, to reassemble and re-member the images, texts, and research artifacts, and, in so doing, to actively participate in the process of co-discovery and co-creation. To borrow from the caption on the side of the box,

SOME ASSEMBLY IS REQUIRED.
The Frame

BROADLY FRAMED, I have designed this research study with the aim of examining and better understanding the role that art and art education might play in the development of socially engaged and responsible students/citizens. My study draws upon visual culture and critical theorists who assert that students must be imbued with the expres-
sive and critical tools in which to analyze, interpret, and respond to the increasingly visual and mediated world(s) in which they live (Duncum, 1999; 2001; 2002; Freedman, 2000; 2003; Kincheloe, 2003; Tavin; 2000; 2003). This study also builds on literature in multicultural and social reconstructive arts education which suggests that engagement in the arts can facilitate the development of an ethic of care, thereby enabling participants to positively transform themselves, their communities and the world(s) in which they live (Blandy, 1987; Chalmers, 1987; 2001; Garber, 2001; Greene, 1995; 2001; Stuhr, 1994; 2003). My guiding question entering into the study was: How might engagement with social issues through the examination and production of art/visual culture impact students' understanding and awareness about these issues? As a corollary to this question, I was also interested in how this engagement might influence students' understanding and awareness of the social roles and cultural functions of art/visual culture. These questions arose out of my own pedagogical experiences both within and beyond the classroom, as well as from a comprehensive review of the literature, which revealed a paucity of empirical data supporting the conceptual connections being made among art/visual culture, education, and social issues. While art and art education have been promoted regularly by critical and social reconstructive art educational theorists as catalysts for social and individual change, very few studies had concentrated on high school classroom settings.

As such, my study focused on a group of Visual Art 11 and 12 students attending a small inner city high school in a large Canadian urban center. This school serves approximately 500 students in grades 8 through 12. The student body reflects Canada's diverse sociocultural population and is home to a large number of young people from families who have recently immigrated to Canada. Over the course of three months, I worked in the classroom as an artist/researcher/teacher (the significance of this term is illustrated and explored later in Bringing Educational Research to Life). Throughout this period, I served as the students' primary instructor. Together, the students and I examined the connections between a number of social issues (e.g. media concentration, violence and war, consumerism, discrimination, etc.) and the visual culture of the everyday. This investigation involved a critical examination of a variety of visual texts, including print advertisements, television programs and commercials, movie clips and photographs of contemporary visual and performance art, and images of culture jamming.

In designing the curriculum unit for this research project, one of my goals included teaching the students how to expose, critically interpret, and deconstruct the creative strategies and aesthetic tactics commonly employed by artists, de-
signers, and other producers of visual texts. I approached this task by providing the students with examples of how to critically interact with a variety of visual artifacts and materials, including magazine advertisements, television commercials, movies, television newscasts, and contemporary visual and performance art. Like Howell (2003), I believe that most of us (often especially the young) are practiced and experienced viewers of contemporary visual texts, but that too much of this experience is “grounded in habit rather than analysis” (p. 5). And like Howell, I also believe that “[w]e are all too often complacent and accept visual literacy as a passive rather than an active pursuit. We take too much for granted, and (consequently) leave too much unseen” (p. 5). Thus, I made a conscious effort not to take visual literacy skills for granted.

Although a few of the students in the class indicated that they had received lessons from other teachers in how to ‘read’ visual media, many others in the group revealed they had no previous experience in analyzing visual texts. Thus, I consistently worked to make the familiar aspects of visual culture less familiar for all of the students. I wanted the students to look again at images they commonly took for granted.

I also encouraged students to challenge disenfranchised conceptions of the social role and political function of art. This included suggesting that most art does not exist within the formal isolation of the art gallery. I worked to elucidate for the students that visual culture, including television programs, blockbuster films, websites, music videos, fashion magazines, and advertising campaigns, is already central to their lives. I tried to reveal how these daily visual experiences affect the ways we adorn ourselves, the ways we speak and act, the types of dreams and desires we have, the ways we create, even the very ways we think. Thus, throughout the curriculum unit, we discussed the roles these media play in our daily lives and scrutinized the symbiotic ways in which we each engage with and through popular visual culture. We discussed hooks’ (1995) assertion that acts of appropriation are “part of the process by which we make ourselves” (p. 11) and spoke at length about the social and political role(s) that the visual and visuality plays in our everyday lives. Many of these investigations led to corollary discussions about related social issues. These included racial, gender and class ste-
reotyping, discrimination, body image and related health issues, sweatshop labor practices, youth marketing strategies, violence and war, and the environmental and social costs of living within a consumer dominated culture. We examined some of the ways in which visual culture in-forms, influences, and subverts our understandings about social, cultural and political issues. Throughout, one of my overriding objectives in examining popular visual culture was to have the students come to understand media and popular culture as both compelling forms of entertainment and powerful modes of education - essentially types of *edutainment*.

Besides deconstructing, interpreting, and analyzing popular visual texts, we also studied the work of a number of contemporary visual and performance artists. These examinations were focussed primarily on socially engaged artists, including culture jammers and other art activists, who consciously connect their work to the sociocultural sphere. Throughout the unit, I also supplied the students with opportunities to participate in the production of culture and cultural artifacts through art making based around social issues. This decision was a conscious attempt to actively engage students in thoughtful and meaningful artistic production and to move them out of what Paley (1995) describes as "passive cultural roles" (p. 3). He explains that:

Familiar educational notions have traditionally identified young people as 'students' or 'pupils,' locating them in passive cultural roles where – under varying conditions of supervision – they are expected to serve a kind of apprenticeship, gaining the skills, dispositions, and knowledge that the adults of a given society deem important for them to possess. It is only at some later chronological point, after they have demonstrated a certain level of accomplishment, that youngsters are permitted to engage (albeit differently on the basis of ability, appearance, gender, color, and class) in the various tasks of cultural practice. During their early years, however, those domains of culture associated with the making of discourses, histories, and systems of representation are, for the most part, a closed case. In the economies of cultural production, the years of childhood are only a bridge to a future time. (pp. 3-4)

This cultural production initially included the creation of large collages based around social issues. These collages served as visual brainstorming activities and as discussion pieces. They were later utilized as springboards for the major project, a series of individual and collective assemblages, entitled *Head Games*. Constructed using discarded mannequin heads and various other cultural artifacts and found materials, these sculptures were each based around social issues of personal significance to the students. Although most of the students chose to work individually, two small groups of students decided to co-create their sculptures. This project culminated in a group 'artistic intervention,' in which the students...
and I installed their ‘show’ in front of the city’s art museum, near one of the busiest commercial shopping districts in North America. This project and the corresponding installation are discussed in detail in Head Games: Artistic and Educational Interventions.

While I discuss my methodological approach below, an explication of the methodological strategies that I employed during the study can be found in Bringing Educational Research to Life. Suffice to say, I adopted a ‘relational approach’ to this study in an attempt to honor the teacher-student relationship and as a rejection of hierarchical conceptualizations that portray research as something that is done to students rather than with them (Cole & Knowles, 2000; Jardine, 1998; Smith, 1999). This approach included actively involving the students in the collection of visual data (including digital photographs and video of the students and their work), much of which appears throughout this dissertation and the corresponding DVD. My data collection also included interviews, written student responses, field notes and research reflections (some of which also appear throughout this document). Students were invited to create their own pseudonyms and contributed to the analysis process by responding (during class discussions) to the still and video images we collected during the study. The collection and analysis process was ongoing and emergent, and included art making as an important component of the meaning-making process. I have come to understand the images we’ve collected and created as not simply objects of study and modes of data (re)collection, but also, significantly, as mediums of thought, actions and communication (Taylor & Saarinen, 1994).
There is a long tradition within both quantitative and qualitative research methods to produce monographs or other representational research texts that present 'complete' depictions of researched phenomena. Often the underlying assumption associated with these practices is that both the inquiry process itself and the generated data (and the subsequent interpretations) are methodologically and theoretically unquestionable. This assumption is evident in Goetz and LeCompte's (1984) description of the complex process of organizing, analyzing, and portraying ethnographic data, which they claim is analogous to the act of assembling a jigsaw puzzle.

The edge pieces are located first and assembled to provide a frame of reference. Then attention is devoted to those more striking aspects of the puzzle picture that can be identified readily from the mass of puzzle pieces and assembled separately. Next, having stolen some surreptitious glances at the picture on the box, the puzzle worker places the assembled parts in their general position within the frame and, finally, locates and adds the connecting pieces until no holes remain (pp. 191-192)

Although there is a certain allure in adopting a methodological approach to research that conceptualizes data as pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that will ultimately fall into place so that "no holes remain," I can't help but question such impermeable and complete notions of the inquiry process. To extend Goetz and LeCompte's puzzle metaphor a little further, I find myself considering what might happen if some of the pieces of the puzzle go missing,
or don’t fit together quite like the picture on the front of the box. I find myself speculating about what would happen if I failed to utilize an ‘out of the box’ approach to research, resisted following the instruction manual, or consciously negated to ‘surreptitiously glance at’ the picture on the front of the box. Rather than producing complete or whole pictures of research, I find myself wondering about the holes — about the gaps, the caesuras, the openings between, within, throughout the inquiry process. These questions ultimately inspired me to begin (re)searching for an approach to my study that would acknowledge and honour the absences, the holes, missing pieces, ambiguities and uncertainties that I believed were inherent within the inquiry process.

What I settled upon was a pluralistic and hybrid methodological approach. A/r/t/ography, an emerging arts based site of living inquiry, is informed by hermeneutics, action research, phenomenology, visual ethnography (and other qualitative methodologies). It has provided me with a hybrid methodological space that encourages the enacting of visual, written, and performative processes. Not intended to be complete, a/r/t/ography has come to serve as a permeable covering, a malleable theoretical wrapping that has directed, shaped, and (in)formed my research study. Though I contend the representational whole is fundamentally greater than the sum of its parts, I do not claim to have reproduced a whole whole. In fact, I would like to suggest the missing pieces and absences are as important to consider as the parts that have been used. As Fels (1998) explains:

The telling of moments will be rife with holes:

- gaps questions that
  - signal absence(s)
  - and as-yet unrealized possibilities. And the
- 'documentation – fragmentary, elusive, a choreography-geometry
  - of moments and lost
  - rememberings – will be
- as eloquent in its silences as it is in its telling. (p. 34)

This position is congruent with Lawrence-Lightfoot’s (1997) conception that “[w]hat gets left out is often as important as what gets included; the blank spaces and the silences also shape the form of the story” (p. 12). Springgay (2002) meanwhile, reminds us that “[t]he fragment resists an attempt at being put together as a whole...and thus is caught in an endless web of uncertainty” (p. 7). Thus, as Taylor
and Saarinen (1994) metaphorically suggest, "[h]oles in the net are openings for the imagination" (Gaping, p. 7).

By reassembling the relationships between researcher and audience, research and research text, I am spanning and subverting the divide that too often exists between academic texts and non-academic audiences. As Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) points out:

academic documents – even those that focus on issues of broad public concern – are read by a small audience of people in the same disciplinary field, who often share similar conceptual frameworks and rhetoric. The formulaic structure of the written pieces – research question, data collection and analysis, interpretation, policy implications – is meant to inform, not inspire. (p. 10)

Rather than following the formulaic academic approach to representation that Lawrence-Lightfoot describes, one which encourages the use of esoteric language and opaque descriptions of researched phenomena, I have instead chosen to adopt what I feel is a more accessible and, ultimately, more user friendly, approach – one I hope both in-forms and inspires. Although I acknowledge that any discussion about accessible representations of research quickly places us on a slippery philosophical slope, I also recognize my scholarly and social obligations to reach out beyond the guarded gates of the academic community. As Willinsky (2000) explains:

The insularity of social sciences, in which research is principally produced for other researchers and those whom they teach, stands for me as a breach of the social contract. Or at least, I think social scientists have an obligation to consider whether more could be done to improve the public value of their work. Despite grant-winning prose from social scientists to the contrary, the profession appears to rely on trickle-down informatics to carry some part of its work down from the great scholarly journals into the public domain. What goes missing is consideration of public access rights or whether the information is in a readily comprehensible form. (p. 280)

"Responsible thought cannot remain confined within the walls of the academy but must take to the street."

(Taylor & Saarinen, 1994, Communicative, p. 10)
Images

"CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSES OF HISTORY, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY SEEM TO BE SPINNING IN 'TEXTUALITY,' FEELING THE LOSS OF REFERENCE AS A LOSS OF BEARINGS, FEELING SUDDENLY, UNEASILY LIFTED FROM READY CARTOLOGIES OF MEANING INTO AN OZ-LIKE WORLD NOT OF MEANINGLESSNESS EXACTLY BUT OF Duplicity, Doubleness, AND SIMULATION. FROM THE EYE OF THE STORM, WHAT IS/WAS IS ALWAYS ON THE VERGE OF BECOMING SOMETHING ELSE. WORDS DON'T STICK."
(POLLOCK, 1998, P. 73)

"THERE IS ALWAYS SOMETHING STUPID ABOUT TURNING POETRY INTO A PROSE THAT IS SUPPOSED TO EXPLAIN THE MEANING OF POETRY."
(DEWEY, 1934, P. 165)

ALTHOUGH Dewey (1934) reminds us of the foolishness of converting poetry into prose that is supposed to clarify the meaning of poetry, I suspect that he would also have agreed that many of us are not well 'versed' in the languages of creative expression. This fact is manifest in the reality that, without guidance or direct instruction, many readers/viewers/audiences are only able to access purely poetic or visual works on a surface level. As Irwin (2004) points out, "those who have not been immersed in a textual analysis of imagery or who have become anesthetized to the language of imagery, may only be able to enter the visual world through superficial means unless they are guided by narrative text" (p. 27). Thus, con-textualizing images or other artistic works by providing illustrative texts (e.g. artist's statements, footnotes, curatorial précis, etc.) makes very good sense (literally).
And, of course, there is no question that writing itself is a powerful mode of discovery and a compelling method of generating meaning and understanding. As Richardson (2000) reminds us, writing is "a method of inquiry, a way of finding out about yourself and your topic" (p. 923). As such, writing can reflect our desire to make poetic sense of the often ambiguous and blurry qualities and lived experiences of our everyday lives. As Bochner (2000) explains, "[t]he call of narrative is the inspiration to find language that is adequate to the obscurity and darkness of experience. We narrate to make sense of experience over the course of time" (p. 270). Momoday (1998) describes the potential power of written and spoken language:

To tell a story in the proper way, to hear a story in the proper way – this is very old and sacred business, and it is very good. At that moment when we are drawn into the element of language, we are as intensely alive as we can be; we create and we are created. Our stories explain us, justify us, sustain us, humble us, and forgive us. And sometimes they injure and destroy us. Make no mistake, we are at risk in the presence of words. (p. 169)

Thus, I am also aware (and wary) of the power and representational limitations of written language. As such, I remain mindful of the fact that there are times when "writing displaces, even effaces 'others' and 'other-worlds' with its partial, opaque representations of them, not only not revealing truths, meanings, events, 'objects,' but often obscuring them in the very act of writing, securing their absence with the substitutional presence of words" (Pollock, 1998, p. 169).
As Momaday cautions, we are certainly at risk in the presence of words. Besides the risks that written and spoken language present, I also believe that there are occasions when words are simply inadequate. As an artist and an art educator, I have come to recognize the fundamental capacity of art to give form to the ineffable, the unspeakable, and the inde-scribable (literally, the unwrite-able). In other words, I believe there are instances when the visual can communicate messages and meanings that words simply cannot express. As such, I acknowledge a basic cognitive dimension of seeing involves the ability of aesthetic experiences to empower individuals to recognize (literally, to re-cognize), interpret, and understand that which may have been unperceivable or previously overlooked. Davey (1999) explains that "both art and aesthetics reside in the generative tension between sight and in-sight" (p. 3). According to Heidegger (1962), there is no difference between interpretation and understanding. Rather than conceptualizing 'understanding' as something we aim for, Heidegger asserts that 'understanding' is what we do. He explains that "[i]n interpretation, understanding does not become something different. It becomes itself...Nor is interpretation the acquiring of information about what is understood: it is rather the working out of possibilities projected in understanding" (italics in the original, pp. 189-190).

Sally Cone Valley 2004 by Francoise

Note: Each of the students in the study has consented to have their work visually represented in educational research publications.
As such, I recognize the 'doubling' of interpretation and understanding, and acknowledge that interpretation and understanding, and knowing and perceiving, occur relationally and contiguously. And of course, this conceptualization of interpretation and understanding is not limited to the visual – it also applies to other languages of expression including the written and spoken word. As Olthius (2000) reminds us, all human actions involve forms of interpretation and understanding.

Signifying and clarifying belong to the very nature of being human. Indeed, language or discourse is only one form of intercourse, only one the great array of acoustic, olfactory, tactile, symbolic, and graphic ways of signification that we need to interpret in meeting the other. Whether we are dealing with the phonemes of oral conversation, the script of written texts, sculptures, paintings, musical scores, rituals, dance, body language, traffic signs, emblems or floral arrangements, encoding and decoding are always present. Colors, sounds, odors, textures, and gestures present as many complicated dilemmas of interpretation as do words and texts. (p. 140)

Interestingly, each of Olthius' categories of expression and interpretation are interrelated. An examination, for instance, of the connections between seeing and words reveals that their relationship is continually in a state of flux. As Berger (1984) explains, “seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled” (p. 7). Thus, unraveling the visual from the linguistic turns out to be a surprisingly tricky task. In fact, try as we may, it remains conceptually unfeasible to effectively separate the corporal act of seeing (physically perceiving stimuli through one's eyes), from the visualizing act of imagining (forming a mental picture in one's mind), from the inquisitive act of inquiry (go and see what she wants), from the cognitive act of understanding (I see your point). These variations on the act of 'seeing' are intimately connected, perpetually in relation with and through one another. And perhaps only fittingly, these ocular connections and optical collusions seem to be uncannily reinforced by the semantic reality that the social act of 'seeing someone' does, in itself, denote a form of intimate relationship (we've been seeing each other for two months). Davey (1999) highlights the corresponding interconnections be-
tween some of the many linguistic (and lingering) signifiers that describe both acts and actions of perception and cognition:
The analogous relationship between a word and its semantic field and a seen object and its visual horizon reflects the astounding double valence of words which describe perception and cognition. We see an object and yet see or do not see what a person is getting at. We strive to be as clear as we can. If an argument is dark and somewhat opaque, we might endeavour to throw some light upon it, hoping to achieve an illuminating or enlightening insight. A surface may offer a cloudy reflection whilst our reflections might be clouded by blind prejudice. We even speak of having our eyes opened to a problem so that we might subsequently arrive at another perspective or viewpoint. (p. 7)

Accordingly, I have elected to create my academic assemblage with a synthesis of texts and images, poetry and prose, words and pictures. Rather than rely on any one expressive form to communicate the findings of my research, I have chosen an approach that blends visual expression with written language. Like Butler-Kisber (2002), I have attempted to “pull the reader/viewer into a world that is recognizable enough to be credible, but ambiguous enough to allow new insights and meanings to emerge” (p. 231). Butler-Kisber goes on to explain that “[t]hrough accessible language, and a product that promotes empathy and vicarious participation, the potential for positive change in education becomes possible (p. 231). Irwin (2004), meanwhile, describes this integration of text and image as an “act of borderland pedagogy, a way of sharing a third space between knowing and ignorance” (p. 27). In many ways, this notion of borderland pedagogy is analogous to the concept of bricolage. As Baldick (1990) explains, bricolage is a term for improvisation that is “sometimes applied to artistic works in a sense similar to collage: an assemblage improvised from materials ready to hand, or the practice of transforming ‘found’ materials by incorporating them in a new work” (p. 26). Paley (1995), meanwhile, con-
tends that, "[b]y refiguring the page as an invention, bricolage provides for the possibility of creating an intertext, a no-space and an everyplace where writing can shift from topic to topic" (p. 9). He asserts that, by blurring the disparities and boundaries between words and images and by generating a porous organization among its multiple parts, bricolage provides a "working alternative to compartmentalized systems of knowledge production/display" (p. 9). He argues that images within bricolage can be produced to "problematize rather than decorate [a] statement" and asserts that images can thus be read as texts and texts can figure as images (p. 9). As Taylor and Saarinen (1994) explain:

the Word is never simply a word but is always also an image. The audio-visual trace of the word involves an inescapable materiality that can be thought only if it is figured. The abiding question for conceptual reflection is: How to (dis)figure the world? (p. 10)
"If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth. In the first place that stuff bores me, and in the second place, my parents would have about two hemorrhages apiece if I told you anything pretty personal about them. They're quite touchy about anything like that, especially my father. They're nice and all—I'm not saying that—but they're touchy as hell. Besides I'm not going to tell you my whole goddam autobiography or anything."  
(Salinger, 1951, p. 1)

"Every text one writes is autobiographical: anything else would be plagiarism.”  
(Boal, 2001, p. xi)

ALTHOUGH THIS DISSERTATION represents my experiences while working for three months with a group of Art 11 and 12 students at an Urban Canadian Secondary School, it is also, by necessity, a representation of myself. For as Oscar Wilde (1974) reminds us, “[e]very portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not the sitter. The sitter is merely an accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter, who, on the coloured canvas, reveals himself” (p. 5). Geertz (1973) meanwhile, contends that “what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to” (my italics, p. 9). And as Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) explains, “[t]he researcher is the stranger, the newcomer, the interloper—entering the place, engaging the people, and disturbing the natural rhythms of the environment—so her presence must be made explicit, not masked or silenced” (p. 50). And although I’m not going to tell you about my childhood and all of “that David Copperfield kind of crap” (Salinger, 1951, p. 1), I do feel that it’s important not to mask or silence my own presence within this research project. As a social activist, artist, and art educator, I did not enter this research project expecting to assume the role of a neutral and objective observer. I know that
my own experiences, beliefs, and biases have directly affected my renderings of the phenomena experienced and observed. Accordingly, I feel it is imperative to expose some of those experiences, beliefs, and biases, including some of the autobiographical factors that led me to undertake this study in order to reveal (which etymologically and paradoxically means to re-cover) my own positionality within this study.

this research study has emerged from my experiences as a secondary school Art, Drama, Global Education and English educator, particularly through my background as co-designer and teacher of an interdisciplinary course engaging contemporary social issues through the visual, literary and performing arts. This research is also the manifestation of my experiences as creator and director of a student social justice group (PEACE - People Educating Accepting Celebrating Everyone), which utilizes the visual and performing arts to confront issues of discrimination and violence within school and community settings. More recently, my research has been informed by my ongoing supervisory and instructional work with "pre-service" art educators and by my continuing experiences as a social activist and practicing visual and performance artist. All of these experiences have left an indelible mark on my 'location' within this research and have helped to guide a journey that first began back in the summer of 1992.

A friend sent me a photograph from The New York Times of a middle-aged man sitting on a chair in the center of a cobbled Sarajevo street. He was wearing a black tuxedo and was playing a red cello. His name was Vedran Smailovic. Braving sniper and artillery fire, Mr. Smailovic was sitting on the site where 22 of his fellow citizens had been killed by mortar explosions while waiting in a line up for bread. The Times caption explained that Mr. Smailovic was returning to this spot in the street every day for 22 days – one day for each of the people killed – in order to play Albinoni's Adagio in G Minor, a composition reconstructed from a manuscript found in the ashes of Dresden after the Second World War. In the midst of deafening explosions and barrages of gunfire, a cello player was showing the world that the sounds of humanity and peace could still be heard. This courageous and creative act of compassion inspired hope in me and in thousands of others within and beyond the battle-sieged streets of Sarajevo, and served as a poignant and shocking reminder for many around the world of the insanity and absurdity of war.
For over a decade I have carried this picture with me. My teaching career, which began over four years after the publication of Smailovic’s picture, has been directly influenced by his creative and gracious act of courage. In fact, I have come to see this image of a brave cello player as a symbolic representation of the resiliency, dedication and care required by all contemporary teachers in the face of significant sociopolitical challenges and obstacles. Of course, I do not mean to directly equate the adversities faced by educators with the perils and horrors experienced by the residents of the war-torn Sarajevo. However, I do feel that there are significant correlations between Mr. Smailovic’s brave artistic intervention in the midst of a brutal civil conflict and the essential role of teachers in contemporary society. I believe, for instance, that educators have a pedagogical obligation to empower their students to recognize and perceive tears within the social fabric. This process involves illustrating the deficiencies between the fundamental values of a democratic society and the normative practices and dominant discourses of the status quo. Though teachers need not adopt such dramatic forms of action, such as Smailovic’s 22 performances, to awaken their students to injustices, creating critical awareness does often require a radical and creative approach. And, in an era of standardized testing and educational reforms that purport to keep teachers accountable and to leave no students behind, I also believe that acts of pedagogical courage and compassion are now more vital than ever before.

While confidence in public education continues to erode, teachers are asked to cope, often with little or no professional guidance or support, with a rapidly changing world influenced by economic globalization, cultural upheaval, and technological transformation. Miraculously, many teachers do cope. Like the brave cello player from Sarajevo, these teachers find the courage and the compassion to connect their students to the world in critical and thoughtful ways. Often faced with overwhelming odds, including shrinking school budgets and public policymakers who equate standardized test scores with economic prosperity and who believe that knowledge can be reduced to learnable skills and multiple-choice questions, these teachers still find meaningful ways to engage their students in reflective learning about the crucial issues affecting our world. And they do this while also exuding an optimism and sense of purpose that supersedes cynicism and defies the hopelessness too often felt by many of our students in schools today.

I have tried to be one of these teachers. First as a high school teacher and more recently as a teacher educator and an artist/researcher/teacher, I have endeavored to create intellectually rigorous and socially responsible learning communities by fostering critical thinking and a shared commitment amongst my students towards a common good. This has meant valuing individual voices, encouraging thoughtful inquiry, and promoting free ex-
pression. It has also involved creating spaces in which students can actively assume responsibility for their own and each other’s learning. I have encouraged my students to work collaboratively and to remain mindful of the social bonds that ultimately leave each of us profoundly dependant upon one other. Throughout, I have worked to establish and maintain a climate of respect within my classroom. This has required calling upon the etymology of the word ‘respect’ by compelling my students to re-look, in considerate and judicious ways, at themselves, each other and the world(s) that they inhabit and create together.

This has not always been an easy task, and there have been times when my pedagogical efforts have fallen short. During these occasions, I have tried to remind myself of Dewey’s notion of a democracy, which he recognized as an ongoing process – essentially the act of reaching towards an end that can never be finally achieved. My eventual choice to leave the high school classroom and return to the University was not an easy decision. I thoroughly enjoyed working with young people and knew my approach to teaching was making a significant impact on the lives of many of the students I worked with (as well as on my own life). It wasn’t until I awoke one morning in a small hotel room in Otavalo, Ecuador that I knew my life’s path was about to change.

My wife Eileen and I, along with a teaching colleague, were near the end of a two-week humanitarian odyssey, in which we had led 15 students from my Contemporary Issues and the Visual Arts II class on a humanitarian trip to a rural Andean orphanage. This Spring Break trip had been life altering for all of us and we were now preparing ourselves to make the long voyage home. I had spent the early morning hours recounting our many adventures and activities on the trip, as well as re-membering many of my teaching experiences from the previous few years. Sometime during that reflection process, something changed. Perhaps it was the altitude or something I had eaten the night before, but I experienced what I can only describe as an epiphany. I sud-
denly knew that I needed to become much more actively involved in teacher education.

Although my own teacher education program had been more than adequate in many aspects, it didn't fully prepare me for the incredible (and at times, incredibly challenging) experiences that I later encountered as a practicing teacher when I connected the arts with social issues and the lived experiences of my students. In many ways, I felt as though I had had to clumsily stumble upon these connections on my own. I had often wished that someone during my pre-service teacher program could have shared the profound pedagogical and social possibilities that exist when the arts are directly connected with social and global issues. I suddenly realized lying in that Ecuadorian hotel room, that I could become that person. I turned to Eileen, who was lying quietly awake beside me, and said simply, I think it's time for me to go back to university. She smiled and nodded knowingly.

Although I still often look back fondly (and wistfully) on my years in the high school classroom, I have never regretted my decision to return to graduate school. The opportunity to deeply reflect upon my experiences and pedagogical practices, as well as the chance to read and study the work of curricular theorists and educational scholars, has provided me with new insights and understandings about education and society. These experiences have revealed to me some of the possibilities and inadequacies that historically and currently exist within our public systems of education. And although I still see the image of a courageous cello player as a symbolic representation of the qualities required of contemporary educators, I now know that relying solely on the dedication, resourcefulness and courage of individual teachers is not a sustainable pedagogical solution to educational and social deficiencies. Much work still needs to be done – in educational research, curriculum scholarship, teacher education, and professional and public policy development – and I intend to dedicate my scholarly and pedagogical energies (including this dissertation) towards meaningfully contributing to these vital fields.
I am currently in the middle of dissertation chaos (which is actually a rather rich and generative place to be) and have about 12 windows open on my computer, books throughout the house, and papers, field notes, art work, cups of tea, scattered around me on my desk, sitting on the floor, and taped to the walls. I recently moved my office into the basement (which I am affectionately calling the 'Bat Cave') in order to spread out and isolate myself from the living area of the house. I sense that the move closer to the earth is helping me to stay grounded in my work.

Being in the basement has also given me the opportunity to work directly onto the unfinished walls. I’ve plastered some of these walls with sheets of paper which allows me to write while standing up. This transports me back to the classroom and back to my beloved blackboards. How does writing while standing up change this process (and product) of writing? It feels much more public and much more exposed than when I am sitting directly onto the computer screen, or going directly into the computer screen. All of my own writing occurs in tiny little journals and sketchbooks, or goes directly onto the computer screen. At the moment I am writing over my head (both figuratively and literally) and my arm (and mind) is beginning to get sore.

One of the things I’ve noticed about working directly onto the walls is that it allows me to stand back and look at my work from new perspectives, new angles. Interestingly, this is how I sculpt...or sculpt. I find myself stopping frequently to consider, reflect, and reevaluate - and also how I have been engaging in this research. Most of my own writing occurs in tiny little journals and sketchbooks, or goes directly onto the computer screen. At the moment I am writing over my head (both figuratively and literally) and my arm (and mind) is beginning to get sore.
"We who are teachers would have to accommodate ourselves to lives as clerks or functionaries if we did not have in mind a quest for a better state of things for those we teach and for the world we all share. It is simply not enough for us to reproduce the way things are." (Greene, 1995, p.1)

Artful Teaching in the Secondary School

It was the beginning of a busily reciting her 'Welcome speech for the fresh batch spent their morning tour in the auditorium, waiting teachers. As the principal of locker assignments stood up in the fifth row shocked by the interruption, heads in search of the out-student stood up near the out 'CHINK' at the top of his shocked by the interruption, heads in search of the out-student stood up near the out 'FAGGOT' with equal vigor. Tional students, who each rose equally discriminatory, slurs. vered pitch, a second group of and with arms outstretched, fied pause, the entire group of the auditorium and joined individual student members of themselves by name, they also derogatory labels that had clothing. The students then ex-growing movement of students to stand up against hate and grders to join them up on the into small 'focus groups' for action, bullying, and violence. new school year and our principal was come to your first day of high school' of eighth graders. The students had ing the school and were now sitting to be dismissed to their homeroom began a rather uninspired explana- and general hallway etiquette, a boy and, with surprising intensity, yelled lungs. The eighth graders, clearly responded by quickly turning their burst. Almost immediately, a second back of the auditorium and yelled This initiated a succession of addi- and expelled a series of different, but Just as the disruption reached a fe-fifteen students stood up in unison roared, "STOP!" After an electric-then moved in silence to the front the principal on the stage. As the the group proceeded to introduce each symbolically removed large been affixed prominently to their plained that they were part of a at the school who were choosing violence. They invited the eighth stage, where they then split up open discussion about discrimina-
This was the first of a series of artistic projects initiated by the students of my *Contemporary Issues and the Visual Arts* class, an interdisciplinary course that I co-developed and taught within the art department as the basis for this dissertation research. Throughout the year, these students devised and created a number of individual and collective creative 'cultural interventions,' both within the school and in the surrounding community, which addressed and examined contemporary social issues. These works included: art installations about drinking and driving, performance pieces around issues of bullying, violence, and discrimination, photo displays about public space, power and surveillance, video projects about consumer culture, large eco-sculptures constructed of garbage, poster campaigns about landmines, and an arts festival focusing on a variety of issues connected to poverty and homelessness.

This course was based on the conviction that art and art education can serve as catalysts for social change within schools and communities; this course was designed to actively engage students in sociocultural issues through the arts. We developed the curriculum around the belief that the arts can facilitate the development of an ethic of care, thereby enabling participants to positively transform themselves, their communities and the world(s) in which they live. This position is supported by the work of a number of art education theorists (Blandy, 1987a; Chalmers, 1987; 2001; Freedman, 2000; 2003; Garoian, 1999; Garber, 2001; Greene, 1995; Holloway & LeCompte, 2001; Kincheloe, 2003a; 2003b; Krensky, 2001; Stuhr, 2003) who recognize the vital connections and possibilities that exist between art, education, culture, and society, and who acknowledge the importance of the arts in the development of thoughtful, creative, and engaged citizens.

As an art educator, I have found that linking curriculum to the social lives and lived experiences of my students facilitates meaningful forms of artistic and intellectual engagement. When students are passionate about a topic, they are more inclined to connect with it in meaningful ways. Krensky (2001) explains that, "[a]rts education that is connected to the community and addresses issues facing young people generally allows students to use the arts to grapple with the real issues in their lives" (p. 441). This educational approach has been essential in my effort to help students avoid and overcome the feelings of
apathy and helplessness that too often affect and inform the lives of young people in schools today (Greene, 1995). By opening up pedagogical spaces where they can examine and express their experiences, desires, dreams, ambitions, fears, and hopes, I have been able to facilitate thoughtful explorations, meaningful interactions, and positive transformations with and within my students. As Halloway & LeCompte (2001) explain: "The arts provide ways for individuals to give voice or to depict their experiences, to try on new identities or perspectives, and even to visualize, articulate, or act out the impossible. Insofar as the arts permit people to try on and practice ways of being that differ from their original habitus, the arts counter symbolic violence with symbolic action and facilitate transformation of roles and identity." (pp. 394-95)

The Social Lives of Art Educators

LIKE CHALMERS (2001) and Freedman (2000), I too sometimes encounter those who believe that I am more interested in social studies than I am in art. Whenever these types of questions or comments emerge, I try to approach them as opportunities to initiate discussions about issues close to my heart – pedagogy, visual culture, meaning making, democracy, citizenship, communication, social responsibility, and public education. I usually begin by suggesting that what I do as an art educator is not really any different from what other teachers do, which is to help my students to make sense of their experiences and themselves, and to facilitate the creation of meaningful interactions and interconnections between and within the world(s) around them. From my perspective, by providing our students with the intellectual abilities to think critically and the artistic means to express themselves creatively, we as art educators can begin to help students to assert and affirm their humanity. Stuhr (2003) explains that art teachers "help students create meaning and understanding of their lives in the present and imagine possibilities for their lives in the future. Like all other teachers involved in public schooling, art teachers do this through their subject – cultural production and investigation of images and artifacts" (pp. 303).
Tuesday February 17, 2004

I met the art 11/12 students today that I’ll be working with during the research study. When I first walked into the classroom, I couldn’t believe how quiet it was… the students were sitting at tables working independently in their sketchbooks. I spoke briefly with Alice (The Art Teacher) and then she introduced me to the class. I described the research project for the students and then asked if there were any questions. After some prodding from Alice, a couple of students asked questions:

What is this for? What is the video for? Why do you have to take pictures? I did my best to answer the questions and then handed out the parent and participant consent forms. Alice urged the students to return them ‘sooner rather than later’ and then assured me that she would mark names off as they came in. I started feeling worried that no one would actually agree to participate in the study, though one girl started filling her forms in right away which made me feel a little better. Afterwards, I spoke to Alice about how quiet the class was and she explained that many of the students were from immigrant families and, therefore, many of them were new to the school. She explained that the populations of her classes ‘turn over’ quite regularly during the year as families move on and new families move into the area. She suggested this was because downtown was often the first place new immigrant families live when they arrive in Vancouver. I’m a little worried about the lack of enthusiasm/energy the students exhibited today but am also trying to remain philosophical about it. I’m also trying to remember David Jardine’s (1998) notion of the gathering and giving of ‘data.’

If we play for a moment with the etymology of ‘data,’ we find that it originally means ‘that which is given’ or ‘that which is granted.’ Inquiry must open itself to that which is given or granted. It must be able to listen or to attend to that which comes to meet us, just as it comes to meet us. Inquiry need not prepare itself by arming itself with methods which demand univocity and clarity. Rather, it must do what it has always claimed to do – it must ‘gather’ data. This metaphor should not be lost. What is given or granted is precious and delicate, and it must be gathered with all the love and care with which we gather the fruits of the earth, careful not to do violence, careful not to expect too much, prepared – dare we admit it? – for the possibility that nothing will come forth (a possibility that teachers and parents live with all the time in living with children; such deep love, care, and risk only seem peculiar if one becomes cloistered in academia). This gathering cannot take its cue from our willingness to act without a moment’s notice. It must take its cue from that which is given as to how the gathering must go. There is nothing we can do to guarantee that this gift will be given. (p. 30)
Alice mentioned to me that each of these students has an interesting story to tell. I'm looking forward to hearing them. I need to create spaces where those stories can be shared because this is the basis on which new common stories will be created. It's certainly different working in someone else's space, someone else's school. I'm used to knowing and being known in the school... being a stranger is much stranger and much more lonely. Perhaps this is how some of the students feel who are new to the school, to the city, to the country...

Starting this project is good for me... it will help to bring me back down to the reality of teaching and being with young people... I suspect my memory of my own high school teaching is already beginning to play tricks... in my own rememberings, I have begun to smooth over all of the rough spots associated with teaching and being in the classroom and am now increasingly left with polished memories of my experiences in the schools. I need to get back to the messiness of practice. I need to practice being messy...

---

Student Teacher

School

Grade and Subject

Focus of observation

---

Recommended Follow-up

Completed by

Position

(e.g.: school advisor, faculty advisor)
MY APPROACH TO TEACHING ART has been informed by pedagogues, like Dewey (1916; 1934, 1980), Freire (1970, 1993), Greene (1995), hooks (1994), and others, who believe the classroom, with all its limitations and restrictions, still remains as a site of radical possibility. Consequently, I have come to think of my classroom as a place for invention and exploration, rather than simply as a site for transmission and reproduction. I have endeavored to create intellectually rigorous and socially responsible learning communities by fostering critical thinking and a shared commitment amongst my students towards a common good. I have also tried to provide my students with modes of creative cultural production that will equip them to meaningfully participate as engaged citizens in the social and political spheres. This has included engaging in the ongoing effort to imbue my students with, what Taylor (1991) describes as, the “rich human languages of expression” (p. 33). He explains that these languages include, “not only the words we speak but also other modes of expression whereby we define ourselves, including the ‘languages’ of art, of gesture, of love, and the like” (p. 33).

Like many art educators before me, I believe art and art education play a vital educative role in the development of informed and thoughtful human beings. Kincheloe (2003a), for instance, deems art education to be a “central part of a rigorous education that makes us smarter, more insightful, more sensitive to what is occurring around us – in other words better educated people who are more capable of working toward democratic, egalitarian social change” (p. 50). Blandy (1987a) recognizes art and art education as vehicles for social action and democratic participation, while Chalmers (1987) explains that art can create and enhance awareness of social issues and, by edifying people and groups, can “maintain and improve their collective existence” (p. 4). Duncum (2001a) defines ‘art’ as “visual artifacts through which we make meaning” (p. 123) and Greene (1995) claims that encounters with the arts can “nurture the growth of persons who will reach out to one another as they seek clearings in their experience and try to be more ardently in the world” (p. 132). Freedman (2000) explains that art and art education play important social and educative roles in the lives of students: Art is a vital part and contributor to social life and students have the possibility of learning about life through art. At its root, the purpose of art education is not to educate people about only the technical and formal qualities of artifacts but to extend the meaning of those qualities and artifacts to show their importance in human existence. It is this relevance that has made art worthy of a place in formal education. (p. 324)
What Does This Mean?
Identifying the Quest for Meaning in the Art Classroom

THE ONGOING QUEST FOR SOCIAL MEANING IS IMPERATIVE to the creation of our individual and collective identities. And though this continuous search may not always be readily apparent through the frenetic haze of our daily interactions with and within an increasingly mediated and commercialized consumer culture, the desire to make sense of ourselves, and our world(s), is fundamental to human existence. As Kincheloe (2003a) has pointed out, human beings are primarily “meaning makers who inscribe meaning in everything they do” (p.50). Kingwell (2000) explains that, “[a]pparances sometimes to the contrary, we are all struggling, in different ways, to bestow meaning on the world of our everyday experience. We are trying to forge identities from the play of cultural materials” (p. 218). Taylor (1991) observes that human beings can only authentically define themselves against that which has true human significance. I can define my identity only against the background of things that matter. But to bracket out history, nature, society, the demands of solidarity, everything but what I find in myself, would be to eliminate all candidates for what matters. Only if I exist in a world in which history, or the demands of nature, or the needs of my fellow human beings, or the duties of citizenship, or the call of God, or something else of this order matters crucially, can I define an identity for myself that is not trivial. (italics in the original, pp.40-41)
JOHN DEWEY (1916) CERTAINLY KNEW THE IMPORTANCE OF social meaning in relation to educated citizens and public education. In *Democracy and Education*, he wrote that "[w]hen things have a meaning to us, we mean (intend, propose) what we do: when they do not, we act blindly, unconsciously, unintelligently" (italics in the original, p. 29). One of the most powerful ways (perhaps the only way) to generate opportunities for students to create and discover meaning through schooling is to connect the curriculum to their lives and lived experiences in the world. As Greene (2001) explains, "[c]reation does not imply a making something out of nothing. It has to do with reshaping, renewing the materials at hand, very often the materials of our own lives, our experiences, our memories" (Greene, 2001). In fact, connecting curriculum to the lives of students through art education would seem to be a natural fit - the production, evaluation and distribution of cultural artifacts and social meaning continues to be a vital component of our increasingly visual world today (Duncum, 1999; 2001a; 2001b; 2002; Freedman, 2003; Mirzoeff, 1998, 2002; 1999).

UNFORTUNATELY, TEACHING STUDENTS TO DISCOVER AND generate meaning has not always been emphasized in art education (see Bersson, 1987; Freedman, 2000; 2003; Garroian, 1999). Pedagogical and theoretical views about the fundamental connections between art education and the development of informed, creative, and mindful human beings have not been widely adopted or supported by many mainstream art educators. As a result, art education has often remained as a curricular outsider within the world of public education. During the 1970s, for instance, Efland (1976) lamented that art education still remained only as a peripheral concern within general education. He wrote that art "is one of the last subjects to be added to the curriculum and the first to go when funds are short" (p. 39). A decade later, Bersson (1987) commented that if "art education is to be perceived as more than a curricular extra or program of cultural enrichment, it must focus on the 'basic stuff' of people's lives, as well as on our exceptional artistic and aesthetic possibilities" (p. 79). More recently, Stuhr (2003) has cautioned that art educators should resist classifying themselves as specialists, so as to prevent art education from being "marginalized and disenfranchised from the greater school curriculum" (pp. 302-303).
I AM A FORMER SECONDARY SCHOOL ART TEACHER WHO worked in a school district that consistently slashed funding for the arts each year, and I can certainly see the logic in Stuhr’s warning. There is considerable research indicating the arts and art education are fundamental to public education. I sense, however, there is still a belief amongst many in the public (including educators and policy makers) that art education is expendable, a frill of schooling that can be eliminated in times of financial deficit. This mentality, in part, has been placed on the edges of schooling that can be eliminated in times of financial deficit. This mentality, in part, seems to be a result of the historical emphasis that has been placed on unconnected and uncritical forms of discipline-centered (see Bersson, 1987; Chalmers, 1987) and studio production-based models of art education - a curricular prominence that often still continues to this day. In writing about the 'School Art Style,' Efland (1976) questioned why schools had developed an art education methodology that was only marginally related to the “knowledge, beliefs, values, and patterns of behavior that are prized by the society that established the school” (pp. 38-39). It seems that these forms of socially disconnected approaches to art education emphasize technique over critique and a mastery of mediums over an understanding of meanings, have a long history in art education. Freedman (2000) explains that “[w]hile meaning has always been vital to art, it has not always been reflected in education. Instead, curriculum has often focused on form and technical skill, as opposed to content” (p. 316).
FREEDMAN (2003) HAS IDENTIFIED the predominance of aesthetic formalism within curriculum as a contributing factor to the separation of art education from sociocultural and historical issues. In fact, aesthetic formalism, which can be defined as the practice of reducing art objects into the basic elements and principles of design, has played a role in art education since the early 20th century. Although it serves to isolate form from context, this aesthetic model remains today as a staple curricular component of many art education programs. Freedman explains that:

"While this model of aesthetics appears only to facilitate an analysis of what is contained within a work of art, it has actually conditioned students to approach visual culture as a series of objects isolated from larger sociocultural meanings. Formalism has been so influential in the United States that it has become the definition of aesthetics in some American curriculum. In part, this is the case because the atomism and predictability of formalism is easily placed in curriculum and easily assessed. It can include the breaking down of visual form into component parts that neatly fit into the structure of curriculum as content is broken up into courses and lessons. This model of aesthetics does not include an analysis of use, function, underlying assumptions, social impact, and so on, because its application does not tend to take into account sociocultural aspects of visual culture. Nor does it promote an analysis of the creation of the model itself because it is presented as universal and timeless." (P. 27)
FREEDMAN'S DESCRIPTION OF AESTHETIC FORMALISM reflects the modernist mantra - *art for art's sake* - which emerged out of Cartesian thinking and reductionist science - models which called for the complete autonomy of art and artists and the corresponding severing of bonds with society (Gablik, 1992). Within this disenfranchised archetype, the artist assumes no social role or political function and "individualism, freedom and self-expression are the great modernist buzz words" (p. 6). As Gablik explains, for individualistic artists who were trained to think in this way, "the idea that creative activity might be directed toward answering a collective cultural need rather than a personal desire for self-expression is likely to appear irrelevant, or even presumptuous" (p. 6). It becomes readily apparent how, by accepting formalized aesthetics and disconnected notions of art into education, art educators have remained on the periphery of public school policy initiatives and significant educational reforms. It seems that, without finding meaningful ways to connect art educational curriculum to the larger concerns of education and society, art education (and art educators) will continue to be undervalued and thus relegated to the curricular fringes and pedagogical margins of public education.
Although the field has not always acknowledged or accepted the notion that art education is fundamentally connected to the cultural and the social spheres, the concept itself is certainly not a new one. As June King McFee (1966) pointed out nearly forty years ago:

If we believe that art is to be produced and enjoyed only by an aesthetic and intellectual elite or subculture of our total society, then we might have reason for believing in social isolation of the arts. If, on the other hand, we consider art as a phenomenon of human behavior to be found wherever form, line, color are used to create symbols for communication and to qualitatively change the nature of experience, then art is related in some degree to all of society. If we accept this definition we, as art educators, become involved in problems of society and social change; we recognize art as one of the major communication systems of social interaction and of society in transition. (p. 122)

McFee (1966) also urged art educators to consider the fact that “[w]e cannot begin to explore the relationships between art and society without assessing our basic assumptions about art, for these assumptions condition our inquiry” (p. 122). From my perspective, this assessment of our basic assumptions about art must include asking (and continuing to ask) fundamental questions about art and art education. Questions like: ‘What is art?’ ‘How can art be known?’ ‘How is art made and used?’ ‘Who makes art?’ ‘What role does art play in society?’ ‘Where is art encountered and by whom?’ And while it is vital to art education that we search for answers to these and other important questions related to the production, distribution, and consumption of art and related forms of cultural artifacts, a number of art educational theorists also caution us not to arrive at any fixed definitions or solitary answers. Garber (2001), for instance, reminds us that the “foundations for art education should remain open and ever-changing in order to account for the complexity of cultures, people, ideas, objects and events that can be considered within our realm” (p. 110). She explains that restricting theory in art education to any one way of knowing limits our possibilities for understanding art and the world and ultimately, “impoverishes our knowing” (p. 110). Kincheloe (2003a), meanwhile, stresses the importance of uncovering and acknowledging the ways that our culture has trained us to view art, and the world around us. He asserts that the corresponding meanings that we often
create through our multi-
faceted experiences with
art are not absolute
but "contingent on
an exceedingly com-
plex network of other
socially and historically
contextualized meanings
and interpretations" (p.50).
Blandy (1987b) reminds us
that aesthetic approaches and
beliefs are "subject to an ever
fluctuating array of ethnic, racial,
religious, occupational, political,
and philosophical influences" (p. 2).
Chalmers (1987; 2001) urges us to ac-
knowledge the cultural foundations of
art/visual culture\(^1\) and compels art edu-
cators to actively consider the multiple
perspectives and the many, "sometimes
fuzzy," lenses that are used to understand
I posit that we get closest to ‘knowing’ art
(broadly understood as ‘visual culture’)\(^1\)
when we include the perspectives and lenses
of a great variety of individuals and groups,
across different cultures and time periods,
who make ‘art’, sell it, collect it, steal it,
study it, use it, display it, label it, hate it
and enjoy it. I want students to under-
stand how, in a variety of contexts, visual
culture is talked about, viewed, under-
stood, valued, trashed, ignored, used and
labeled. Art educators need to realize that
we all know ‘art’ in a variety of ways, and
that problems of definition are not the sole
preserve of philosophers. Art education can
never be based on only one theory of art. (p.
86)

\(^{1}\) By placing a slash between ‘art’ and ‘visual culture,’ I am acknowledging the contiguous re-
relationship between the two terms. Within this context, ‘art’ refers to the fine arts of painting,
sculpting, drawing, etc., while ‘visual culture’ includes the multiple hybrid space(s) of our every-
day visual experiences (including our interactions with and within sites of popular visual culture,
and the ways we adorn ourselves and our environments). I contend that the terms ‘art’ and ‘visual
culture’ should not be considered as separate and distinct (nor as interchangeable) and assert that
there is contiguous movement and interaction between them.
As Bolin (1987) explains, “[t]he health of a democracy is measured by the degree of participation demonstrated by its citizenry” (p. 58). Certainly one of the ways in which art and art education are fundamentally connected to social and cultural issues is through their capacity to inspire, nurture and inform responsible and engaged citizens. Krensky (2001) observes that an art education based around social issues and communities opens up possibilities for inspiring social responsibility and democratic participation.

For if art education is to be the harbinger of a more just and democratic society, then we must provide concrete educational opportunities for young people to develop the skills necessary to make this goal materialize. Issue-oriented community-based arts education programs are uniquely suited to offer the possibility of social responsibility. Without such programs, we are denying young people the possibility of democratic participation and becoming the creators and recreators of their own lives and the world. (p. 442)

Meaningful engagement with social issues through the arts can also generate opportunities for students to relate to the world in imaginative and productive ways. Creating and interacting with art can inspire students to envision beyond the present and to explore and invent new spaces of possibility for the future (Greene, 1995; Krensky, 2001; Stuhr, 2003). These forms of artistic engagement can provide significant ways in which to partake in the production, evaluation, and distribution of social meaning. Holloway and LeCompte (2001) explain that the arts allow us opportunities to alter and reconstruct signs and meanings:

Through the arts, humans use movement, vocalization, visualization, imagination, verbalization, and auditory and sensory stimulation in a wide range of strategies to exercise their imaginations and to transform how they think and how they express their thoughts and emotions. The arts permit human beings to manipulate and even transform symbols and their meanings rather than simply to accept as given the meanings or uses they seem to have. (Holloway & LeCompte, 2001, p. 394)
Tuesday, Feb 24th

I had forgotten how sleepy and tired students were during the first period of the day. The bell went at 8:30 and only 11 or 12 students were sitting at their desks. Alice suggested that she take care of the stragglers as they came in and asked that I start on time for ‘consistency.’ I am mindful of the fact that I am working in someone else’s space...it reminds me of my teaching practicum. Interesting...

I started speaking to the group as additional students slowly entered the classroom (after receiving a few quiet words from Alice). I explained to the class that they could call me David or Mr. Darts and anything else, provided that it was respectful. I then explained that I would like them to quietly and efficiently move all of the tables to the side and to set up a perfect circle of chairs in the middle of the room. I then left the room and asked the students to send someone to get me when they were done. About 2 minutes later, Alice came out and invited me back in the room. I was actually surprised at how quickly they did this. I then joined the circle and brought out a roll of TP. I asked the students to take as much as they thought they would need and then passed the roll around the room. I then explained that we were going to share things about ourselves based on the number of squares that we had...one girl had 36! As we went around the circle, I was amazed at the cultural diversity that existed within the room: Students from Yugoslavia, China, Hungry, Turkey, Taiwan, Russia, Somalia...Some of the students were more forthcoming with ‘personal’ details but everyone managed to find things to share. At one point, a boy shared his name and a girl to my left whispered to a friend ‘I didn’t know that!’ After the sharing circle, I brought out my digital camera and gave a quick demo of how to use it. I asked each student to take his or her photo (or have someone else take it) and explained that no one was obligated to have a photo taken. One girl commented to a friend, ‘Who wouldn’t want their photo taken?’ As the camera was passed around the room, I tried to speak about the research project but many of the students were more interested in the photo shoots than my explanation...an observation that I shared with the students when the camera had returned to me from the circle. I then asked the students to move the chairs out of the way and to stand up in a circle. I explained the concept of an energy ball game and suggested it might be a way to generate some blood flow in the students. Sadly, the energy ball game mostly served to suck my energy – the students were pretty lackluster and with the exception of a few, most were not too enthused. One student commented that the class was shy. Interestingly, after the class, Alice came up to me and mentioned that it was amazing how I had managed to get Vince to do anything! She said that she and likely most of the
students were staring at him as he played the energy ball game. After a few minutes of struggling, I grabbed the energy ball and put everyone out of their misery. I asked the students to grab their chairs and we sat in a circle again. I explained that I would like them to create pseudonyms for themselves so that I could represent them ethically in my research. Many of the students seemed excited by the prospect of creating a new name for themselves. I handed out sheets of paper and put some instructions on the board. I asked them to put their name on a sheet of paper along with their 'code name.' I also asked them to draw me a thumbnail sketch of themselves and to answer two questions. How long have you been taking art? Do you consider yourself to be an artist? Why or why not? The students then spent the last 20 minutes working on this short assignment.

I was happy to see that many of the students had returned their consent forms and am feeling very lucky to be working in Alice’s class room. I really want to actively involve the students in the research project as co-researchers... I ‘deputized’ them all to be co-researchers, which they found amusing but I also sense that there is a resistance to being too actively involved. I feel a pressure from the students (and perhaps myself) to move into a more traditional teacher-student role (where I teach, ie. tell them what to write down, remember and do) and they learn (ie. write down, remember and regurgitate). I recall this pressure from my years of teaching...the only time I really sensed that it disappeared was in the Contemporary Issues and Visual Arts 11 (and this was because we ‘formalized’ the role of students as teachers). I think I will try to push this boundary a little more with the class and will find a way to discuss their conceptions of teaching and learning. Because I am not the students’ regular teacher, I am also feeling a little impatient that I don’t yet have a comfortable working relationship with the class. I’ve been lurking around the art room a fair bit but we’re still learning to trust each other and I had forgotten how long this can take. Good to remember as I evaluate student teachers!

Recommended Follow-up

Completed by ____________________________  Position ____________________________

(e.g., school advisor, faculty advisor)
BY RESISTING AND CHALLENGING CONCEPTIONS OF CULTURAL production that fail to acknowledge the potential for the active participation and significant contributions of young people (Paley, 1995), art educators can begin to move their students beyond modes of passive spectatorship and towards more active and expressive forms of communication with the world. In a consumer-dominated society in which ‘culture’ is often defined as an object to be purchased, fostering meaningful production through increasingly important methods of cultural art education is tant. As Freedman “[a]rtistic freedom condition, even a democracy” (p. 326). Unfortunately, the growing commercialization of public civic space (Meikle, 2002) has contributed to a society in which young people are often left feeling unable to meaningfully participate in acts of cultural production through and pedagogical opportunities to around them. As Rich (2001) points the participation of the many in a powerful and narrowly self-interested few” (p. 103). Ultimately, creative and critical means to artistic resources can nurture students with the arts and art education can nurture and facilitate the development of thoughtful and informed citizens. According to Nussbaum (1997), the arts “play a vital role, cultivating powers of imagination that are essential to citizenship...The arts cultivate capacities of judgment and sensitivity that can and should be expressed in the choices a citizen makes” (p. 7). By inspiring imaginative inquiry and facilitating informed cultural action, the arts can, therefore, be seen as effective tools for encouraging citizenship and for developing social responsibility – literally the ‘ability to respond’ – within school and community settings.
According to visual culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff (1998, 2002; 1999), the world is now more visual and visualized than ever before. This observation echoes the work of postmodern theorists like Jameson (1984; 1991) and Kincheloe (2003b), who have recognized the cultural sphere as now being the most important political arena within contemporary society. For art educators who are committed to examining sociocultural issues and fostering democratic principals in their classrooms, these observations certainly have significant curricular and pedagogical implications. In fact, because of the ubiquity and inseparability of the cultural and the aesthetic, some art education theorists (Duncker, 1999, 2001b, 2002; Freedman, 2000; 2003; Tavin, 2000; 2003) are now calling for the implementation of visual culture forms of art education. As Freedman (2000) explains:

art education is increasingly important in societies built on expressive freedom that are rapidly shifting from text-based communication to image saturation. No educational group outside of art education is prepared to teach students about the complexities of the increasingly pervasive visual arts. (p. 324)

Visual culture educators acknowledge that most forms of art do not exist within the formal isolation of the art gallery but instead reside within the realm of our everyday visual experiences (Mitchell, 1994; 1998; Tavin, 2000; 2003). These visual experiences include our regular encoun-
ters and interactions with television programs, blockbuster films, websites, music videos, fashion magazines, advertising campaigns, amusement parks, shopping malls, and the multiplicity of other forms of popular visual culture. Accordingly, visual culture art educators also recognize the centrality of these forms of visual experiences to our daily lives - including the ways in which they impact how we adorn ourselves, the ways we speak and act, the types of dreams and desires we have, the ways we create, even the very ways we think. And, because the ideological is now seen as being firmly entrenched within the cultural, visual culture art educators assert that a socially responsible program of art education should provide pedagogical spaces in which the layers of sociocultural, political, aesthetic, historical, and pedagogic complexities surrounding everyday visual experiences can be critically examined and creatively explored (Duncan, 1999; 2001b; Freedman, 2003).

If art education is to help students understand and meaningfully participate in public conversations around the social and political relations of art to meaning, identity, culture, and democratic citizenship, art educators will need to consider adopting curricular perspectives and pedagogical practices that empower their students to perceive, assess, and respond to the struggles occurring within the realm of their everyday visual experiences. Visual culture forms of art education will undoubtedly offer opportunities for this to occur. Ultimately, if we are committed to providing an art education for our students that resists the isolation from sociocultural meanings that aesthetic formalism and disenfranchised models of art education inevitably generate, we as art educators will need to seriously consider how effectively our curricular programs and pedagogical practices connect with the diverse social lives and lived visual and cultural experiences of our students.
VISUAL CULTURE JAM:
ART, PEDAGOGY, AND
CREATIVE RESISTANCE
ONLY HOURS AFTER coalition tanks rumbled into the center of Baghdad during the 2003 US led invasion of Iraq, American Marines secured a chain to the large statue of Saddam Hussein in the middle of Firdos Square and proceeded to topple the effigy of the Iraqi leader. Perhaps to reinforce their point, and much to the delight of television news producers from around the world, one of the soldiers draped a US flag over the head of the statue before it fell. It was quickly removed, likely after a call from someone at US Central Command who saw the footage on CNN, but not before some in the viewing audience had time to consider the neo-colonial symbolism of it all. According to many of the media commentators that day, the destruction of Saddam’s monument was comparable to the toppling of statues of Lenin or the fall of the Berlin Wall in Eastern Europe a decade earlier. For some of us, however, the event served less as a corollary to the triumph of capitalism over communism, and more as a conspicuous reminder of the ubiquitous connections between art, culture, ideology, and power.

A BRIEF EXCURSION back through history reveals how enduring the ties between art, culture, politics and power actually are. Rulers and conquerors of states, kingdoms, and empires of both the ancient and modern worlds have strategically employed the arts to venerate their victories, reinforce their power and intimidate and malign their enemies. From imperial Roman medals, coins and statues which commemorated the rule of powerful emperors, to Medieval monumental works of art that, under the façade of Christian themes, were created to support the ideological interests of the church, art has consistently been in the tactical employ of leaders and politicians.
(Clark, 1997). One-party states like Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia have unabashedly employed a wide array of artistic means to help achieve their ideological goals, as have most modern day Western democracies. The Chinese students who demonstrated in Tiananmen Square for democracy during the summer of 1989 certainly understood the power of art in relation to politics. They painstakingly built a thirty-foot monument, The Goddess of Democracy, as part of their attempt to confront the State’s own symbols of power. The Chinese government, knowing full well the connections between art and politics, though apparently miscalculating the correlations between international media coverage and future trade relations, ordered their troops to destroy the statue (and open fire on the demonstrators) after only four short days. Millions of people from around the world saw these events depicted in newspapers and on television and, not surprisingly, reproductions of the Tiananmen Square monument soon began emerging in public spaces around the globe.

**Political Edutainment**

As we look backwards then from the first decade of the 21st century, it readily becomes apparent how ubiquitous and pervasive the connections between art, culture, ideology, and power continue to be. It seems almost natural, for instance, that the CIA would have funded many of the international exhibitions of American Abstract Expressionist art during the cold war, that Fleetwood Mac would have been asked to play their hit song “Don’t Stop (Thinking About Tomorrow)” at Bill Clinton’s inaugural gala (or that Clinton would play his saxophone on MTV in what would turn out to be a defining moment in his 1992 presidential campaign), or that pop cultural icons from Ronald Reagan to Jesse “The Body” Ventura, to Arnold Schwarzenegger would have run and been elected to high public office. It appears that we have become rather comfortable mixing our entertainment with our politics. As postmodern theorists like Jameson (1984; 1991) and Kincheloe (1993; 2003a) have pointed out, the postmodern era of the last thirty to forty years has witnessed a transformation of the cultural domain into what is now considered to be
I've just met with representatives from the UBC Faculty of Graduate Studies and have been informed that in order to submit my thesis to the National Library, I will need copyright permission for each of the copyrighted images included within this document. As an assemblage artist and a culture jammer, I am accustomed to producing art directly from the cultural materials of my everyday experiences. These materials often include advertisements, magazine images, TV commercials, etc., many of which are copyrighted. I wonder what effect this limitation will have on my a/r/t/ographical process/production?

After speaking with FOGS, it appears that Klein (2000) was right when she wrote: "And so, when we try to communicate with each other by using the language of brands and logos, we run the very real risk of getting sued" (p. 176).

Although I appreciate the necessity of protecting artistic work, it seems to me that artists and other cultural producers must have the fundamental right to comment on and make critical re­marks about our shared commercialized world. Again, I return to Klein: "When we lack the ability to talk back to entities that are culturally and politically powerful, the very foundations of free speech and democratic society are called into question" (pp. 182-183).
the most important political arena. Kincheloe (2003a) notes that "[a]reas that were once considered trivial venues of entertainment by political analysts are now used for profound political 'education'" (p. 78). This shift in sites of political consciousness from the political to the cultural realm has important implications for teachers generally and for art educators specifically. Teachers who are committed to examining social justice issues and fostering democratic principles through their teaching are obliged to consider how their pedagogical practices attend to the complex connections between culture and politics, and ought to evaluate how effectively their courses prepare their students to engage as thoughtful and informed citizens within the contemporary cultural sphere. Though attending to these questions might ultimately be the responsibility of all teachers, because of the inseparability of the cultural from the aesthetic, art educators are ostensibly the best placed within schools to directly attend to these commitments. In fact, this disciplinary positioning inside schools has been one of the motivations in recent years for some art education theorists to call for the implementation of visual culture forms of art education.

Several proponents of an art education informed by (and imbued with) visual culture have successfully demonstrated that the visual is inextricably linked to ongoing social, political, psychological, and cultural struggles (Duncum, 2001a, 2002; Freedman, 2000, 2003; Tavin, 2000, 2002; 2003). These struggles occur on numerous cultural fronts and through multiple visual media, including, teenager's bedrooms, shopping malls, theme parks, community celebrations, television programs, advertisements, and digital environments (Freedman & Schuler, 2002; Grauer, 2002; Krug, 2002; Smith-Shank, 2002; Stokrocki, 2002). According to visual culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff (1999), the human experience is now more visual and visualized than ever before and visual culture is not a just part of our everyday lives, it is our everyday lives. He explains that "[V]isual culture directs our
attention away from structured, formal viewing settings like the cinema and art gallery to the centrality of visual experience in everyday life" (p. 7). Duncum (1999; 2002) meanwhile, has identified the everyday aesthetic experience as an often overlooked but important location where many of our attitudes, knowledge and beliefs are shaped. He characterizes our everyday aesthetic experiences as significant sites where ideological struggles occur, often without our conscious knowing, and argues that this imperceptibility makes them difficult to resist.

Ideology works not because it calls particular attention to itself, but because it grounds itself in taken-for-granted, common-sense assumptions. Ideology works through ordinary cultural artifacts, and it can be hard to resist because it so often appears to belong to the realm of the natural. In this way ideology establishes the parameters for thinking and experiencing outside of which it is difficult to think or experience, let alone to act...While culture is always a site of struggle to define how life is to be lived and experienced, the struggle is often rendered invisible. (Ducum, 2002, pp. 5–6)
A significant component of an art education informed by visual culture then, is the uncovering of these ideological struggles within the realm of the everyday. The Russian critic Viktor Shklovsky (1988) described the acute unawareness of the familiar as a state of habitualisation and claimed that only through art could we begin to perceive that which had become commonplace (p. 20). And although there is certainly much to embrace, celebrate, and take pleasure in within our everyday visual culture, including the semiotic possibilities it offers for creating meaning and forging and defining individual and collective identities, Duncum (2001b) reminds us that visual culture education must equally be concerned with "the teasing out of what lies behind imagery - the material conditions of their production, distribution and use; in short, the interests they serve" (p. 31). By illustrating how the visual event, expressed by Mirzoeff (1999) as the interaction between viewer and viewed, is consistently embedded within social, political and economic contexts, visual culture educators can begin to awaken their students to the complex forces behind the imagery and aesthetics of the familiar. As students become attuned to the previously unperceived, they can be encouraged to reconsider the commonplace and question the taken-for-granted. If art education is to prepare students to responsibly live within the contemporary sociocultural sphere, educators must be willing to help them resist the ideology of the ordinary, question the unperceived and become awakened to the invisibility of the everyday.
Thursday, March 11, 2004

I started the lesson today by showing some examples of performance art. The students seemed especially interested in the performance activist Reverend Billy (and the Church of Stop Shopping)...a couple of students had heard of him before. The general sentiment was that sweatshops are bad but that his performances were a waste of time because everyone would still buy stuff from Disney or Nike. A couple of girls said that as long as celebrities buy stuff, everyone else will. I got the strong sense from the class that doing anything to protest unfair labor practices or consumption was a waste of time because no one would ultimately listen. When we looked at the Whirlmart piece, the students felt that no one would be 'intellectual enough' to understand the protest. There seemed to be a real sense of skepticism and disempowerment. When we viewed the Truth campaign, the students agreed that the visual was sometimes more powerful than text. We talked about how everyone knows that cigarettes are bad for you but many people still smoke...one girl pointed out that cartons always have warnings printed on them. I would like to explore this theme a little further. By far, the most 'heated' discussion occurred around the consumption of name brand products like Nike...I suspect that this is because of the strong connections between clothing, brands and identity. I am looking forward to showing the Ad and the Ego video because it really gets at some of these issues. I also interviewed some more students and continue to be impressed with how articulate the students are when discussing their social issue pieces. Most of the students (all but two, Barbie and Zola Damone) have admitted to never doing anything about a social issue before, never protesting, etc. All of the students have indicated that they have never created art based around a social issue...

Recommended Follow-up
CRITICAL PEDAGOGUES have long called for an education that approaches everyday experiences, particularly in relation to popular culture, as sites for ideological struggle and resistance. Although critical pedagogy continues to be interpreted in a multitude of ways and through an array of pedagogical practices, according to Tavin (2003), it is primarily "rooted in a democratic ethos that attends to the practices of teaching and learning and focuses on lived experiences with the intention to disrupt, contest, and transform systems of oppression" (p. 198). Thus, critical art educators are committed to the democratization of society through art education and schooling and seek to reach their emancipatory goals by creating awareness of, revealing, and resisting hidden forms of power (Kinchole, 1991). Yokely (1999) asserts that critical art educators "combine the power of artistic means with political action as they question ideological formations, and indeed all facets of life, through projects of possibility" (p. 24). Hence, critical art education is seen as a tool for exposing and addressing oppression and encouraging social transformation (Freedman, 1994; Stuhr, 1994). Richard Cary (1998) explains that "[g]aining emancipatory knowledge involves the tasks of identifying hidden sources of oppression in individual lives and distortion of social relations among people. It includes the awareness and motivations that propel resistance" (p. 14). In fact resistance, defined by critical pedagogues as oppositional behavior that contests institutional power and dominant cultural norms, is seen as a naturally occurring element of school culture and a fundamental component of emancipatory pedagogy (Giroux, 1981, 1983; McLaren, 1985, 1989).
Resistance Theory, a branch of critical pedagogy that emerged in the late 1970s, is based on the egalitarian notion that youth resistance in schools might offer a basis for social transformation by undermining the production of dominant social structures and power relations (Giroux, 1983; Hall & Jefferson, 1976; Willis, 1981). Resistance theorists have pointed out that schools are not ideologically neutral sites of learning and have challenged their ostensible roles as democratic institutions. By uncovering the existence of school-based opposition and resistance, particularly by rebellious groups of adolescents, resistance theory has proven to be an influential approach in revealing the role that schools play in the reproduction of the social relations of communities, the workplace and society as a whole. Research on teenage subcultural groups conducted at England’s Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies during the 1980s demonstrated how dominant systems of social and cultural reproduction are consistently met with some degree of resistance and opposition (Trend, 1992). McLaren (1989) has argued that resistance allows students from subordinated groups to incorporate their street corner culture into the classroom in an attempt to make schooling acknowledge their identities and lived experiences.

Resistance theorists have conceded, however, that student resistance in schools is not inherently liberatory in nature and does not necessarily lead to emancipatory goals. Giroux (1983) has noted that some oppositional acts in schools represent true political acts of defiance while others actually embody oppressive forms of racism and sexism. Other resistance researchers, like Paul Willis (1981), have discovered that working class students who engage in acts of resistance often inadvertently implicate themselves in their own domination (In McLaren, 1985, p. 93). David Trend (1992) acknowledges the existence of student resistance in schools but concludes that these forms of opposition often have a limited tactical effect. He explains that: the agencies of resistance that stymie cultural reproduction often contribute to a process that locks students into an underclass role. The most common resistances to oppressive schooling (nonperformance, truancy, disruptive behavior) generally culminate in academic failure, thus giving the system the last word. (pp. 150–151)
IF RESISTANCE, THEREFORE, is to be an effective pedagogical tool for exposing oppression and encouraging personal and social transformation, it must be recognized as more than simply a theory to explain the behavior and scholastic failure of subordinated groups of students within schools or an indiscriminate label for all forms of opposition. To be of genuine pedagogical value, resistance must be re-envisioned as a generative site of consciousness-raising, a location where students and teachers together are able to critically reflect upon and effectively challenge repressive practices and dominant structures that reinforce the inequalities of the status quo. Resistance thus conceived becomes both disruptive and creative, a site of thoughtful opposition and a place for reflective inquiry and meaningful engagement. This definition is akin to Giroux's (1983) notion of resistance, which he felt needed to be evaluated against the degree to which it prompted critical thinking and galvanized “collective political struggle around the issues of power and social determination” (p. 111). This conception of resistance is also congruent with the types of thoughtful educational interventions advocated by several visual culture education theorists, who have called for an art education that actively reveals, and effectively facilitates critical engagement with, the everyday experience of seeing (Duncum, 2001a; 2002; Freedman, 2000; 2003; Mitchell, 1998; Tavin, 2000; 2002; 2003). By situating resistance within the educative realm of daily visual experiences, students and teachers can begin to meaningfully assess, interpret and attend to the social, political, psychological, and cultural struggles that occur within the multiple sites of the everyday.
TWO MONTHS PRIOR to the toppling of Saddam's monument in Firdos Square, US Secretary of State Colin Powell presented the American case against Iraq to the United Nations Security Council. It seemed like an unlikely coincidence, in the days leading up to the impending invasion, that the tapestry reproduction of Picasso's Guernica, which had hung in the hall outside the council chambers since 1985, would be completely obscured by member-state flags, a UN logo and a large baby-blue curtain. Although UN officials claimed that they were simply creating a more appealing backdrop for the television cameras, it was hard not to consider the implications of covering up the anti-war piece. Aside from the general "opposition to war" message, Picasso's painting threatened to evoke historical parallels that the Bush administration and UN officials were clearly determined to keep the media and the public from considering. Anti-war protesters were quick to condemn the concealment of the Guernica tapestry and responded by
holding up their own reproductions of the painting for the television cameras outside of the UN. Media outlets from around the world carried the story, fueling the international split within the UN Security Council and congealing the growing global movement against the impending war. Sixty-six years after the creation of the original, even reproductions of Picasso’s painting still packed a surprisingly potent political punch.

**BESIDES HIGHLIGHTING** the persuasive influence the American administration has over UN officials, this event demonstrated the oppositional power of art and visual representation within the milieu of our contemporary visual culture. In fact, the visual arts have been used for decades to reveal tears in the social fabric, thereby exposing the caesuras between fundamental societal values (i.e., justice, democracy, freedom) and the dominant discourses and normative practices of the status quo. Since the early 18th century, oppositional artists have utilized their work to inspire, offend, and enrage audiences, to awaken the unconscious, and to communicate ideas and emotions otherwise difficult to articulate (Clark, 1997). By calling attention to the social, political, cultural, and religious mechanisms and restrictions that inform our actions and temper our beliefs, artists are able to expose us to ourselves, to each other, and to the world we are attempting to cultivate together. This artistic troubling of our identities, our beliefs, and our actions (and inactions) is often disorienting and almost always discomforting. It frequently trembles the ideological ground on which we are accustomed to standing. From gay activists to Guerilla Girls, Dadaists to Debord, Conceptualists to Culture Jammers, socially engaged artists have repeatedly addressed and redressed issues of sociopolitical and cultural significance, and in the process, undermined our ability to function within a dysfunctional world.

**ART EDUCATORS WHO** introduce the work of socially engaged artists into their classrooms, open up educative spaces where the layers of sociocultural, political, aesthetic, historical, and pedagogic complexities surrounding these works can be examined and explored. By exposing their students to this work, art educators can begin to challenge disenfranchised conceptions of the social role and political function of art with their students. This is crucial if students are to understand and meaningfully participate in public conversations around the social and political relations of art to power, culture and democratic citizenship. If art education is to empower students to perceive and meaningfully engage in the ideological and cultural struggles em-
bedded within the visual, art educators will need to first render these struggles visible. W.J.T. Mitchell (1998) has described his aim as a teacher of visual culture as the struggle to "overcome the veil of familiarity and self-evidence that surrounds the experience of seeing...to make seeing show itself, to put it on display, and make it accessible to analysis" (p. 86). As part of his Eight Counter-Theses on Visual Culture, he contends that visual culture involves a "meditation on blindness, the invisible, the unseen, the unseeable, and the overlooked" (p. 90). Greene (1995) explains the arts can be used as a pedagogical strategy to move students into spaces of awareness and resistance: hoping to challenge empty formalism, didacticism, and elitism, many of us teachers believe that the shocks of awareness to which the arts give rise leave us (should leave us) less immersed in the everyday and more impelled to wonder and to question. It is not uncommon for the arts to leave us somehow ill at ease or to prod us beyond acquiescence. They may, now and then, move us into spaces where we can envision other ways of being and ponder what it might signify to realize them. But moving into such spaces requires a willingness to resist the forces that press people into passivity and bland acquiescence. (p. 135)

BY INTRODUCING STUDENTS to the work of socially engaged artists, as well as to other forms of visual representation that leave us less immersed in the everyday, art educators can begin to challenge learners to reconsider the complexity of their daily visual experiences. Combined with a concerted pedagogical effort to reveal and deconstruct the persuasive strategies and aesthetic tactics commonly employed by visual artists and producers of popular visual texts, art educators can move their students towards a better understanding of the ideological and social power of visual representation. Freedman (2003) explains that, "[w]hen students develop a deeper understanding of their visual experiences, they can look critically at surface appearances and begin to reflect on the importance of the visual arts in shaping culture, society, and even individual identity" (p. xi). This visual understanding is essential if students are to gain insight into the artistic intentions and social motivations of visual artists and if they are to uncover, interpret and meaningfully respond to the ideological struggles and cultural forces that exist within the visual.
Although the term "culture jamming" was first used in 1984 by the San Francisco audio-collage band *Negativeland,* the concept itself dates back to the suffrage and avant-garde movements of the early 20th century. These radical artists and self-described social agitators adopted socio-political issues as their primary focus and challenged dominant conceptions about art and artists, directly confronting the rigidity and hierarchical superiority of the art institutions. As Clark (1997) explains, groups of avant-garde artists across Europe developed "pictorial procedures which broke away from rules of compositional harmony and conventional ways of creating the illusion of perspectival space" (p. 32). Dada artists, for instance, embraced counter-aesthetic imagery and modern techniques like photomontage, which easily facilitated the creation of satirical forms of visual representation and which, because it didn’t require special skills to create, resisted the privileged status of the artist as a trained professional. Marcel Duchamp, the most well known of the Dadaists, has been described as a "shock artist" who used his art to confront and expose the insanity of the post war world (Kincheloe, 2003b).

From Duchamp’s perspective the world that emerged from the horror of World War I was pathological and insane. Duchamp discerned that he had to use his art to call attention to this reality. Like ‘shock artists’ before and after him, Duchamp railed against the social, cultural, political and religious restrictions that undermine our ability to cope with the derangements that confront us. (p. 14)
The Surrealists adopted this stance of defiance towards the status quo in the 1920s by proclaiming their aim was to overthrow capitalism through the liberation of the unconscious. They condoned political actions that were "playfully absurd and purposeless," and therefore, not "harnessed to the utilitarian demands of the capitalist economy" (Clark, 1997, p. 139). These concepts later influenced Guy Debord and the Situationist International during the 1950s and 1960s. Building on Marx's theory of 'commodity fetishism,' the Situationists declared that our real lives had been co-opted by the spectacular media events and commodity consumption of the modern world. As a response to this 'society of the spectacle,' the Situationists advocated the idea of 'spontaneous living' as a way of reviving the creativity of everyday life. They developed the concept of detournement which, roughly translated, can be defined as a 'turning around,' essentially the act of pulling an image out of its original context to create a new meaning. Lasn (2000), the publisher of Adbusters magazine and a leading figure within the culture jamming movement since the late 1980s, explains that detournement involves "rerouting spectacular images, environments, ambiances and events to reverse or subvert their meaning, thus reclaiming them" (p. 103).

Lasn draws heavily on the theoretical framework laid down by the Situationists and explains that [c]ulture jamming is, at root, just a metaphor for stopping the flow of spectacle long enough to adjust your set" (p. 107). He and many of his fellow culture jammers also find inspiration in Alinsky's (1989) metaphor of "mass political jujitsu," which Alinsky describes as "utilizing the power of one part of the power structure against another part...the superior strength of the Haves become their own undoing" (p. 152). In practical terms, this may involve attempting to subvert a multi-million dollar advertising campaign by altering
I started the lesson by creating a circle and doing a ‘check-in.’ In many ways, it would be easier not to do these check-ins as it is still sometimes painful to get the students to share much about themselves. Most of the students talked briefly about their Spring Breaks. Sleeping and doing nothing was a definite theme. Still, I feel that I am making progress slowly with them. I am now able to joke and tease them a bit now that I am learning about their lives. We then watched *The Ad and the Ego* together. After the video (57 minutes) we returned to the circle and I asked the students to share their initial responses to the film. A number of students indicated the video was too long. Neo-Max indicated there were too many fast cuts and it became too hard to pay attention. I asked him why he thought the producers might have chosen a visual approach and he suggested it was to confuse us into not paying attention so we could be manipulated on a subliminal level. A number of the students also indicated the messages in the video (advertising generates markets through creating anxiety and doubt; that advertising provides more education than school; people are more easily manipulated with images than with text or words; advertising influences us at subtle and complex levels) were depressing. When pushed a bit, they complained there is nothing they can do about the ill effects of advertising. This ongoing sense of apathy or powerlessness seems to be a recurring theme. Many of the students believe it is pointless to do anything because of the large scale problems and the small scale interventions. I wonder how I can begin to instill some hope into these students? Without hope, they will continue to believe that resistance is futile. We need a way to tap into their senses of agency. A couple of students indicated that the video was interesting and very informative. Dr. Q commented she had no idea advertising worked this way. She seemed genuinely surprised and a little discomforted. I wish I could have photographed the look on her face. The end of the video included footage of Ron English and friends jamming a billboard. The students seemed interested in talking about this action. Mary-Lee asked why it was illegal to jam billboards. I put the question out to the rest of the class and someone explained that companies pay money to put their advertisements up on billboards. I then explained that billboard rental costs vary depending on the location and size. I also explained that even if someone has enough money to post a billboard ad, the company that owns the space can censure the content of the ad. We discussed the potential motivations for doing this. The students seemed pretty interested in this. At the end of the period, Fred (an artist and grad student who volunteers in the art room every Monday) commented to me that it was really interesting to hear the students share their opinions. He indicated he wasn’t used to hearing from students in the art classroom and felt it was an invaluable exercise. Alice commented that I had my work cut out for me as my next lesson was based on the conversation that had occurred at the end of class...
In North America, we are now living in an age in which the number of shopping malls has surpassed the number of schools. Daily, we are exposed to thousands of advertising images and marketing messages, each of which attempt to influence our emotions and make new associations between deep immaterial needs and material products (Lasn 1999). Over the last number of years, marketing talk of pitch and product has been replaced with discourses of meaning and relationship building (Klein, 2000). Competitive clothing companies now focus their attentions on manufacturing images and identities rather than on producing actual products. Tommy Hilfiger, for instance, doesn't produce a single item of clothing (the company is operated entirely through licensing agreements), while Nike president Phil Knight has described his company's mission as, "enhancing people's lives through sports and fitness" (Klein, 2000, p. ). When questioned about the marketing success of Diesel Jeans, company owner Renzo Rosso openly confided that, "We don't sell a product, we sell a style of life" (Klein, 2000, p. 176).

Within this contemporary climate of consumer relationships, lifestyle companies and meaning-full marketing, how are concepts of identity affected and interpreted?

Susan Fornier (1997), in her paper, "The Consumer and the Brand: An Understanding within the Framework of Personal Relationships," wrote "this connection is driven not by the image the brand 'contains' in the culture, but by the deep and significant psychological and socio-cultural meanings the consumer bestows on the brand in the process of meaning creation" (Klein, 2000, p. 176).
a carefully crafted company logo or advertisement to radically change the originally intended message – the goal being to draw attention to unethical labor and marketing practices of the seller and, in the case of products like cigarettes and liquor, to highlight the true health risks to the consumer. This might be accomplished by ‘jamming’ a high profile billboard³, producing and airing a 30 second video subadvertisement⁴, or creating a spoof of a corporate or political publication or website that borrows the layout, design and photographs of the original, but which carries a message that is counter to the target site⁵.

KLÉIN (2000) HAS APTLY described these and other forms of creative cultural intervention as “semiotic Robin Hoodism” (p. 280). She asserts that as a result of newly accessible digital technologies and a steady increase in aggressive commercialism, culture jamming has experienced a revival in recent years. Klein explains that culture jammers, who are influenced by media theorists’ calls for less corporate control and more democratic forms of media, are now literally “writing theory on the streets” (p. 284). She describes culture jamming as a challenge to antiquated interpretations of freedom of expression and consumer-driven notions of public space, and provides justification for the creative tactics adopted by culture jammers by contextualizing their work within the milieu of contemporary artistic practices:

Artists will always make art by re-configuring our shared cultural languages and references, but as those shared experiences shift from firsthand to mediated, and the most powerful political forces in our society are as likely to be multinational corporations as politicians, a new set of issues emerges that once again raises serious questions about out-of-date definitions of freedom of expression in a branded culture. In this context, telling video artists that they can’t use old car commercials, or musicians that they can’t sample or distort lyrics, is like banning the guitar or telling a painter he can’t use red. The underlying message is that culture is something that happens to you. You buy it at the Virgin Megastore or Toys ’R’ Us and rent it at Blockbuster Video. It is not something in which you participate, or to which you have the right to respond. (178)
IN FACT, THE FUNDAMENTAL right to respond to culture through artistic production and creative cultural critique is one of the primary mantras of the culture jamming movement. Culture jammers contend that DIY (Do-it-yourself) culture, which can be defined essentially as the act of creating art, and thus meaning, out of the cultural materials of the everyday (including images, artifacts and references from popular culture), should be actively encouraged and endorsed (Duncombe, 2002; Klein, 2000). Like several artists and cultural critics before them, many culture jammers maintain that society has been progressively lulled and mediated into acquiescence by the increasing media spectacle of consumer culture. Lasn (2000), for instance, believes the media are "rear-ranging our neurons, manipulating our emotions, [and] making powerful new connections between deep material needs and material products" (p. 12). Duncombe (2002), meanwhile, claims that most people living in liberal democracies and consumer economies "are used to politics, products, and entertainment being created and carried out by others" (p. 4). He asserts that, within this context, even the seemingly simple act of citizen-initiated cultural production has become ideologically subversive. He explains that, "[i]n a society built around the principle that we should consume what others have produced for us, throwing an illegal warehouse rave or creating an underground music label - that is creating your own culture - takes on a rebellious resonance" (p. 7). In a commercially-dominated society in which 'culture' is often defined simply as a set of objects, images, and artifacts to be purchased and amassed, participating in individual and community-based forms of cultural production and resistance is seen by culture jammers as an essential component of responsible democratic engagement with the ideology of the everyday.
CREATIVE RESISTANCE:
Critical Cultural Production in the Classroom

THE CREATIVE TACTICS used by culture jammers to engage with daily life are, in many ways, analogous to the pedagogical approaches promoted by several visual culture educators, who have called for an art education that includes conscious and critical forms of student sociocultural engagement (Duncum, 2001a; 2002; Freedman, 2000; 2003; Freedman & Schuler, 2002; Mitchell, 1998; Stuhr, 2003; Tavin, 2000; 2002; 2003). Each group, for instance, acknowledges the importance of identifying, interrogating, and exposing the ideological forces embedded within our everyday visual experiences. And while there is little question that students are regularly immersed in symbiotic relationships with visual culture, both consuming and constructing meaning from their daily visual encounters (Congdon & Blandy, 2001; Rushkoff, 1999), it is also clear that many of these experiences are absorbed and reproduced without adequate critical examination (Freedman & Schuler, 2002; Goldfarb, 2002; Mitchell, 1998; Morley & Robbins, 1995). Some visual culture theorists contend that art educators have a pedagogical responsibility to move students beyond uncritical and superficial aesthetic understandings that fail to recognize the ideological struggles embedded within the everyday visual experience. Freedman and Schuler (2002), for instance, assert that, "students are becoming part of con-
sumer culture and constructing their individual identities with little critical reflection" (p. 19). They claim that art teachers can help students to view and interpret television critically in order to help them "make choices about which influences they are willing to accept" (p. 22). Tavin (2002) explains that, "art educators have an urgent and necessary responsibility to help students develop critical, reflexive, and meaningful approaches to interpreting, critiquing, and producing images, objects, and artifacts from visual culture" (p. 47). Duncum (2002), meanwhile, maintains that, "a war is being waged between the global corporations that seek to define us as consumers and older forms of social organizations like nation states and civil governance that seek to define us as citizens" (p. 6). He claims that educators must work to pass on identities as citizens to their students, and explains that "[i]t is to this mighty struggle for a primary identity as citizen versus consumer that there arises the call for educational intervention to develop a critical consciousness of everyday aesthetic sites" (p. 6).

**IN SOME WAYS,** these sentiments echo the views of culture jammers like Lasn (2000), who claims that "[c]ulture isn't created from the bottom up by the people anymore - it's fed up to us top-down by corporations" (p. 189). Firmly lodged within the discourses of both groups is the conviction that cultural and educational 'interventions' are required to examine, expose and respond to the pervasive influence of contemporary consumer culture. And both culture jammers and many visual culture educational theorists agree that, for these types of interventions to be effective, they must include critical forms of creative production. For culture jammers, these acts of creative resistance are a critical response to what they see as the insanity of consumer culture. As such, they are a direct attempt to call attention to, and transform, the way meaning is produced in our society. For visual culture educators, classroom-based cultural production can be an important method for generating and facilitating sociopolitical awareness, understanding, and participation. It is, essentially, the attempt to
help students critically form identities and produce and convey meaning from their daily visual experiences. Stuhr (2003) contends that art educators can accomplish this objective through "cultural production and investigation of images and artifacts" (p. 303). Freedman and Schuler (2002), meanwhile, explain that "[t]he making of art has long been valued as a physical manifestation of an artist's social, cultural, and individual identity because it reflects, critiques, and supports the exploration of what it means to be human for viewers" (p. 23). Consequently, classroom-based cultural production can help to move students from uncritical modes of viewing, what the Situationists described as a passive culture of spectatorship, towards more proactive forms of engagement. Freedman (2003) explains that student art-mak-
ing facilitates critical comprehension and plays a vital role in the learning and teaching of visual culture: Artistic production is a critical path to understanding, partly because the process and the product of art-making enables students to experience creative and critical connections between form, feeling, and knowing. It empowers students through their expression of ideas and construction of identities as it gives insight into the artistic motivations, intentions, and capabilities of others. (p. 147)

ALTHOUGH IT MAY NOT, for instance, be desirable to instruct students in the art of jamming billboards, art educators can still meaningfully engage their classes in forms of creative and critical production inspired by culture jamming (Congdon & Blandy, 2001). With the rising availability of new media technologies in the art classroom, including digital cameras and camcorders, image manipulation and design programs, video editing software, and web-based graphical interface applications, students and teachers increasingly have access to a wide array of powerful artistic tools as a means of engaging with and experiencing visual culture. Not that new media technology is a requirement for infusing culture jamming and socially engaged artistic tactics like detournement into the art curriculum. Introducing students to counter-cultural modes of artistic production based on art activism, conceptual, performance, and guerrilla art, for instance, can offer multiple opportunities for meaningful forms of student cultural participation.

WHEN COMBINED WITH creative explorations and artistic projects based around themes of shared social significance, visual culture educators can begin to generate important forms of student engagement with the normative practices and sociopolitical discourses of the everyday. Duncombe (2002) explains that contemporary politics can be described as a "cultural discourse" based on "a shared set of symbols and meanings that we all abide by" (p. 6). He claims that, "rewriting of that dis-
course – which is essentially what cultural resistance does – is a political act in itself” (p. 6). By encouraging students to interpret, evaluate, and ‘rewrite’ the shared symbols and meanings of their everyday visual experiences, visual culture educators can begin to move young people beyond modes of passive spectatorship and towards more active and expressive forms of communication with and in the world around them. And, by promoting active participation in the sociopolitical sphere through creative cultural production, art educators can begin to shift their students towards more active and responsible forms of engagement with the inequities and injustices of the status quo. Ultimately, if art education is to move students beyond modes of passive spectatorship and towards more generative and thoughtful forms of cultural production and resistance, art educators will need to help students make meaning of, and creatively respond to, their everyday visual experiences. By encouraging critical and creative forms of cultural production and actively uncovering the ideological struggles embedded within the visual, visual culture educators can imbue students with a meaningful ability to respond to the increasingly complex visual environment of the everyday. Combined with a determined pedagogical effort to expose and deconstruct the powerful strategies and aesthetic tactics commonly employed by artists, designers, and other producers of visual texts, visual culture educators can begin to provide their students with the required intellectual and creative tools to examine, challenge, and transform themselves, their communities, and the world(s) in which they live.
1. The American school of Abstract Expressionists was proclaimed by critics like Clement Greenberg in the 1950s to be the epitome of free art. According to Clark (1997), numerous international exhibitions of this work were accompanied by curatorial statements in which nationalist rhetoric compared the freedom expressed in American painting with the strictly controlled “kitsch of Soviet communism” (p. 9). He explains that, “some of these exhibitions had been secretly funded by the CIA, a fact widely known by the mid-1970s” (p. 9).

2. I am using the term socially engaged artists to describe all artists who consciously choose to engage with social justice and/or human rights issues through their work.

3. Jamming within this context refers to the practice of altering the text and/or images of a billboard advertisement to produce a message counter to the original. New York artist Ron English’s website has some excellent examples of this form of culture jamming http://www.popaganda.com, as does the website for the San Francisco based Billboard Liberation Front http://billboardliberation.com.

4. Subvertisement refers to an advertisement with an anti-marketing message. The Detroit Project has produced a series of 30 second video subvertisements which link the inefficient automobiles being produced and consumed by North Americans with terrorism http://www.thedetroitproject.com/ads/default.htm. A number of other examples of video subvertisements can be found on the Media Foundation’s (Adbusters magazine) website http://adbusters.org/campaigns/mediacarta/toolbox/resources/tvjam.

5. Some well publicized examples of this practice have included Greenpeace’s http://www.stopesso.org, which attempts to inform consumers of Esso/Exxon Mobil’s poor environmental record and questionable public relations policies, and @™ark’s http://gwbush.com, which, during the 2000 presidential election, highlighted hypocrisies in George W. Bush’s campaign, including his refusal to deny having used illicit drugs, despite his severe policies on illegal drug use.

6. According to Klein (2000), under current US copyright and trademark laws, artists and activists run the very real risk of being sued for incorporating ‘protected’ cultural materials into their work. Klein cites a number of examples of what she describes as “copyright and trademark harassment,” in which artists, activists, and community groups have been threatened with legal action and “dragged into court for violating trademark, copyright, libel or ‘brand disparagement’ laws - easily abused statutes that form an airtight protective seal around the brand, allowing it to brand us, but prohibiting us from so much as scuffing it” (p. 176).
Mindfulness...

It's interesting to me that as I sift through the mounds of data (photos of student work, interview audio and video tapes, field notes, written and visual reflections, student writing) I've collected over the last five months, I often find my mind begins to wander. This 'mind wandering' is frequently a very generative space where I begin to make connections between research artifacts, concepts, ideas, images, memories, quotes, etc. Letting my mind wander has allowed me to find all sorts of interesting new spaces of connection and intersection. Rita (Irwin) and Alex (de Cossin) both speak about a pedagogy of walking; perhaps there is also a pedagogy of mind wandering.

Carl (Leggo) once told me he sometimes gives himself permission to go for long hikes in his mind during boring meetings and presentations.

Like Carl, I find my mind tends to wander when I am physically or intellectually somewhere I would prefer not to be. It's almost like my mind stands up and says, "Come on, let's get outa here" and when my body fails to move, my mind just walks away.

Interestingly, one place my mind consistently wanders is when I am riding my bike. There seems to be something about the rhythmic action of pedalling that allows/inspires my mind to wander. Perhaps this is a form of pedagogy?

As I struggle to balance being a researcher, artist and teacher, I find I make transitions between different forms of mindfulness. I primarily seem to fluctuate between hyper-awareness and mind wandering. Sometimes, however, these two states of mind meet in
the middle. I think of this state as being 'in the zone.' It is a euphoric and lucid state in which everything seems to be interconnected and whole. Everything seems to make sense. I am always extremely reluctant and disappointed to leave this state of mind. Although, this state of mind can occur at the most peculiar of times, for the most part, I tend to get into the zone most often while I am engaged in the process of art making (defined broadly). For me, this fact alone helps to justify the inclusion of art making within the inquiry process. Creating art allows me to make connections between researched phenomena that just wouldn't be revealed (literally, 're-covered') through any other process. Although this doesn't negate other ways of 'knowing' research, it does certainly help explain why artistic production should be included in the inquiry process.
I have consciously resisted making a firm commitment to any one theoretical or methodological approach to my research. And, although I may risk being condemned for my propensity towards theoretical and methodological promiscuity - for my proclivity for “poaching ideas from all kinds of places, and using them in new ways” (Bell, 2001, p. 75), I firmly remain committed to my non-commitment. Though for some purists, combining theoretical approaches and blending research methodologies is like mixing prescription drugs with alcohol, as Bell explains, “for those of us simply wanting to make sense of the world by any means necessary, pluralism is a much better tactic than purism” (p.75). I tend to agree.

Limiting ourselves to any one theory or methodological approach to research seems counterproductive to the ways in which we individually and collectively travel through, and make sense of, our ever shifting and changing worlds and selves. As Garber (2001) posits:

[T]o restrict theory in art education to the realm of philosophy, sociology or any other field of knowing impoverishes our knowing. To determine at this moment (or any other) a single theoretical basis does not allow for social change, shifts in art and in how we know and experience our world. It limits the possibilities of knowing art and the world, just as a lack of theory altogether limits how we know. (p. 110)
Through my unwillingness to choose a clear linear methodological course for my research, I am (ac)knowledging there are multiple ways of knowing, being and understanding with, in, and through the inquiry process. As an artist who is also a researcher and a teacher, I have come to understand that viewing the world through many divergent and often contra-dictory lenses generates a much needed haziness - an ambiguous view and obscure representation of the world that is at once confusing (literally, with fusion), interesting (literally, to be between), and revealing (literally, to re-cover). Chalmers (2001a) explains that in understanding visual culture, we need to consider and acknowledge the “multifaceted lenses and diverse, sometimes fuzzy perspectives through which visual culture can be, and is, ‘known’” (p. 86). In his defense of artistic pluralism, Chalmers (2001b) questions, “isn’t that the real challenge – to embrace muddle and complexity[?]” (p. 150). He also asserts that “[t]hose of us who work in the arts in education need to embrace the uncertain, to embrace many different understandings of art, visual culture and artifacts. Art educators need to accept each author’s position (and many others) and add them to their store of knowledge about ways in which art can be known and ways in which it is understood” (p. 149).

Accordingly, I have chosen methodological pluralism and theoretical hybridity as my approach to research and have thus, deliberately sampled from a number of existing and emerging educational research theories and methodologies, many of which themselves are already compilations of educational research theories and methods. I have attempted to cut and paste, tear and stitch, rip and tie them together into a cohesive and dynamic and meaningful assemblage. In so doing, I have endeavored to find the connections and creative junctures between a host of differing and different methods of inquiry. I believe that commitment to diverse and different ways of knowing has enriched and deepened the research conversation (Geertz, 1973). As Ball (2002) writes:

To be committed to the development of different ways of knowing through the development of different methodologies, and alternative writing strategies, will necessitate the development of different research/scholarly practices. The notion of the rugged individualist researcher will need to make space for the researcher who pursues connectedness, creative sorts of knowing....I am suggesting making space for different kinds
of knowing and for different methodologies for knowing will mean reexamining how we teach and practice research....We need to begin to move beyond what we know. This is facilitated by challenging how we know and how we represent what we know. (p. 24)

My commitment to methodological pluralism and propensity towards theoretical hybridity has led me to an emerging methodology, a/r/t/ography, that I have come to adopt as a form of methodological compass – a kind of researcher’s guide to the galaxy, if you will. A/r/t/ography can be described as an arts based site of living inquiry that integrates the practices of art making, researching, and teaching. It is a hybrid methodological space informed by hermeneutics, action research, phenomenology (and other methodologies) that encourages the enacting of visual, written, and performative processes. A/r/t/ography has come to serve as a permeable covering, a malleable theoretical wrapping, a porous methodological skin of sorts, which has (em)braced and enfolded my inquiry process and which, ultimately, has directed, shaped, and (in)formed my research study.

What follows then, is an examination of a/r/t/ography as an emerging form of arts-based/living inquiry, as well as an investigation of each of the methodologies (visual ethnography, hermeneutics, and action research) that have directly inspired and informed my a/r/t/ographical journey. Although they exist here in a somewhat linear and reductionistic fashion, it is important to note that I consider each methodology to be interconnected and contiguous fragments, which summatively, constitute a methodological whole that is fundamentally greater than the sum of its individual parts.
OVER THE LAST DOZEN years, a number of arts-based forms of educational research have emerged and been developed. Founded initially on the work of Eisner (1979, 1991) and Barone & Eisner (1997), these modes of inquiry have included narrative (e.g. Bochner, 2000), autobiographical, poetic (e.g. Richardson, 2000), performative (e.g. Fels, 1998), autoethnography, self-study, visual ethnography (e.g. Pink, 2001), and a host of other creative and hybridized forms of qualitative research. Many of these methods have blurred the boundaries between empiricism and the arts, and have attempted to “empower and change the manner through which research is conducted, created, and understood” (Springgay, Irwin, & Wilson Kind, 2004, p. 3). To date, however, “very little has been done in the way of integrating the visual arts into educational research methods” (Irwin, 2004, p. 23). As Keys (2003) points out, many of the current approaches to arts-based research “utilize literary mechanisms and thus far few employ visual arts processes or the consideration of the role of the artistic/aesthetic formative experiences in pedagogy of self and other informants” (p. 99).

A/r/t/ography, an emerging research methodology infused with and influenced by the growing arts-based educational inquiry movement, recognizes and (ac)knowledges the possibilities created by integrating visual culture and art making within the educational inquiry process. Described by de Cosson (2003) as a “living methodology,” he explains that the term ‘a/r/t/ography’ was originally ‘coined’ by Rita Irwin and co-developed by the members of the University of British Columbia A/R/T/S research group (p. xii). He explains that a/r/t/ography “allows for divergent, transformative artistic knowing to move through our research as living practice” (p. xii). In fact, the notion of living inquiry is integral to understanding a/r/t/ography. Inspired by action research, including Sumara and Carson’s (1997) concept of action research as a living practice, a/r/t/ographers
contend that the processes and practices of art making, researching, and teaching are “not merely activities added to one's life, but are the processes by which one's life is lived” (Springgay, Irwin, & Wilson Kind, 2004, p. 10). As such, a/r/t/ographers endeavor to dwell in the liminal spaces between artist, researcher, and teacher in an attempt to generate lived/living experiences and understandings. In this sense, a/r/t/ography becomes both a form of inquiry and a mode of understanding that embodies all aspects of one's private, public and/or professional self (Springgay & Irwin, in press).

Infused with a phenomenological lens, a/r/t/ography seeks to illuminate the human experience through the contiguous processes of art making, researching, teaching, and writing. It is the coming together or doubling of art and graphy, image and text, and it implies both visual and written research processes and products (Springgay, Irwin, & Wilson Kind, 2004). As such, a/r/t/ography is both a mode of inquiry and a method of intervention – simultaneously being and becoming a manner of understanding and an act of creation. Accordingly, engaging in a/r/t/ography involves a difficult, and sometimes paradoxical vigilance, to the ongoing practice of being an artist, researcher, and teacher. This notion of the multiple lives of an artist/researcher/teacher is similar to Finley and Knowles’ (1995) understanding of the relationship between being both an artist and a researcher.

I have become increasingly confident in describing myself both as an artist and as researcher...But I have also discovered that my researcher self and my artist self are not separate...I have also asked myself whether doing art improves my research. And I am emphatic in saying that it does. I am not merely looking, I am seeing. When I write, I am acutely aware that language is my medium. And I believe what I write, the end product, responds, not corresponds to what I see and understand. (pp. 131-132)

Springgay, Irwin, and Wilson Kind (2004) explain that “[t]o be engaged in the practice of a/r/t/ography means to inquire in the world through a process of art making and writing. It is a process of double imaging that includes the creation of art and words that are not separate or illustrative of each other, but are interconnected and woven through each other to create additional meanings” (p. 6). They maintain that their understanding of the term artist is “embodied, holistic, and broadly defined” and assert that it is “imbued with the understanding that to live the life of an artist who is also a researcher and teacher, is to live a contiguous life, a life that dialectically moves between connecting and not connecting the three roles” (p. 8).
To engage in a/r/t/ography is to venture into the uncomfortable, the unstable, and the previously unknowable. It involves a 'letting go' of conventional linear notions of academic inquiry. Although this often leads us into sites of difficulty, it also serves to uncover generative spaces of opportunity. Fischman (2001) explains that “[i]f we dare to engage in the dynamic process of looking at the field (of education) using new tools and questioning those areas which have been uncharted and treacherous, we may enter insecure territory, but one that holds layers of meaning we may not have otherwise encountered” (p. 32).

Greene (1995) describes this process as “a matter of going intentionally in search of something and seeking out the kind of understandings needed for the search, for moving toward what is not yet known. In this search, a refusal of the comfortable is always required, a refusal to remain sunk in everydayness” (Greene, p. 175). These sentiments echo Fels’ (1998) notion of the researcher as “an experimenter – an adventurer, a facilitator, a catalyst who invites encourages dares exploration” (p. 34).

As such, the creative action-interaction between art making, writing, and researching involves a willingness to place oneself in the “space between structure and chaos – a space that complexity theorists call the ‘edge of chaos’ where patterns of interrelations are continually created and recreated through an ‘endless dance of co-emergence’” (Fels, 1998, p. 30).

Like Fels’ endless dance of co-emergence, a/r/t/ography disrupts and displaces conventional notions of qualitative research. Specifically, it questions and (dis)solves dichotomous notions of theory (theoria) and practice (praxis) within educational inquiry. In fact, a/r/t/ographers posit that poesis (mean-
ing-making through artistic creation) can also play an integral part of the inquiry process. Irwin (2004) explains that:

Although a dialectical stance assists many educational endeavours, it still favours a two-ness of categories and in education this usually means favouring theory/practice. If we resist this favourism and move to embracing theoria, praxis and poesis or put another way, research, teaching and art making, we are moving to a more complex intertextuality and intratextuality of categories. A dialectical stance no longer works unless we push the very nature of the intention embodied within a dialectical stance to a multilectical view that encourages thirdness, and in-between space, between and among categories. (p. 23)

This notion of a thirdness, a between space that is both between and amidst categories, is integral to a/r/t/ography. Irwin (2004) asks that we “conceive of researching, teaching and art making as activities that weave in and through one another, an interweaving and intraweaving of concepts, activities and feelings” (p. 23). She explains that “[w]here two would be inclined to dialogic opposition, a third space offers a point of convergence yet respect for divergence, where differences and similarities are woven together” (p. 24). This notion is similar to Applebaum’s (1995) concept of betweenness. He writes that “[b]etween closing and beginning lives a gap, a caesura, a discontinuity. The betweenness is a hinge that belongs to neither one nor the other. It is neither poised nor unpoised, yet moves both ways” (pp.15-16). These between spaces - caesuras and gaps amidst and within the processes and products of researching, teaching, and art making - are always unstable and continually indeterminate. They are prone to complexity and contradictions. Phelan (1993) describes this third space as the “rackety bridge between self and other” and explains that it is in our attempts to walk and live on this bridge that we find real hope (p. 174). Bhabha (1994), meanwhile, explains that it is crucial to focus on the moments that are produced in the articulation of differences. He claims that “[t]hese ‘in-between’ spaces provide a terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular and communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself” (pp. 1-2). Thus, by urging us to embrace the in-between space, a/r/t/ography asks that we acknowledge and examine the methodological, metaphorical, and social spaces amidst and in-between, in order to experience what Fels and Meyer (1997) describe as “the risk, the unexpected, the interruption located in spaces that open us to possibility” (p. 76).
THE A/R/T/OGRAPHICAL
WHOLE IS GREATER THAN
THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

Springgay (2002) explains that art generated within arts-based educational research "illuminates what could not be represented through written form" (p. 3). She maintains that:

[w]hen we research using art forms, the art of analysis. Subsequently, the art product, theoretical considerations are all entwined. They are separate in the sense that each individual strength and merit, but they other as fragments of an uncertain part and the entire process and product cannot separate out the art from the but rather they are joined collective-

Thus, a/r/t/oographers recognize that art making collectively produce that separately could not exist. In that the a/r/t/oographical whole is sum of its parts. A/r/t/oographers emerge through the contiguous inquiry that could not have mate-way, the generative a/r/t/oigraphi- inquiry, and text give form to that remain unseeable, unknowable, and becomes the tools the research, and with each other. component achieves stand amidst each whole. Remove one collapses. Thus one research and the theory, ly. (pp. 11-12)

the processes of writing and meanings and possibilities this sense, they (ac)knowledge fundamentally greater than the recognize valuable in-sights acts of art making, writing, and serialized independently. In this cal tensions between image, which would otherwise inde-scribe-able.
Whereas Eisner and Barone (1997) have developed a criterion-based model for evaluating the quality and legitimacy of arts-based research, Springgay, Irwin, and Wilson Kind (2004) explain that a/r/t/ography is defined more fluidly through an interrelated and emerging series of six renderings: contiguity; living inquiry; metaphor and metonymy; openings; reverberations; and excess. They caution that there is not a distinct delineation between these six renderings and explain the renderings should not be interpreted as "static images or words captured on a page, but rather visual, aesthetic, and textural performances that dance and play alongside each other" (p. 21). They note that there is a "mediation and meditation" between their six renderings that produces possible spaces and intersections through/with/in which additional renderings may yet emerge (pp. 5-6). They explain:

Renderings offer possibilities of engagement. To render, to give, to present, to perform, to become – offers for action, the opportunity for living inquiry. Research that breathes. Research that listens. Renderings are not methods. They are not lists of verbs initiated in order to create an arts-based or a/r/t/ographical study. Renderings are theoretical spaces through which to explore artistic ways of knowing and being research. (p. 6)

CONTIGUITY

Whereas a/r/t/ography itself can be described as a coming together of art and graphy, contiguity emphasizes the divergent and convergent natures of words and images within a/r/t/ographical inquiry. Springgay, Irwin and Wilson Kind (2004) explain that the doubling of images and texts is "not a static rendering of two elements positioned as separate and distinct, but it is the contiguous interaction and the movement between art and graphy that research becomes a lived endeavour" (italic in the original, p. 8). Within this context, they describe their understanding of the term artist as "embodied, holistic, and broadly defined" and explain that it is "imbued with the understanding that to live the life of an artist who is also a researcher and teacher, is to live a contiguous life, a life that dialectically moves between connecting and not connecting the three roles" (p. 8). Thus, a/r/t/ographers attempt to dwell and inquire within and between each of the three roles, simultaneously connecting and disconnecting these separate and inseparable realms of knowing and being.
LIVING INQUIRY

Irwin (2004) explains that a/r/t/ography is a "living practice of art, research and teaching: a living metsage, a life writing, life creating experience" (p. 28). Borrowing from Carson and Sumara's (1997) notion of action research as a living practice, a/r/t/ography as living inquiry recognizes that "art, research, and teaching are not done, but lived" (Irwin, 2004, p. 8). This involves continually searching for the places where images, words and the world intersect, spaces where each "pushes, cajoles, entrances the other into alternative formations" (Pollock, 1998, p. 81). A/r/tographers contend that the dialectical spaces in and between the roles of artist, researcher, teacher are dynamic spaces of living inquiry. As such, they contend that engaging in living inquiry involves a deep commitment to combining inquiry within all aspects of one's life. As Springgay, Irwin, and Wilson Kind (2004) explain, "[t]hrough attention to memory, identity, autobiography, reflection, meditation, story telling, interpretation and/or representation, artists/researchers/teachers expose their living practices in evocative ways" (p. 12). Through a commitment to living a life full of meaning that is complexified and enhanced through perceptual and artistic practices, a/r/tographers ascribe to Pinar and Grumet's (1976) contention that "[w]e must lay in waiting for ourselves. Throughout our lives. Abandoning the pretense that we know" (p. viii).
Living inquiry has been fundamental to my inquiry process. My deep commitment to integrating inquiry into all aspects of my life has allowed my lived (and living) experiences to inform my research and, conversely, has allowed the a/r/t/ographical approach to permeate my daily experiences. This has felt very natural. Giving myself permission to dwell within the complexities of my everyday experiences has allowed me to more clearly see the relationships between my artist, researcher, teacher, parent, husband, student, citizen selves. I have begun to realize that compartmentalizing these various components of my identity gives me only a partial picture (interesting metaphor) of my self. I've been claiming that the a/r/t/ographical whole is greater than the sum of its parts but I also need to acknowledge that the whole a/r/t/ographer is greater than the sum of her/his parts. In other words, engaging in a/r/t/ography has helped me to understand that I cannot ignore the relationships between myself as a parent and myself as a teacher or a researcher. Each role inevitably influences and informs the other. When I approach parenting or teaching through the lenses of inquiry, it inexorably informs my relationships with my son and also influences my understandings of myself and the other parts of my life, including this research project. When I approach researching through the lenses of parenting or teaching, my relationships with the students and understandings of the research 'data' are also impacted. These roles cannot be separated (though of course they cannot be completely integrated either).

Engaging in living inquiry also presents a number of challenges. I find it difficult, for instance, to deconstruct exactly how I have come to many of the insights within this study. Of course on some levels, carefully viewing the video footage or photographs from the study provided me with important insights about what transpired and certainly triggered
memories and ideas about certain events and experiences. Viewing the photographs of the students walking down the street proudly holding their assemblages in the air, for instance, contributed to my understandings of how installing their work in public generated student agency and voice. Watching and editing the video footage shot by the students helped me understand the installation from their 'view point' and also contributed to my understanding of how visually documenting the event contributed to their sense of agency and empowerment.

However, I am hesitant to only make such clear cut (another interesting metaphor!) associations. By integrating inquiry into all aspects of my life - creating collages and digital images, editing video footage, writing, teaching, reading and analyzing the interview transcripts and my field notes, viewing the research images, making dinner, riding my bike, playing with my son — it becomes difficult to trace all of the analytic and creative processes that have led to my understandings about/within this project.

This approach feels very hermeneutical to me. I remember sitting in Ted Aoki's class a few years back and discussing the idea that each time we engage with a text (I am defining 'text' very broadly) we are changed. Thus, when we later return to it or engage with another text (what does it mean to conceptualize research participants as 'texts?'), we are inevitably viewing it (and ourselves) from a different perspective (yet another interesting metaphor!). This, in part, is what I mean when I claim to be involved in 'relational inquiry.' By recognizing the importance of the relationships between my life and lived experiences and this research (and of course the research participants), I am acknowledging the influence and impact that each has upon the other.
Metonymy plays an important complexifying role within a/r/t/ography. As Springgay, Irwin, and Wilson Kind (2004) explain, "[m]etonymical meaning is not intended to close spaces with singular interpretations but instead allows for the ambiguity of meaning to shift in space and time" (p. 14). Thus, a/r/t/ographers use the slash to both divide and double words, thereby providing possibilities for multiple, relational and shifting meanings. In this way, the slash serves both a constructive and destructive role, helping to reveal and conceal meanings. Metaphors are also important in understanding a/r/t/ography. As Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) explains, embedded within the contextual frame, "metaphors capture the reader’s attention, call up powerful associations, and resonate through the rest of the piece" (p. 55). And, whereas factual academic language could be argued to exist within systems of restraint and categorization, metaphor and metonymy are seen to "permeate boundaries; disturbing systems and order" (Springgay, Irwin, Wilson Kind, p. 15). In describing the use of metaphoric language within performative writing, Pollock (1998) explains that metaphors can render absence present and can evoke worlds that are "other-wise intangible, unlocatable: worlds of memory, pleasure, sensation, imagination; affect and insight" (p. 80). Rather than describing events or processes in narrowly defined ways, metaphors and metonyms use language like paint to un/ambiguously render and represent what is and what might be. This allows a/r/t/ographers to reach beyond the academy’s inner circle by communicating through expressive means that both inform and inspire their readers/audiences.
OPENINGS
A/r/t/ographers re-cognize the gaps, caesuras, and openings between, within, and throughout the inquiry process. Thus, openings within a/r/t/ography are not empty spaces in need of filling but instead invitations located within space and time that allow artist/teacher/researchers to “move within the research text, penetrate deeply, and to shift thun­daries of perspective” (Springgay, Irwin, & Wilson Kind, 2004, p. 17). A/r/t/ographers recognize that these openings are not always easily entered. They include ruptures, “cuts, cracks, slits and tears, refusing comfort, predictability, and safety” (p. 16). Opening towards others within the inquiry process invites the benefits and losses of shared participation. As such, openings can re-mind us of the difficulties and the dangers involved in opening up ourselves to encounters and conversations with and within living inquiry.

REVERBERATIONS
Reverberations within a/r/t/ography call attention to the echoes be­tween – within – amongst – around – inside - beneath the spaces of knowing and not knowing, between the acts of art making, research­ing, writing, and teaching. Reverberations re-present and draw atten­tion to the conversions and conversations that resonate between our over, inner, outer, and under-standings. Etymologically, ‘reverberate’ signifies reflection; the act of throwing back; of reechoing; of re-vers­ing (literally, rewriting poetically). In fact, Luce-Kapler (1997) sug­gests that poetry can play an important role in research because of the ways in which “[i]t begins to reopen space” (p. 194). She explains that “[p]oetry has space for questions to echo. Poetry can threaten the organization of the symbolic order and the stability of meaning” (p. 194). She advises that researchers should, “[p]ut your ear to the line,
closer to the words. Listen. There are other texts called and recalled in the research text. (p. 194). By attending to the poetic spaces within arts-based educational inquiry, a/r/tographers can begin to listen to and respond to the texts and contexts in which meaning and understanding are formed and forming.

As Jardine (1998) explains, "[e]ducation is a risky, tense conversation between the old and the young, between the old and the new" (pp. 28-29). He suggests that educational research and theorizing cannot be simply a matter of documenting this conversation or declaring an end to it "through objective re-presentations which render it univocal (i.e., turn it into the singular voice of the disinter-

ested, methodical theorist)" (p. 28). The trick, according to Jardine (1998), is to join the conversation. He explains that, "[e]ven though it is difficult, even though it is irresolvable, ongoing, fluid, and risk-laden, the conversation between teacher and student, between adult and child is not something that needs fixing" (p. 29). And although Jardine seems to be using the verb 'fix' in this instance to connote 'repair,' he would also likely agree that the conversations between the old and the young should not be "fixed" in the static sense either.

Thus, by honoring and re-cognizing the importance of the reverberations, noises, voices, rattles and hums emitting from and within these conversations, a/r/tography attempts to carefully listen in, to join, and interpret these ongoing and emergent discussions. As
David Smith (1999) explains:

"The mark of good interpretive research is not in the degree to which it follows a specified methodological agenda, but in the degree to which it can show understanding of what it is that is being investigated. And 'understanding' here is itself not a fixable category but rather it stands for a deep sense that something has been profoundly heard in our present circumstances. Similarly, 'hearing something in the present' does not just mean simply being aware of vibrations on the eardrums, but a registering of them within the deep web of sounds and voices that make up the structure of one's consciousness as language, memory, and hope. (pp. 41-42)"

EXCESS

Inspired in part by the work of Bataille (1985), excess is seen by a/r/t/o graphers to serve a subversive and generative function within living inquiry. Serving as "a point of rupture between absolute knowledge and sheer loss," excess provides openings for complexity and deeper understanding and is exposed, flexible and in constant change (Springgay, Irwin, & Wilson Kind, 2004). As such, excess is an "ongoing practice concerned not with inserting facts and figures, images and representations into language, but with creating an opening where control and regulation disappears. Excess is a way to re-image ourselves into being; re-assembling the mundane of our experiences" (p. 19).
Sometimes I wonder if I should be practicing D/A/R/T/S/oography. Besides struggling to be an (A)rtist, (R)esearcher, and (T)eacher, I am also busy being a (D)ad and a (S)tudent. I think that it is important to consider/remember the fact that each of us wears many hats in our daily lives. What I like about the concept of living inquiry is that it acknowledges the many selves that we occupy each day and encourages us to include them within the inquiry process. Engaging in living inquiry allows me to remain mindful throughout my day. This has helped me notice the patterns in the direction of the wind during my daily bike rides (it blows to the West until mid-day and then blows to the East), the beauty in the cracks in the 60 year old hardwood floors in my living room and the subtle body language of my son Julian (he rubs his cute little face whenever he's tired). These other parts of my life have also helped my better understand my research.

Often the connections between knowing and making are elusive. I often create images or objects that only become significant to me in retrospect (literally, to 'see' historically). Having faith in this fact allows me to move creatively forward. I can create, knowing that the meanings will emerge at a later date. Of course, this requires a commitment to looking again (re-specting). In many ways, this dissertation has been created with a faithful commitment to this re-spectful process. Many of my observations and reflections only become meaningful after re-looking at them. Oftentimes, I will document an event (visually or textually) and only understand its significance later on. Perhaps this is why they say that hindsight is 20/20.
LIKE BELL HOOKS, I too remember being scolded by my mother for staring too intensely as a child. In fact, from the earliest days of my youth, I was insatiably fascinated by the unfolding lives of the many people around me. The lady next door who did her gardening at night by the glow of an orange living room lamp, the man up the street who wore women’s blouses in the summertime, the worn-out looking mothers in the grocery store who wearily pushed metal shopping carts laden with whining children and colorful boxes of food; all of these people and countless others were irresistibly interesting for me to observe. And of course whenever she caught me, my mother would emphatically remind me of how disrespectful and rude it was to stare at people with such intensity. Even my younger brother seemed willing to help shed me of my distasteful habit by sassily suggesting that I should, ‘Take a picture, it’ll last longer,’ whenever he had the opportunity. And so slowly I learned to hide my gaze, to camouflage it, to disguise my intense curiosity and replace it with a facade of adolescent disinterest and teen-aged boredom. But my desire to observe the lives of others remained and, secretly, I never stopped watching.

Although my childhood taught me there is certain danger in watching, it took until I was in graduate school for me to really understand that there is also ‘power in looking.’

(hooks, 2003, p. 94)
looking.’ I had just finished a pilot research project, as part of a methodology course in video-ethnography, in which I had explored the connections between clothing, marketing and identity. I had conducted a series of video interviews with a small group of educators, thematically analyzed the data, and non-chronologically inter-spliced the footage with a variety of video and photographic images of clothing and visual marketing strategies commonly found within typical retail shopping environments. My aim was to utilize the language of images and visual texts to support, animate and enrich the interview clips. By analyzing and representing my research in this way, I was rejecting the notion that ethnographic information ultimately must be translated into text in order to be decoded and understood as knowledge (Collier & Collier, 1986). Thus, I resisted the idea that visual images “may often have no place in the final product of the research, except as occasional illustrations” (Collier & Collier, 1986, p. 170). I instead adopted an approach outlined by Pink (2001), which rests on the principle that “the purpose of analysis is not to translate ‘visual evidence’ into verbal knowledge, but to explore the relationship between visual and other (including verbal) knowledge” (p. 96). Pink (2001) explains that:

In practice, this implies an analytical process of making meaningful links between different research experiences and materials such as photography, video, field diaries, more formal ethnographic writing, local written or visual texts, visual and other objects. These different media represent different types of knowledge that may be understood in relation to one another. (p. 96)

This representational approach was also influenced by my commitment to the idea that film is a “quintessentially phenomenological medium” that has “a unique capacity to evoke human experience, what it feels like to actually be-in-the world” (Barbash & Taylor, 1997, pp. 74-75). I sought to render the experiences of my subjects as ‘lifelike’ in an attempt to illustrate how these experiences were significantly connected to the human experience of living in the everyday. Thus, I felt that it was my responsibility as the researcher to literally ‘bring my research to life.’ To accomplish this, I utilized the artistry of filmmaking to inspire the viewer to engage with the research in such a way that they may be inclined “to see the everyday as worthy of attention, to see through surface appearances and worn-out clichés, to attend to what we ordinarily overlook, in short, to re-search.” (Montgomery-Whicher, 1997, p. 219). Accordingly, I tried to invoke a sense of human relatedness in the viewer through my video text. I wanted the viewer to recognize the experiences represented on the screen as meaningful to his or her own lived experiences. As Greene (1994) explains, “[w]hen imaginative works enable us to see metaphorically and allow us to deal imaginatively with what goes on under the heading of ‘reality,’ we see the texture of our experience; we discover the text-like character of our lives. And it is then that meaning has an opportunity to emerge” (p. 217).

My previous experiences with film, as both a video artist and as a consumer of moving images, had clearly shown that it was possible to create powerful and evocative narratives
Princess Diana walked up to me in class during our studio period today with a Barbie doll and some hair clippings from her mannequin head. She pointed at the doll and then at the hair and announced that Barbies only had hair on their heads. She explained that she was trimming her mannequin's hair and looked down at the table to see that some of the clippings had fallen onto one of the Barbie dolls. It suddenly occurred to her that Barbie's body was hairless. This appeared to have had a significant impact on her. She later took some clear tape and attached clumps of hair to the doll's body. I asked her about the significance of her discovery (and her subsequent response) and she replied that it was time for Barbie to start living in the "real world." We talked briefly about how hairless dolls might have an effect on our beliefs about beauty and body hair. This incident has helped me to understand how powerful producing art/visual culture with artifacts from our everyday lives can be. This incident is an excellent example of how re-looking at the visual world around us can help us to see our world and ourselves anew. This incident also demonstrated to me how excess (in this case hair clippings) can "re-image ourselves into being; re-assembling the mundane of our experiences" (Springgay, Irwin, & Wilson Kind, 2004, p. 19).
through the medium. And although I knew that, by drawing on cinematic conventions and creative filmmaking practices to represent my research findings, I could be accused of manipulating or even distorting the material, I felt conceptually and artistically committed to this approach. As Trihn T. Minh-ha (1992) has observed, "[e]very representation of truth involves elements of fiction, and the difference between so-called documentary and fiction in their depiction of reality is a question of degrees of fictitiousness" (p. 145). Ultimately, I felt that this method was no less flawed than the techniques adopted by the authors of ethnographic monographs who "routinely call upon their writerly skills and the conventions of textual presentation to communicate their understandings" (Henley, 1998, p. 44). As Goodall (2000) has pointedly questioned, "[d]o scholars really have a place to stand – epistemologically, ontologically, rhetorically, or pragmatically – that licenses a disregard for revealed truth because of the form of its expression?" (p. 194).

Goodall's questions are congruent with Clifford Geertz’s (1988) earlier troubling of the relationship between representation and 'reality':

The strange idea that reality has an idiom in which it prefers to be described, that its very nature demands we talk about it without fuss - a spade is a spade, a rose is a rose - on pain of illusion, trumpery, and self-bewitchment, leads on to the strange idea that, if literalism is lost, so is fact. (p. 140)

By choosing not to ‘translate’ my visual data into text, I was also questioning the belief that subjective experience, in this case my experiences of video interviewing educators and thematically analyzing my collected data, could be successfully translated into objective knowledge. Although Henley (1998) explain the “moving image camera” was used in research applications for most of the 20th century as a “means to retain a supposedly objective image of the world for subsequent detailed analysis” (Henley, 1998, p. 44), I felt that this was fundamentally a problematic approach. To begin with, it neglected to thoughtfully consider the intentionality of the researcher, or the effects that a camcorder or camera inevitably has on the interactions between research participants and researcher. As well, it failed to critically assess the technological inclinations and limi-
tations of image-based research methods. Just as the contemporary rendering of the world produced by the multiple images and visual technologies that surround us in the everyday is never innocent (Rose, 2001), nor can we expect that the images and visual representations we generate as researchers during the course of our inquiries to be without bias. As Bill Nichols (1991) explains:

As a machine the camera produces an indexical record of what falls within its visual field. As an anthropomorphic extension of the human sensorium the camera reveals not only the world but its operator’s preoccupations, subjectivity, and values. The photographic (and aural) record provides an imprint of its user’s ethical, political, and ideological stance as well as an imprint of the visible surface of things. (p. 79)

In representing my research as a video ‘text,’ I was also attempting to acknowledge the fact that a researcher’s physical, theoretical, ideological, cultural, and historical ‘location’ within the context of any research project will indelibly impact his or her subsequent renderings of the phenomena observed. As Desai (2000) points out, “[n]o representations, whether visual, textual, or verbal, are neutral” (p. 115). Greene (1994), meanwhile, explains that “description, like language itself, is contingent on vantage point, or on location, or on gender, or on class, or on ethnicity. Description, after all, is a human activity; it does not come down from ‘nowhere,’ nor does it point to some non-human reality beyond” (p. 207). And rather than attempt to conceal or disguise my subjective influence upon the inquiry process, I instead chose an unconventional and creative approach to representation that I hoped would serve to reveal my own positionality as the researcher within the project.

After screening my film in class during the final seminar of the term, the other students in the course provided me with written and oral feedback about my project. A few of my classmates commented directly on my editing prowess while a number of others reported being personally touched in some way by the video text. The most telling observation came from one student who stated simply that it was remarkable how effectively I had managed to keep myself so completely out of the film. Although it wasn’t presented in the context of a criticism, this comment struck me very hard. I had been the interviewer, the camera operator, the editor and the researcher, and, somehow, had still remained virtually invisible within the final production. Upon reflection, I realized that I had unconsciously managed to edit my ‘physical self almost completely out of the film. In so doing, I realized that I had inadvertently adopted the ‘Cartesian gaze’ - what Gablik (1992) has referred to as “the disembodied eye” (p. 126). Even though
I had intentionally chosen a nontraditional method of representation as an attempt to reveal my own subjectivity as the researcher, I had still fallen into the methodological trap of misrepresenting myself as an invisible observer. I couldn’t help but think of the connections that scholars like Greene (1994) have exposed between representation and power: “Many of us are beginning to recognize that representation in its traditional sense has had to do with the exercise of power” (Greene, p. 209).

I began to imagine what the Wizard of Oz must have felt like the moment that Toto pulled back his curtain. I painfully remembered Kuehnast’s (1992) observation that “just as the Wizard of Oz tries to remain out of sight when Toto pulls back the curtain, ethnographers try to remain invisible behind their camera, as if to protect the illusion of their authority by saying ‘Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain’” (p. 190). Without realizing it, I had essentially become the man behind the curtain, the Wizard, the all-mighty ethnographic being. Although to the astute observer, there were signs of my subjectivity and positionality throughout the representation of my research, I had somehow completely failed to adequately reveal myself as the researcher. For the first time in my life, I started to truly understand that there was power in looking.
Needless to say, I have since reconsidered and reevaluated my approach to educational research. Although I am still committed to image-based forms of research and representation, including photographs and ethnographic video, I now more clearly understand the potential challenges and responsibilities associated with using these media. I have taken to heart Luce-Kapler's (1997) suggestion that “[p]erhaps it is time to reveal the writer of the research as much as the data. The writer is the data: the data is the writer” (p. 187). Accordingly, I have become more conscious of the importance of exposing and actively representing my own influence on the research process. This includes acknowledging my impact on the participants within my study and re-recognizing the effect that my positionality within the study will have on the subsequent representations that I generate. As Desai (2000) points out, representations are always incomplete truths. She explains that “representing the other tends to reduce the other to some partial characteristics” (p. 117).
I am also more aware of the ethical responsibility I have as the researcher, to divulge how the research process has affected me. These understandings have emerged out of my interest in dialogical approaches to research, primarily as a result of my examination of hermeneutical inquiry methods. As hermeneutical scholar David Smith (1999) explains:

[ANY study carried on in the name of hermeneutics should provide a report of the researcher's own transformations undergone in the process of the inquiry, a
showing of the dialogical journey, we might call it. Underscored here is a profoundly ethical aspect to hermeneutic inquiry in a life-world sense, namely, a requirement that a researcher be prepared to deepen her or his own self-understanding in the course of the research. Other people are not simply to be treated as objects upon whom to try out one’s methodological frameworks. (p. 38)

As I will discuss in the following section (*Interpreting Action Research: Collaborative Inquiry in the Classroom*), adopting a hermeneutical approach to my research within a classroom setting provides meaningful opportunities to actively include students within the inquiry process itself. Hermeneutical inquiry is fundamentally grounded in the dialogical nature of human experience and understanding. It is based on the conception that human beings can only come to understanding in relation to (and with) one another. Creating understanding and, thus, meaning, is therefore contingent on the degree to which we can ‘blend’ our understandings with the understandings held by others. When this occurs, we can begin to generate new understandings—new meanings that are subsequently held in ‘common.’ This phenomenon is what Gadamer (1994) described as a fusion of horizons. It encompasses our abilities to understand our selves, each other, and the world(s) we create and share together. As Taylor (1991) has observed, “[n]o one acquires the languages needed for self-definition on their own. We are introduced to them through exchanges with others” (p. 33). Smith (1999) describes the nature of this dialogical inquiry process as fundamentally ‘referential’ and ‘relational:’

One of the most important contributions hermeneutics makes to all contemporary social theory and practice, then, not just to curriculum and pedagogy, is in showing the way in which the meaning of anything is always arrived at referentially and relationally rather than (for want of a better word) absolutely. The hermeneutic deflection of absolutism in favour of relationism does not elevate the relational as the new absolute except in the sense of supporting the view that relationality (living together creatively on the planet) requires a new set of conditions for pedagogy and procedures of inquiry. (p. 38)

Present day hermeneutical inquiry owes a significant debt to the work of Edmund Husserl, who has been described as the father of contemporary phenomenology (Jardine, 1988). Husserl’s theory of ‘intentionality’ challenged the Enlightenment ideal of objective reason by illustrating that it was impossible to separate the world we collectively inhabit from our descriptions and interpretations of that world. Smith (1999) explains that, “[a] clear split between subjective thinking and objective thinking is not sustainable because my subjectivity gets its bearings from the very world that I take as my object...the world is always a world that I share with others with whom I communicate, so my descriptions of the world are always subject to modification on the basis of what I share communicatively” (p. 32). Thus, hermeneutical inquiry actively facilitates a questioning of Cartesian dualistic conceptions of the world that separate objective methods from subjective knowledge. Jardine (1998) explains that phenomenological and hermeneutical approaches to educational inquiry are needed to reveal the dangerous illusion of ‘clarity’ and to dispel the Cartesian desire for ‘certainty.’ He calls on educational researchers to move beyond “indifference, disinterestedness, anonymity, and the other hallmarks of objectivity” (p. 7) and to instead embrace lived experience and a love of ambiguity:

Awakening from Descartes’ nightmare is not a matter of simply devoting a tolerance for ambiguity. It requires of us a love of ambiguity which is at once a love of the generativity of new life as a gift bestowed upon the Earth. We can only hope that it is out of this love that educational theory and practice is born. (p. 31)
'Hermeneutics' is generally understood as involving the art of interpretation. It is etymologically related to the concept of 'bringing to understanding' and is connected to the Greek wing-footed god Hermes. Palmer (1969) explains that Hermes is "associated with the function of transmuting what is beyond human understanding into a form that human intelligence can grasp" (p. 13). Hermes has been described as a messenger god who relayed divine messages to the mortals on earth. He has also been portrayed as a 'trickster' god who regularly altered and manipulated these messages. As Kincheloe (2003) points out, "Hermes both clarified and played with these messages, in the process alerting humans to the ambiguity and complexity of the process of meaning making in everyday life" (p. 76). Davey (1999) describes the challenges associated with interpreting, translating and communicating meaningful insights for others as 'Hermes' predicament.' He explains that: Hermes' predicament addresses all who work with expression, for what is given to us through insight, intuition or revelation has to be understood and then translated into forms permitting others to grasp what we have come to understand. Hermes
presides over the tension between the ‘seeing’ of a truth and the task of communicating it. It is not inappropriate then that he was also the god of those who travel dark and difficult roads. (p. 6)

The inherent ‘difficulty’ associated with hermeneutical interpretation requires that it always be met with an innovative and imaginative approach - thus, the process of interpretation itself can, therefore, be understood as a fundamentally creative act. Rather than simply translating or describing phenomena, hermeneutical scholars attempt to breathe (literally, ‘to inspire’) life into their interpretations. In this sense, they are not merely re-presenting or re-interpreting their subject matter but extending and transforming it. As understandings ‘fuse’ through the dialectical inquiry process, a third space is created that represents neither original understanding, but embodies instead something beyond a combination of the two. The creative nature of this communication generates new possible productions (rather than simply reproductions) of understanding. In the hermeneutic sense then, the purpose of interpretation is not just another interpretation, but newly generated meanings based upon a shared language of understanding. Smith (1999) explains that the aim of the hermeneutic imagination is to “rescue the specificities of our lives from the burden of their everydayness to show how they reverberate within grander schemes of things” (p. 41). He believes that good interpretive educational research must ultimately be aimed towards providing young people with:

- a sense of the human world as being a construction that can be entered and engaged creatively;
- to have a sense that received understanding can be interpreted or re-interpreted and that human responsibility is fulfilled in precisely a taking up of this task.” (p. 42)

Accordingly, hermeneutical interpretation has also been described as a socially responsible act. As Kincheloe (2003) points out, the process of interpretation is socially complex and, thus, cannot be de-contextualized from the physical and social worlds. This means that responsible hermeneutical interpretations cannot be separated from meanings that have been previously ascribed through cultural, ideological, historical, or psychological contexts. He explains that:

a text to be interpreted, whether it be visual or print, can’t be separated from meanings and inscriptions granted it by past, present and future meaning makers. For example, a Volkswagen may be a cute little lime green car, but it can never be completely separated from
its Nazi origins as Adolph Hitler’s people’s car for the Third Reich. Thus, cuteness has an edge in the hermeneutics of Volkswagens. (p. 76)

Ultimately, good hermeneutic interpretation requires a responsibility towards the subject(s) of study, which, because of the inherently dialogical nature of hermeneutic inquiry, ultimately involves a responsibility towards ourselves. To remain responsible in the hermeneutic sense, then, is to remain conscious of the profound connections and dependencies that exist between researcher and participant, object and subject, self and other. As Smith (1999) explains: I always interpret others from within the frame of our common language and experience so that whatever I say about you is also a saying about myself. Within the hermeneutic agenda, however, the purpose is not to translate my subjectivity out of the picture but to take it up with a new sense of responsibility – to make proposals about the world we share with the aim of deepening our collective understanding of it. (p. 42)
Interpreting Action Research: Collaborative Inquiry in the Classroom

HERMENEUTIC MODES OF DIALECTICAL INQUIRY and relational understanding are congruent with the approaches currently advocated by a number of educational researchers within the field, particularly those involved in action research forms of inquiry. Cole & Knowles (2000), for instance, have suggested that educational research that is connected to students should be defined as a "relational activity" (p. 152). They claim that this approach honors the teacher-student relationship and rejects hierarchical conceptualizations that portray research as something that is done to students, rather than with them. They explain that "'good' educational researchers, in our view, are those who are mindful of the delicate practice-inquiry link and who work to define mutually respectful relations with those whose experiences they are trying to understand. For us, just as teaching is a relational activity so, too, is researching" (p. 152). In fact, Cole & Knowles advocate involving students directly in the inquiry process as co-researchers. They suggest that this is a respectful and natural approach to researching in schools.

Involving students in researching activities is natural; it resonates with the kinds of teaching and learning processes already in place in classrooms. The idea of involving students as collaborators in classroom inquiry is an extension of the relatively recent shift in educational research in which external researchers research with teachers, not on teachers. Continuing the analogy, teacher research in classrooms needs to be with students, not on them. (p. 152)

Involving students as co-researchers is also an idea supported by a number of other educational research theorists (Atweh, Christensen, & Dornan, 1998; Hunt, 1987; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998) who believe that students can, and often should be, actively engaged in reflexive forms of educational inquiry. This approach to educational research challenges traditional conceptions of schooling that frame teachers as providers and students as recipients of knowledge. Kincheloe & Steinberg (1998) explain that facilitating student participation as researchers involves relinquishing the teacher's position as a 'truth provider' but does not include denying the teacher-researcher's position of authority within the classroom.

Facilitating student research does not mean abandoning the authority of the social role of teacher, nor does it mean never providing students with content knowledge. No teacher who teaches students research skills can maintain a passive, out-of-the-way...
status. Developing students as researchers is a pedagogical process where students
and teachers work together in the activity known as learning. (p. 17)

This approach to educational research is grounded in a deeply held respect for the
dialogical relationship between teacher and student. Smith (1999) explains that being
with students in the classroom requires a "giving of oneself over to conversation with
young people and building a common shared reality in a spirit of self-forgetfulness,
a forgetfulness which is also a form of finding oneself in relation to others" (pp. 38-
39). Involving students in the inquiry process also emerges from a profound valuing
of the role that the relationship between teacher and students plays in the creation of
conscious and thoughtful human beings. Greene (1995) observes that "the classroom
situation most provocative of thoughtfulness and critical consciousness is the one in
which teachers and learners find themselves conducting a kind of collaborative search,
each from her or his lived situation" (p. 23). Ultimately, involving students as co-
researchers in educational inquiry is based on the notion that research is always "for
purposes of improving practice; developing curriculum; enhancing educational experi-
ences; and informing understandings about teaching-learning processes, relationships,
explain that education and educational research must help students make sense of the
world and their place as active agents within it: "Student researchers in our vision learn
to act in informed, socially just, and communitarian ways. We would not measure our
success in terms of their ability to raise standardized test scores or gain admission into
prestigious colleges. Our vision involves student inquirers as courageous citizens, not
merely 'good students'" (p. 3).

Working with students as co-researchers within educational research studies opens up
a number of methodological possibilities. According to Cole & Knowles (2000), there
is a large spectrum of options available for involving students within 'relational' ac-
tion research projects. The inclusion of students as co-researchers fits naturally within
the model of the action research spiral, and thus, student co-researchers can often be
integrated into some or even all of the stages of the action research process. One such
approach involves collaborating and consulting with students during the ongoing data
collection and analysis stages of the project. In this scenario, the teacher-researcher
initiates the study and develops the primary focus of inquiry. Students participate in the
analysis and data collection processes by reflecting upon their individual and collective
experiences throughout the study by keeping reflection journals, partaking in collabora-
tive debriefing/feedback sessions during class periods, and by engaging in dialectical
interview sessions. As Smith (1999) explains, this approach to 'analysis' shares much
in common with a good conversation: "When one is engaged in good conversation,
there is a certain quality of self-forgetfulness as one gives oneself over to the conversa-
tion itself, so that the truth that is realized in the conversation is never the possession of
any one of the speakers or camps, but rather is something that all concerned realize they
share in together" (p. 38).
Wednesday, April 28, 2004

Just got off of the phone with Alice. She called to talk about the graphic nature of some of the sculptures that the students have created. She mentioned that there is a little voice in the back of her head that is concerned about placing these pieces in public. She is worried that the violent nature of some of the sculptures is unrelated to the influence of media.

When Alice finished expressing her concerns, I suggested to her that the media was directly connected to the issue of violence and pointed out that the students had chosen themes that were important to them. She then responded that many of the students were unaware of the visual messages that their pieces were communicating. I agreed that this was certainly very possible. She then spoke about the 'safety' of the students and suggested that it is very risky for even professional artists to display their work in public. I agreed that safety was paramount but also explained my belief that part of a 'safe' learning environment includes examining and working through difficult and unsettling subjects. Alice then expressed concern about the reputation of the school and mentioned that her principal was growing concerned about the subject matter of the art and the implications of displaying it in public. In the end, we agreed that we would together discuss the potential implications of showing the work in public with the students during the next class.

It appears that I have hit a nerve in the system. I agree that more time discussing the students’ work and the potential implications of displaying it publicly will be a good thing but am disappointed that Alice is so uncomfortable with showing the work in public. It's interesting to me that the issues we deal with in school are often removed from the everyday experiences of our students. It seems that violence and war is a very real part of all of our lives, particularly right now. Why do we spend so little time examining conflict and violence within the curriculum?
Thursday, April 29, 2004

Today, I visited King George and, before the class began, spoke with Alice further about the "Head Games" project. One of her concerns, which she reiterated, was that the visual messages communicated by some of the pieces were ambiguous and that, therefore, some of the viewing public might be offended by the graphic and conflicting nature of the work. My accepted level of 'risk' seems to be considerably higher than Alice's. I imagine that this is, in part, a result of my many experiences working with students in public around (sometimes controversial) social issues. This observation has important implications for my research because it helps to ground me in the reality of contemporary art educational practices in schools. I need to understand that art educators working in high schools may have more conservative views about art education in relation to social views. My overall sense of Alice during the last few months is that she is quite progressive in this regard. The fact that she invited me to work in her classroom (and has allowed me to stay) is a testament to her commitment to examining social issues through art. If publicly displaying this work is of concern to Alice, I can safely assume that many art educators would feel the same way...

When the students arrived, Alice and I co-facilitated a discussion about the upcoming artistic intervention. We discussed the fact that some people may not agree with the positions that the students had taken on some of their chosen social issues. We cautioned that there was always the possibility that some viewers may even get angry or upset. We then discussed the fact that some of the art works could be 'read' differently than the students had intended and talked about some of the advantages and disadvantages of ambiguity in relation to art. In the end, most of the students seemed open to including their artists' statements with their pieces. Overall, the class still seems 'charged up' about the prospect of placing their work out in public. This is very encouraging to me! When I began working with this class, they were pretty pessimistic about the role (and ultimate effectiveness) of art and art making in addressing social issues. Somewhere along the way, this attitude seems to have changed. They now seem very keen on the idea of installing our sculptures out on the streets.

Alice also seems more at ease after speaking with the students and me. She indicated that she would talk to the administration and offered to have a student in another class type up the artist’s statements before Monday. She also asked me not to contact the media about our installation.
Thursday, April 29, 2004

I'm relieved the art installation is going to go ahead and am feeling happy that Alice is now more comfortable with this. I really enjoy working in Alice's classroom and am sorry that I didn't spend more time inquiring as to how she felt about the "intervention" component of the curriculum unit. I also have to admit to feeling a little disappointed about her request for me not to inform the media about the art installation. Having involved the media in various other student-based projects during my years as a high school teacher, I know that media coverage could have been an important component of this project (it would have helped to bring "media education" to life for the students). I was actually hoping to help the students write up a press release and contact the media themselves (something I've done in the past) but I suppose it was not to be...

On one level, I certainly understand why Alice and the Principal of the school are nervous about involving reporters with this project. Although the past projects that I've developed with students have almost always received positive press, there have been a couple of occasions in which the reporter covering our story gave it a negative spin.

However, in many ways, these incidents have been even more powerful lessons in media education for the students (and sometimes for me). It seemed to really help the students understand how the representations that they see in the news (or in popular culture generally) have been filtered through various sociocultural and ideological lenses. In discussing cultural representation and the politics of voice, Desai (2000) explains that "[a]lthough many forms of representations, including the visual, are presented as fact or reality, they are based on selective processes that define, order, classify, and name social reality" (p. 115). I would have liked for the students to see these selective processes in action...
HEAD GAMES: ARTISTIC & EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS

As previously discussed in ‘The Frame’ at the beginning of the dissertation, the students and I, over the course of our three-month curriculum unit, examined, deconstructed, and interpreted numerous examples of popular visual culture, including print and television advertisements, newscasts, movie clips, and TV programs. We also viewed and discussed the work of socially engaged visual and performance artists, including culture jammers and art activists. As well, an integral component of this curriculum unit involved engaging the students in artistic production, first by creating collages and later by producing sculptural assemblages based around social issues. In creating the assemblages, I provided each student with discarded mannequin heads and invited them to convey a message through their sculptures based on a social issue or set of issues of personal significance. I encouraged the students to incorporate found objects and other cultural artifacts from their everyday lives into the sculptures as a means of actively participating in the (re)production of culture. In so doing, I was encouraging my students to understand “that they have a role in the making of their world and that they need not accept positions as passive spectators or consumers” (Trend, 1992, p. 150). Throughout these studio portions of the unit, we continued to discuss and critically reflect upon the many roles of art and artists within contemporary society. We also continued to examine texts from popular visual culture and discussed the notion that we live in a ‘semiotic society.’
Throughout the unit, I worked to expose the students to the layers of sociocultural, political, aesthetic, historical, and pedagogical complexities surrounding the realm of our everyday visual experiences. I encouraged them to challenge disenfranchised conceptions of the social role and political function of art, and worked to help the students make sense of, and meaningfully respond to, their daily visual and artistic experiences. This included suggesting that most art does not exist within the formal isolation of the art gallery. I worked to elucidate for my students that visual culture, including television programs, blockbuster films, websites, music videos, fashion magazines, and advertising campaigns, is already central to their lives. I tried to reveal how these daily visual experiences affect the ways we adorn ourselves, the ways we speak and act, the types of dreams and desires we have, the ways we create, even the very ways that we think. I felt that this pedagogical approach was crucial if I was going to help the students understand and meaningfully participate in public conversations around the social and political relations of art to identity, power, culture and democratic citizenship. Towards this end, the students and I planned a public installation of their work. This collective ‘artistic intervention,’ which we designed early into the unit as an afternoon field trip, became a central focus of the students’ work and a core component of the curriculum unit.

In fact, for many of the students, the art installation itself became the single-most pivotal event during the three months that I was at the school. Placed at the end of the Head Games unit and designed to give the class a venue to share its work (and corresponding social messages) with a broader audience, the installation also offered the students the opportunity to actively participate in the disruption and (re)production of (visual) culture. As Beyer (2000) explains, “cultural production and social action can become significant parts of educational, and especially classroom activity. A revitalized vision of the aesthetic, one that incorporates a critical and productive conception of the relations between art and society, provides an emancipatory perspective with which educational practice may be conceived and constructed” (p. 89).

The students collectively chose the location, a public area downtown in front of the city’s public art museum. The site, which is situated in the midst of one of the busiest shop-
ping districts in North America, is regularly populated with shoppers, tourists, and business people. This location regularly functions as a meeting place for lunch goers, chess players, skateboarders, and various young people (some of whom appear to live on the street), and also serves as a gathering space for public rallies and protests, most recently demonstrations against the invasion and subsequent occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. Rather than requesting official approval for their installation, the class elected to simply install the show without formal permission from either city hall or the art gallery. This decision was influenced by the work of culture jammers and art activists that we studied in class and emerged out of a group discussion about the tensions that exist between public and private space, specifically the ongoing commercialization of public gathering areas.

The site is approximately one mile away from the school and the commute took twenty minutes on foot. Our walk took us past a number of busy ‘high end’ retail clothing outlets and, because each of the students carried their head sculptures out in the open, we created somewhat of a surreal spectacle for shoppers and passer-bys on the sidewalk. As Susie later pointed out, “[i]t was so out of the ordinary, normally when you walk down Davis, you just see people buying crap.” During our walk, Princess Diana commented to me, and the students walking beside her, that it was weird how all of the clothing stores we were walking past were full of mannequins, many of which didn’t have heads.

After arriving at the installation site, Alice and I helped the students place their sculptures and artist’s statements on the sidewalk. Some students, noticeably Francois, Princess Diana, and Dr. Q, elected to remain close to their assemblages during the installation in order to actively engage in conversation with their viewers, while a few others chose to walk inconspicuously amongst the crowds. The remainder of the class sat on the steps adjacent to the installation, in order to observe and photo-document the reactions of passer-bys from, what Mayman later described as, “a safe distance.” From the sidewalk, these students appeared to assimilate with their surroundings, which included a small congregation of young (and a few not so young) people, most of whom appeared to be living on the street. The juxtaposition and symbolic tensions between our collective efforts to convey social messages through the
installation and the social dynamics of our chosen location were not lost on the students. As Susie later commented, “[i]t was ironic how there was a homeless guy sleeping right behind us and then there were other kids who were obviously living on the street. I thought that was weird. Like us rallying together and then other kids actually going through some of the stuff that we were talking about, I thought that was weird.” The installation lasted approximately one hour, during which time the students observed and photo and video-documented the experience. I had earlier suggested to the students to consider themselves as researchers and to record and make note of what they saw and experienced. At the end of the installation, we spent a few minutes debriefing and discussing our initial reactions and observations before taking down the show.

The students also provided a number of written responses to questions that I presented throughout the term (as outlined in Appendix B). Though I had originally intended to incorporate student creative writing as a means of reflection and data collection, I reevaluated this strategy after learning that 8 of the 13 participants spoke English as a second, or in two cases, a third language. Though in all instances, the students were competent in spoken English, some of them struggled noticeably when asked to write responses in English.

Though my goal was not to discover some underlying universal elements of their experiences but instead to give voice to and honor their multiplicitous perspectives and experiences, similar and overlapping themes did surface in the collected data. Thus, I have attempted to interweave these throughout this section.
Today, we installed our assemblages in front of the art museum. There was a lot of uncertainty around this installation...there was supposed to be a Strike today but it was averted during 11th hour negotiations last night. It was supposed to rain all day but miraculously, it didn't (until the very end). There was also the uncertainty of whether the school would let us go ahead with the field trip based on concerns around the subject matter of some of the art and unease about the possible public reaction to it. After some discussion around the logistics of the installation, Alice and the students and I agreed that the assemblages would be accompanied with the artist's statements in order to reduce the likelihood of multiple readings of the work (in the hopes that fewer people would be offended). Although I personally felt some resistance to this decision, in hindsight it proved to increase the success of our installation (I was happily surprised to see how many passerby's actually stopped to read the students' statements). The individual statements definitely supplemented our collective statement.

We gathered at lunchtime and then spent a few minutes reviewing our strategic plan for the afternoon. I reread the "Head Games" statement which was written based on our earlier class discussions (and on the students' artists' statements) and asked the students for any additional feedback. They all seemed to agree that it was very clear and articulate. We then discussed the notion that each student was to approach the fieldtrip as researchers and to remain lucid and awake in order to be effective observers.

We then began our 20 minute trek up to the art museum. Along the way, we managed to attract a fair bit of attention. It was interesting because although there were only a dozen of us, the additional heads gave the impression that we were a group of 20-25. Princess Diana and Susie and I discussed how interesting it was that so many mannequins were used in the many stores we passed. This revealed yet another layer of the connections between our art and the power and influence of consumerism/advertising. Susie asked me if there were really surveillance cameras on Davis Street...
and, as we approached the corner of Bailey Street, I pointed out a couple of police cameras to the students. Susie and I discussed the eerie connections between Orwell’s 1984 (which she is reading in English class) and contemporary North American society. We all waved at the cameras. Once at the site, the students spread out and began placing their sculptures. Alice and I began laying out the artists’ statements while some of the more timid students scurried over to the steps of the art gallery and sat down. Princess Diana, Dr. Q and Francois went to the other side of the street and set their sculptures up there. They sat down beside them and waited to see who would stop. People on the art gallery side of the sidewalk began noticing the sculptures immediately and approximately half of the passerbys stopped and began reading the artists’ statements. Many of the pedestrians began shooting photos. I was personally surprised by how many people took photos of themselves with the sculptures. Some of the viewers assumed that the work was mine (I was dressed in my usual black and likely looked artsy). Folks who spoke to me were generally very surprised to discover that the work was created by high school students. I suppose these sculptures are quite different than most of the art created in schools. Alice spent most of the time taking photos while many of the students walked around or sat on the steps nearby. They seemed very pleased by the amount of attention that the work garnered. Francois and Princess Diana actively engaged folks in discussions about the work (its intent/purpose/message). More people on their side of the street seemed to walk by without looking and, after viewing the video documentation, I suspect many of the passerbys assumed the girls were panhandling.

It was interesting to hear the students’ comments about the juxtaposition of their art installation and the large advertising posters that kept driving by on the sides of busses. A few of the girls began to make fun of the “nearly naked people” trying to sell them stuff. The only negative comment I managed to hear was from one woman with a stroller who exclaimed that “It’s art, but it’s crap.” Interestingly, she stayed for nearly 20 minutes going through the entire exhibit. She even crossed the street to view the sculptures and speak with Princess Diana and Francois and Dr. Q. I was again proud to hear them converse with her about their art so effectively. In the end, I think the woman left

Recommended Follow-up
with a much better understanding of their intent/messages. Much of this interaction was caught on
video. One of the real advantages of asking the students to do the video/photo documenting (besides
including them as researchers) was that they were able to get footage that I never would have been
able to have taken. Dr. Q in particular was very bold in her documenting and didn’t seem afraid to
getclose up to people with the camera. This was an assertive side of Dr. Q that I haven’t seen before.
Very interesting!

In general, the feedback from the public was overwhelmingly positive. I was happy and proud to hear
the students speak so articulately about their work and was especially happy when Neo Max told
someone the media/advertising is a form of education. One of the girls mentioned that when she read
her artist’s statement (which had been typed up by one of Alice’s ‘service’ students) she was really
surprised at how good it sounded. Princess Diana and Francois mentioned that this was the coolest
fieldtrip ever and a few other students nearby agreed. Our installation was up for approximately one
hour until it started to lightly rain. It was surprising how many people continued to stand in the rain
and read the artists’ statements/view the work. A number of people went through the installation and
spent time with each piece before moving on. We eventually gathered up the sculptures under the
trees and congratulated and dismissed the students. I then left Alice alone with the sculptures and
went in search of a cab. When I returned, a crowd had gathered around her. She told me later that she
had to put the artists’ statement back out because so many people started asking her about the work.
She also noted that many folks were willing to stand in the rain in order to read and better understand
theartworks. She seemed pretty happy. In the end, I asked some of the viewers to help me load the
heads into the back of the taxi. Alice commented in the cab that she enjoyed the experience. Before
dismissing the students, she had told them how proud she was of them and also commented that they
not only had a voice today, they were screaming through their art. When we returned to the school,
Katy (the student teacher) mentioned that one of the grade 8s had asked her when he would get to do
the head assignment. Overall, today went better than expected! I’m really looking forward to interview-
the students and also sharing some of the video footage with them.

Recommended Follow-up

Completed by

Position

114
All of the students in the study indicated the *Head Games* curriculum unit provided them with new understandings and awareness of their everyday visual experiences. Princess Diana felt placing art out on the streets helped her to see her world differently. As one of the students who volunteered to photo-document the installation, she found herself “really noticing” the advertisements on the sides of the buses for the first time. “There was all these ads on the buses that kept driving by. I started taking pictures of some of them.... These models are like half naked with their shoulder bones sticking out and stuff, basically using their bodies to sell things.” She was skeptical of the potential impact of displaying the sculptures before the installation but now feels that it was an important part of her learning about consumerism.

Before, I didn’t really think that going out on the street and putting art out on the street would make that much of an impact but it really did. It really did make me realise all this stuff, like how advertising really is in our faces since we’re born. Like McDonalds and the toys for kids, they just want to get them hooked so that when they’re older they eat there. There’s just so much. You’re kind of aware of it your whole life, you hear it all over the
Openings within a/r/t/ography have given me permission to move freely between, through and within the various research (con)texts of this study. In fact, it’s amazing how fluid and open my world has become! As I sit here sifting through the digital images and editing the research video footage, I find myself making all sorts of connections. I keep switching back to my word processing program to capture my thoughts in text before they vanish, or over to Photoshop or InDesign in order to generate an image or lay out a page inspired by something I’ve written or seen. The same thing happens when I’m reading through and analyzing the interview transcripts and written student responses. One phrase (or even part of a phrase) can suddenly trigger an insight or inspire an image. The trick seems to be in learning how to move between the visual and the textual without disrupting the flow of ideas and insights. What I’m finding (is this one of my findings?) is that these different modes of understanding and interpreting the data are much more confused (literally ‘with fusion’) than I had originally anticipated. This quest for understanding resonates deeply with the hermeneutic spirals of understanding, though I have to admit that engaging in this process often leaves me feeling dizzy!

One of the things I’ve been struggling with throughout this project is learning how to ‘capture’ these thoughts, ideas, and insights before they disappear (interestingly, the term ‘capture’ is used to describe the process of placing the video into the computer. In some ways, I am actually uncomfortable with the term ‘capture’ as it can be ‘confining’ and can denote ‘imprisonment’ and ‘arrest,’ terms that seem counter to the spirit of openings within a/r/t/ography.). I am struggling with the notion of allowing my mind to roam freely while also keeping my thoughts within the confines of this research project. I suppose in some ways, this process is very similar to the act of creating art (always trying to strike a balance between my creative and rational minds).
place, commercials on TV, but you don’t actually sit there and think about it for this long and this project, the time we were working on it, we were constantly talking about it and thinking about it.

Dr. Q also feels that the installation and the preceding curriculum unit provided her with new insights about the world and the people around her. This included a realization that people have more common concerns than she first imagined. “I learned that most people are concerned with war and violence as well as the commercialism of modern society. And I realize how much money people actually spend on looking like each other.” Susie found that she had more in common with the other students in the class than she first realized. “I learned that a lot of people are concerned about the same issues as the art class. And that kids in the class have more in common than they maybe thought.” Mary-Lee, meanwhile, felt that the Head Games project afforded her new insights about the students in the class and society as a whole. She discovered “[t]hat a lot of people aren’t as shallow or closed minded as I thought.” This is significant because, earlier in the curriculum unit, Mary-Lee was one of the more vocal skeptics in the class. She believed that artists were unlikely to meaningfully affect societal change through their work and felt that art “doesn’t change people’s minds.”

Francois also believes the Head Games unit increased her understanding about media, specifically the marketing industry. “I learned more about advertising and its influence and that it’s actually considered a system of education, which really surprised me. I learned that its more a system of stereotype molding and influence and that if you read between the lines you can find some funny underlying messages.” Susie feels the curriculum unit gave her a new understanding of the popular culture around her. She claims that this “perspective and ideas of popular culture really opened my eyes to what’s going on! I really enjoyed creating the sculptures and discussing the importance of social issues in our society.” Mayman, meanwhile, explains that the curriculum unit changed her TV viewing habits and helped her to understand how she is personally influenced by popular visual culture.

I really enjoyed this project a lot because now when I watch an advertisement on TV it makes me think. Before it used to just be something you watch but now I think about what they’re actually trying to say.... How the advertising works and how it affects people and how it affects me. I can’t say I’m not like that because everyone is. And it made me think about how I became like I am.

Mary-Lee explains that since beginning the Head Games curriculum unit, she “started noticing how many of them (advertisements) there were, actually. I just didn’t notice before but now I notice, like, they’re everywhere.... Commercialism. Before this, I didn’t think about it at all. I ignored the crappy commercials and looked at the good ones and never realized how good they were at manipulating people. I didn’t even realize.” Susie explains that young people generally aren’t expected or encouraged to think about social issues or how their own decisions may be impacting the rest of the world. She feels that the Head Games unit helped to make the students in the class more aware of this.

I think a lot of us realize [now] that there’s this smokescreen, especially in front of young people because we’re not really encouraged to think about certain issues. We’re just en-
encouraged to go to school, read a textbook, do whatever and to be shallow but not to think about the consequences of our actions.

Princess Diana felt the *Head Games* project has helped her to become aware of, and critically interpret, the many advertisements she encounters each day.

You know what? You don’t really notice it, you look at magazines everyday, you read the ads, you’re like, nah, nah, nah and then you actually sit down with the idea in your head that you’re going to look for ads that are really targeting like, buy this car and you’ll have a good life and things like that. The ads on my head, I went through like 25 magazines trying to find ads that were like...I have this one that says, ‘good friends, good times, great gifts. It just throws in great gifts... Another one for Phillips razor, ‘make your life better.’ With a razor? (Laughter) How’s that going to make my life better? It might make my legs softer but it’s not going to make my life better.... I just never realized how much is there until you sit down and think about what you’re looking for. Then you notice it a lot. And now I notice it - ever since this project, whenever I’m downtown, I notice so many different things that are totally, ‘they just want me to buy their product.’
During my interviews in the days and weeks following the installation, a number of the students commented they felt surprised at the impact their installation had had on passers-by. In fact, there seemed to be a general sense amongst the group that the artistic intervention was considerably more successful than they had originally expected. This is significant because, early into the curriculum unit, many members of the class expressed frustration at the inability of art or any individual social-based action to influence people or to make a real difference in the world. Comments like, "Yah, but what's the point? You're not going to make a difference or change anything," were common reactions to some of the early photos and video clips of art activism and culture jamming that I shared with the class. Although these remarks diminished as the curriculum unit progressed and the students were exposed to the work of socially engaged visual and performance artists, the surprise expressed by many of the students after the installation, indicates to me that a certain level of skepticism about the efficacy of art as a mode of conveying important social messages remained.

Mayman, for instance, commented that "a lot of people kept on stopping and looking at the heads. It was really interesting because I didn't think that was going to happen, people stopping and looking and asking questions, it was really interesting. Everybody wanted to know what it was.” Mayman’s level of surprise is echoed by Dr. X., who felt that viewers’ reactions were much more positive than he had anticipated. He explains:

It was interesting because people were asking about our heads and stopping and reading what we wrote about them. And they took pictures and they talked about positives and they liked our heads a lot. It was really interesting. We thought we were going to get a lot of negative reactions but we didn’t. It was really good.

Neo_Max was also surprised by the number of positive reactions that the class’ sculptures attracted. Although he was originally nervous to show his work in public, he found that he enjoyed the whole experience and ended up feeling proud of himself and his work.

At first it felt like people were looking at me and I was like freaking out. I wanted to stand by it (his sculpture) but I also wanted to see what people’s real reactions were.... I was
actually proud of myself after, after the project was over because at first I didn’t think that it was going to be that big of an issue or that big of a deal just like some, you know, project that you go and display. But once you look at peoples’ reactions and what they think about it, it was just kind of surprising because it turned out better than I expected. I didn’t think it was going to be that good.

Mary-Lee also seemed genuinely amazed that so many people took interest in the class’ work. She was especially moved by the number of passers-by who took photographs of the head sculptures. “People looked at it. They took pictures and seemed really interested in what we had to say. I was surprised because I thought that people would ignore it. It was cool cuz a lot of people stopped and read our artist statement and talked to us about it. They really got involved.” In speculating as to why there were so many photographs taken, Mary-Lee conjectures that “either because they thought, ‘Oh look crazy Canadians let’s take their picture’ (laughing), or, (more seriously) they thought it was really good and they wanted to remember it and spread it to their friends.” Francois also appreciated the strong impression that the installation had on some of the public, as well as on herself. She explains that, “I loved the reactions from people. The first reaction was usually shock...it kinda felt good having people react that way to something that you did.” Roxanne Cersa enjoyed the Head Games unit and especially valued the reactions of passer-by during the installation. She explains that “it was fun and it was interesting because it was something new, I’ve never done something like this before and then we got to see how people react to that kind of stuff.” Princess Diana also enjoyed interacting with those who stopped to view her work and claims it helped her feel very proud of her sculpture. She recalls enthusiastically the fact that a number of passer-by took photographs of her work.

Tons of people were taking pictures. Tourists were like posing making peace signs down by the heads. And snapping away pictures. And lots of people walking by took pictures. I remember a tour bus was stopped at the red light and people were all getting out of their seats and looking out of the window. I just wanted to go up to them and hold my head up and let them read my artist’s statement.
At the beginning of the curriculum unit, many of the students' definitions of art were limited largely to conventional mediums, like painting and drawing. Accordingly, these students considered artists to be people who had a high level of technical skill in these areas. These sentiments were evident in both individual and class discussions and were also confirmed in many of the interviews and written responses provided by the students. Though a few students' replies to the question, "Do you consider yourself to be an artist? Why or why not?", did illustrate a more complex understanding of art and artists, their overall conceptions of art still seemed framed by formalistic definitions. Barbie, for instance, responds that "I believe I am an artist. I may not be a great drawer, or painter, but I always grasp the brightest colours of life and enjoy painting opportunities for myself." Roxanne Cersa explains that "[y]es I think I am an artist because people can consider anything art, and I believe that an artist is anyone who creates something in an art form (eg drawings, paintings, clay sculptures). I think that anyone can be considered an artist, they are just not professional." Dr. Q, meanwhile, explains that, "I'm an artist because I paint and draw and stuff, so I make art and in my opinion anyone who makes art is an artist." However, with the exception of Dr. X who claims that "I think I am not an artist, because artists are people who do something for the world," none of the students alluded to connections between art and the sociocultural sphere. As the following passages highlight, when their knowledge about socially engaged art and artists grew, and their sense of artistic agency correspondingly increased, many of the students expressed arriving at new understandings of the connections between art/visual culture and society.
Besides being generally surprised by how well the installation was received, Neo-Max explains that his experiences over the last three months have helped him to think differently about the definition and social role of art.

After I made it and we went and displayed it I was pretty happy. I really liked the fact that some people thought it was going to be displayed at some art gallery somewhere...I was pretty surprised that people would like something like this. It showed a different perspective on how this economy works and stuff and I didn't know what people would think. So that was pretty interesting, I really liked that part. I used to think that art was just for pictures. Now I know that art is running the world, with all of the signs and everything you look at is somehow basically related to art. And I never knew all of this stuff before.

In fact, by the end of the curriculum unit, many of the students in the research study felt that they had a new understanding of the potential sociocultural roles of art and artists. Whether they attributed this to the art installation or to the curriculum unit itself. Francois, for instance, explains that she now connects social issues with art making and visual culture. “This was a really fun project and it was really different. It showed how art can be applied to so many different things. It was totally unique. It was fresh for me and I’ve been around art all of my life. My parents are into painting and stuff like that...I’ve grown up around it (art) and this was something really new for me and I enjoyed it.” She later goes on to explain that, “I think that even the amount that you enjoy your work and how much work you put into it is actually affected because something is part of life and you can see how it integrates into the whole picture and it makes you more interested.”

Vince, meanwhile, used to believe that art was primarily defined as drawing and painting. He explains that “[b]efore I used to think that art was just drawing, but now I know that it’s projects and sculptures and drawings and other stuff. He feels that the Head Games project has helped him to understand that art can be used effectively to communicate social messages. He now believes that “sculptures work best for speaking a message. Because when you tell someone your message about the media and the world today you need an example to show them what you mean by that.” Roxanne Cersa now feels that art can be an effective mode of communicating messages and sharing information about social issues. She explains that “[s]omething visual is always good cause people look right at but when there’s a whole bunch of writing people have to sit there and read it but when you have a big sculpture in the background and you talk about it its probably better.” Yell, who has been studying and making art for 16 years, revealed that this was the first time she has worked in 3-D. She explains that “I really enjoyed making a sculpture. I never thought about creating art out of these types of materials.” Yell also feels that the Head Games project has increased her conceptions of art, particularly in relation to content and social function. She reveals that, “[b]efore I was just drawing stuff that I like to draw...but now I started thinking about themes, and issues and stuff...it looks like it has something in it and it seems to inspire people and it makes people think. I like that.”

Zola Damone feels that most students generally have a narrow view of what art is or can be. She explains that “people just think that art is drawing and painting and pretty
much that’s it. But there’s so much more to it. You can use it to open doors and to educate so many people.” She believes that “media arts” should be taught at the school and explains that she would like to see the curriculum changed for next year.

I think that media arts should be an actual course.... I think for next year, I’m not going to be here because I’m ‘gradding,’ they should put media art in the curriculum because, I don’t know, people honestly just think that art class is, you make your little painting and your drawing and you’re done. They don’t really get anything out of it. There’s some students who really like art and who make really nice things but, no one really thinks of it as anything.

Zola Damone appreciated the way that the Head Games unit examined the connections between art and social issues and feels that students are starting to understand the relationship between visual culture and society. She feels that a Media Arts course would appeal to students at other schools as well.

We were talking about this at school...people are starting to catch on. Like, other people at other schools that I’ve been talking to don’t get to do what we’ve been doing. I think every school should do stuff like this...connecting real issues with art. Other than that, I’m not really good at art but media art is ok.
Of the six a/r/t/ographical renderings, I feel that Metaphor and Metonymy have not resonated as powerfully within this study as the other five. Though the metonymic slash has helped me to conceptualize and represent the contiguous relationship between art and visual culture, metonymical meanings have not directly inspired many insights or stimulated many understandings during my inquiry process. Conceptualizing this research study through the metaphor of an assemblage, however, has allowed me to permeate the academic boundaries that often constrain and confine conventional research texts. I feel that enacting the metaphor of an academic assemblage has allowed me to reach beyond the gated walls of the Academy by communicating through expressive and inter-textual means. Cut and pasted from the visual artifacts and cultural materials of my everyday lived experiences as an artist, researcher, and teacher, I believe that this dissertation has become a living, breathing metaphoric text in itself.
ARTiSTiC AGENCY AND VOiCE

The Head Games unit generally, and the artistic intervention specifically, seemed to provide many of the students with a newfound sense of agency and voice. As Alice, their regular classroom teacher, explained during our class debriefing session at the conclusion of the art installation, the students not only managed to speak through their art, they succeeded in screaming out their message. As is evident in many of the students' comments that follow, they obviously agree with Alice's affirmative assessment of their work.

Princess Diana, for instance, appreciated creating sculptures to convey her message to the world. She explains that "I thought using the heads was an awesome idea. I couldn't think of a better way that would get my message across better than using a mannequin head...it just worked so well. Everyone did their own thing with it and it just looks really cool!" Francois felt that the installation was a true accomplishment for the students because they were able to voice their concerns and ideas out in public. "I felt the installation was a success because we did it to get our ideas out in the public and get reactions from the public and that's exactly what happened. The fact that most reactions were positive and that most people enjoyed the field trip made it even more successful." She later states that:

From this experience, I've learned that art can have a huge effect on people, especially when it's publicly displayed. It can stir a lot of feelings and create some interesting reactions. It confirmed the idea I had that most people are conscious of what the media does as well. I also learned that presenting your work to the public can be very satisfying.

One student, Dr. X, was originally concerned that his sculpture, which dealt with the negative social consequences of war, would not be well received in public. During the installation, however, he realized that it didn't matter to him how people reacted to his work. He felt that it was more important to put forward his point...
I love David Smith's (1999) notion of hearing something in the present as a registering of the vibrations on the eardrums "within the deep web of sounds and voices that make up the structure of one's consciousness as language, memory, and hope" (pp. 41-42). After my second interview with Mayman, she thanked me for listening to her and commented that not many people were really good at listening. At the time, it struck me how important good listening was to the inquiry process. A few days later, while I was transcribing/listening to the interview, I suddenly realized that listening was directly connected to the notion of 'voice.' This realization eventually inspired me to notice how many of the students in the study felt the art installation was successful because it had given them the opportunity to share what was on their minds with an audience (the members of the community). In other words, the students linked the success of the artistic intervention directly with the fact that others in the community 'heard' their visual message(s).
of view on an important issue than to worry as to how people might respond to it. “Before we went out there I was thinking that people might say negative things about the sculpture but when I was there for some reason I didn’t care. Some people can like it and some people don’t but I want to say something important and I think I did.” Dr. X felt that his piece was successful “cause I tried to do something about war, about dying people. Today, in this time we have wars between some countries. They are killing people everyday. Because of that I tried to explain something about war.” DR. Q, meanwhile, felt that the Head Games project was valuable because it allowed her to communicate an important message through her art.

It was better than doing just random stuff for art that’s pointless, at least this project had a meaning. Because you’re trying express something with it, you’re trying to send a message. Not just painting a picture of a house or something…This wasn’t depressing it was actually showing people something and actually being there to see their reactions.

Susie felt that the most important aspect of the art installation (and the project in general) was that it allowed the students in the class to deal with and ‘speak’ about issues that were important to them. She claims that “[i]t was successful because most of the class participated and made their voice heard. I think the purpose of the project, for the students, was to finally say what was important to them and what was on their minds. They weren’t told what had to be done but instead what had to be thought about.” Vince Smith also felt that the art installation was definitely a success and was especially pleased because of the way he directly connected and communicated with other people through his sculpture.

It was successful because I saw a lot of people looking at it and thinking about it and I know there was something going through their heads about it. It made me feel proud that people were listening to my message and to know that I touched their lives and they heard me out loud.

In fact, many of the students felt that the field trip provided valuable opportunities to learn and to voice their thoughts, ideas, and concerns. Princess Diana describes the art installation as “totally worthwhile.” She explains that “I thought it was a really cool project. It was one of the best field trips I’ve ever been on. Not exactly because it was more fun but it was so like, I guess it sounds lame, but I had fun learning about it.” These sentiments were echoed by Francois who commented that “the fieldtrip totally made the project worthwhile. It was the perfect final conclusion.” She claims that knowing that her work was going to be displayed in public gave her motivation to really apply herself to the project. As she explains, “knowing that we were going to show these to the public made me want to do well on this project.” Before the art installation, Mayman felt that the intervention “would really be successful if the whole class worked on one thing like sweatshops. Then it would have a really strong voice.” After installing the work in the community, however, she explains that “the intervention went much better than I expected. We made a strong statement with those heads. It was strong and really pretty good.”

Dr. Q was also pleased with the installation. She remarked that some observers had negative
HEAD GAMES
WHERE DO THE VOICES AND THE PICTURES AND THE IDEAS FLOATING AROUND OUR HEADS COME FROM? WHO IS ACTUALLY DOING THE TALKING? THE SEEING? THE THINKING? WE BELIEVE WE ARE ALL STRUGGLING IN DIFFERENT WAYS TO GIVE MEANING TO OUR EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES. WE BELIEVE WE ARE ALL TRYING TO CREATE IDENTITIES FROM THE PLAY OF CULTURAL MATERIALS. THESE ASSEMBLAGES ARE OUR ATTEMPT TO EXAMINE THE ROLES OF THE MASS MEDIA, POPULAR CULTURE, AND ADVERTISING IN OUR OWN STRUGGLES TO CREATE AND TRANSFORM OURSELVES AND THE WORLD AROUND US. THESE ASSEMBLAGES ARE OUR ATTEMPT TO UNDERSTAND AND QUESTION AND PLAY WITH THE CULTURAL MATERIALS OF OUR OWN LIVES. WE HOPE THIS ART WILL LEAVE YOU A LITTLE UNCOMFORTABLE. A LITTLE LESS ABSORBED IN THE EVERYDAY. A LITTLE MORE INCLINED TO QUESTION THE THINGS FLOATING AROUND INSIDE YOUR OWN HEAD.

I was standing in the middle of the classroom during a studio period, surrounded by students and mannequin heads (the presence of the mannequin heads made it feel like there was 40 students in the class) and suddenly realized that the artistic intervention we were planning should be called 'Head Games.' I shared the idea with the students and they quickly agreed that it was the perfect title. Later, after reading the students' individual artist's statements, I wrote up our collective statement, which was unanimously endorsed by the class.
reactions to the installation but felt that exposing people to the sculptures allowed students to get through to people. “I think it was successful because a large number of people stopped. They all wanted to see it and find out what it was. We produced a number of different emotions, positive and negative ones. We got through to people and a lot of people were exposed to it.” Dr. Q spent much of the fieldtrip video-documenting the installation and the public’s reaction to the students’ sculptures. She expressed gratitude at being offered the opportunity to operate a video camera during the event and felt that the experience may impact her future career ambitions.

During the field trip I observed that we were successful in grabbing people’s attention. People stopped to look, some asked questions. I was filming the whole thing so I was always looking out for what people did. Some lady thought it was ‘weak,’ some people said they didn’t get it, but most were open to it and curious as to what it is for. One person also said, “an art installation outside of the art gallery. Interesting.” Also some people took pictures with the heads. I learned that whenever there is something out of the ordinary happening on the street people will stop and look and try to find out what it is and why it’s there. Also that people are curious, and open to ideas. Some people are more open than others. Also, that recording something like this is fun. I might look into video journalism now.

Neo_Max believes that “some people really loved our work” and justifies his assessment by explaining that a number of people “asked at which gallery the sculptures will be displayed.” He feels that this interest in and receptivity to the students’ work has helped him to understand the power of art to convey important social messages. He explains that this project taught him “[h]ow to communicate with people through art and see how much a small project can have a major effect on some people.” Princess Diana, meanwhile, believes that her sculpture was successful because she managed to communicate a powerful message with it. “I believe my sculpture was hugely successful because the message of it, I think is strongly put forward. I put a lot of thought into every thing on my sculpture and it shows in my work that there is a strong voice and message that wants to be shared.” She claims to now have a new understanding about how to help people learn about significant social issues that affect us all. She found that her message is much more forceful because it connects issues that are actually important to her with her art. “It comes through way more strongly if you can actually say this is how I feel and this is what I’m thinking.” She speculates that by creating socially conscious art and by working with others, it may be possible to reach and educate others.

I learned that if we rally with our heads, maybe we can educate people more on how advertising and media really, really influence people’s lives, we can’t change the world by doing this, but we may catch the right persons eye or let people know we don’t have to always do what TV or media tells us to.
Contiguity has proven to be integral to my a/r/t/o/ographical research. By acknowledging and encouraging the coming together of art and graphy, contiguity has helped me to re-present and re-configure the processes and products of my research. As a writer and visual artist, I have been able to generate meanings through the interactions and tensions between images and texts and have been able to infuse inquiry directly into my artistic practices. As such, I have arrived at understandings about my study while manipulating, viewing and producing images and texts. In fact, by confusing the boundaries between the processes and products of art making, teaching and inquiry, contiguity has allowed insights and oversights to emerge and ‘materialize’ through this creative tension. Creating the collages and laying out the pages of this dissertation, for instance, has directly impacted my understandings within the study. My design strategy has often involved an element of ‘play’ (as I loosely place and move the various images and texts around the page). While designing one of the pages for the “Art Education for a Change” chapter, I suddenly realized each of us creates identities for ourselves based on the ‘play’ of cultural materials and social artifacts. This eventually helped me to find the commonalities between the various mannequin assemblages that the students were busily creating (see “Collective Artists’ Statement”).

Contiguity also helped me re-cognize that, just as I was simultaneously attempting to be an artist, researcher, and teacher, the students within the study might also want to occupy more than one role (e.g. as students, researchers, artists, and teachers). This realization contributed to my discovery within the interview transcripts that many of the students shared a desire to educate others about important social issues through their art (one of the factors that I believe ultimately led to the success of the art installation).
expressed a desire to educate and
in-form others through their art and felt that the Head Games unit
was an excellent way to meet this goal. As Neo Max explains, “I’m glad you came because
I would never have thought about this point of view before this project. There are a lot of
things that nobody knows about and I wanted to just change that, to help people know about
this stuff. Just small things, but its all good to know.” Vince, who expressed concern that
people are being manipulated by the media to think and act and dress a certain way, felt that
others needed help understanding their dependence upon popular culture.

Well it’s about media and how the media is today. It involves how people dress and act
and look like and how they are influenced by rock stars, actresses, actors, a whole bunch
of people. They watch them on TV and decide that they want to be like this person or that
figure. Because it is an everyday thing, everybody is doing it, its like a drug and they’re
addicted to it.

Roxanne Cersa created her sculpture, Sold, because she felt that, “[t]here’s so much adver­tising and everything, it’s not like you go into the store and choose what you’re going to buy,
you see it on TV and then you know what you want.” To artistically convey this message to
the viewer, she explains that, “I did it like the person was hypnotized and rather than buying
from the company, the company was buying them.” Zola, who believes that people aren’t
sufficiently aware of the true effects of abusive relationships and violence against women,
also feels that her sculpture was an effective mode of communicating her social message.
I didn’t think that people were well aware of what was going on. I know people who are
in abusive relationships but you don’t see it from the outside. It looks totally normal.
They can hide it. But deep inside they’re all messed up. Personally I’ve tried almost
every way. I do stuff like this all the time but I thought I’ve never done it with art and I
thought it would be interesting. And people seemed to notice it more.

When asked about her motivation for choosing an anti-war message for her group’s
sculptures, Susie explains that, “[a] lot of people are misled into thinking that war is some­thing different than what it really is.” She explains that “not many people seem to know
what’s going on. They don’t want their pretty little bubble ruined.” Mary-Lee, in speaking
about the censorship of the Iraq war news coverage and her desire to expose the “real story,”
explains that:
Just because they can’t see it, people think its not there (the war) so they don’t care. You
shouldn’t have to see photographs of people lying dead in a field to know that they’re be­ing killed. I mean it’s a war. So just because they can’t see it they think it’s not going on
so they just go on with their happy little lives. We thought we need to help them see it.
I SUSPECT THERE is an inherent danger in reducing this study to a pedagogical recipe for visual culture education (take 20 mannequin heads, add two large bags of cultural artifacts, some glue, one box of magazines, and stir). There is no question that using mannequin heads and other cultural artifacts from the everyday lives of students (e.g., Barbie Dolls, toy soldiers, corporate logos, Disney products, etc.) to create assemblages was an effective method of expanding the students' conceptions of art/visual culture. But I worry that this pedagogical/artistic approach could be rendered less meaningful if it is not also accompanied by thoughtful discussions about the connections between these materials, signs, and symbols, and our own social lives and cultural identities.

I used the Head Games curriculum project as a vehicle for discussing, examining, and exposing the ideological, social, psychological struggles that occur within our everyday visual experiences (there are of course many other vehicles that could be used). The art making proved to be an important component of the unit, but it only constituted one piece. I am concerned that if art educators don't also engage their students in critical examinations of the influence that these materials, signs, and symbols have on our selves and our societies, this approach could easily become just another superficial school art project.
The responses provided by the students during the interviews and written feedback sessions offer an important voice to the collective body of wisdom within the field. As is evident in many of their telling comments, observations, reflections and insights, the students' reaction to and assessment of the *Head Games* curriculum unit was overwhelmingly positive. I am particularly encouraged by the way in which many students in the study appear to have moved towards new understandings of the social roles and communicative functions of art and popular visual culture. Related to this discovery are the transformations that appear to have occurred in many of the students' attitudes towards creative social action. I also feel that each of the students in the study have arrived at new understandings of their visual surroundings and are now more equipped to critically assess and creatively respond to their everyday visual experiences. The possible pedagogical and curricular implications of these insights and observations, as well as some promising directions for continued study, will be engaged and addressed in the final section.
WHAT FOLLOWS are a series of summaries and suggestions garnered from the research data. Within each section, I have attempted to include the salient points raised by the research and to draw lessons for future inquiry within the field. Though I appreciate that the small scope and size of this case study cannot substitute for the multiplicity of art educational settings, contexts, and situations that exist within the field, I do feel that there are potential lessons to be learned from this work that may still serve to inform future curriculum development, policy decisions and research directions.
Making Headway:
Increasing Students’ Awareness and Understanding of Social Issues Through Visual Culture

The responses provided by the students during the written feedback and interview sessions offered insightful, and at times, unexpected results. These supplemented the moving and still images collected throughout the three months, as well as my own field notes and research reflections (including many of the images and journal writings that have been integrated throughout this dissertation). My guiding research question, ‘How might engagement with social issues through the examination and production of visual culture impact students’ understanding and awareness about these issues?’, produced what, at first glance, appeared to be mixed results.

Whereas the students unanimously felt that the Head Games curriculum unit directly impacted their understandings and awareness of visual culture itself (specifically popular visual culture, including advertisements and other commercial media), very few of them stated or alluded to an increased understanding or awareness of other social issues discussed/examined in class. In retrospect, this result is not entirely surprising, given the amount of time and effort that we spent examining and deconstructing print and television advertisements, as well as studying culture jammers and other artists whose work directly addresses issues related to commercial visual culture. As well, it is important to consider that the students collectively chose to create their assemblages (the major ‘project’ within the unit) under the shared theme of mass media, popular culture and advertising (see the Head Games Collective Artists’ Statement in the previous section). This decision arose out of a class discussion about the advantages of producing a coherent and unified collective message for the upcoming art installation/intervention. Thus, each member of the class agreed to create their individual sculpture based around the question: ‘Where does the influence of the media, popular culture, and advertising stop, and where do I/we start?’ And although this decision still allowed space for the students to examine divergent social issues that were of personal interest to them (four students dealt directly with commercial visual culture, whereas four others chose to create sculptures based on war and propaganda, two based on sweatshops, two on violence against women, and one on technology), each of the sculptures was inevitably infused with and influenced by the collective theme. Thus, it stands to reason that the students’ awareness and understanding of popular visual culture would have been the most likely social issue to be impacted by the curriculum unit.

The very fact that every student in the study indicated their participation in the curriculum unit resulted in an increased understanding and awareness about popular visual culture is, in itself, significant. Besides providing what I believe to be an affirmative response to my guiding research question, this outcome also suggests that many of the students’ prior interactions with popular culture texts were uncritical and under-informed. I base this claim on the self-described transformations that occurred in each of the students’ awareness and understanding of popular visual culture, as well as on my own observations and field notes, which consistently suggested the class as a whole did not enter into the curriculum unit with a comprehensive understanding of the sociocultural and ideological struggles occurring within their everyday visual experiences. This included an insufficient knowledge of the influential aesthetic strategies and visual tactics employed by commercial artists, designers and other producers of visual texts. Thus, it seems
The last few months have, in many ways, been a real struggle for me. I have worked (and not always succeeded) to simultaneously be an artist, researcher, and teacher and have found it frustrating and difficult to juggle all three. I have also discovered that exerting too much effort or spending too much time within one of the realms can adversely affect my performance in the others. I sometimes find myself so engrossed in teaching, for instance, that I totally forget to wear my 'researcher hat.' Conversely, I sometimes become so involved in observing or analyzing an event or encounter with a student that I fail to authentically 'be' with my students in the classroom. As an artist, I sometimes become so involved in the aesthetic or technical qualities of my work that I fail to pay attention to the larger social connections and meanings. Thus, there have been moments when I have doubted my method and questioned my ability to effectively engage in a/r/t/ography.

Thankfully, I came across this quote today by Elizabeth Grosz (1995) and realized that these struggles are a necessary and important part of the process of 'living with inquiry.'

"In refusing to seek answers, and in continuing to pose questions as aporias, as paradoxes – that is, to insist that they have no readily available solutions – is to face the task, not of revolution, i.e., the overthrow of the old (whether capitalism, patriarchy, binary oppositions, or prevailing models of radicality) but, less romantically or glamourously, endless negotiation, the equation of one’s life with struggle, a wearying ideal but one perhaps that can make us less invested in any one struggle and more capable to bearing up to continuous effort to go against the relentless forces of sameness, more inventive in the kinds of subversion we seek, and more joyous in the kinds of struggle we choose to be called into" (p. 6).
clear that the majority of the students in the study did not possess satisfactory visual literacy skills at the beginning of the curriculum unit.

This finding supports the theoretical work of a number of critical and visual culture educational theorists, who assert that students require instruction in critically examining and creatively analyzing popular culture texts. Giroux (1992) for instance, claims that popular culture must be seen as a "legitimate aspect of the everyday lives of students" and should be "analyzed as a primary force in shaping the various and often contradictory subject positions that students take up" (p. 31). He asserts that, "popular culture needs to become a serious object of study in the official curriculum" (p. 31). This position is held by others, like Beyer (2000), who posits that the arts, including the student production of popular culture, may provide teachers with significant ways to help their students develop critical aesthetic understandings and a moral awareness of their everyday lived experiences.

One of the things that I believe is centrally required in order to create alternative, critical, feminist, and social-aesthetic theories is the incorporation of forms of popular culture — television programs, movies, music, video productions, texts, video games, and so on — into the curriculum of our schools so that developing an understanding of the meaning and influence of such works becomes an important part of schooling. Helping students develop a critical, analytical, reflective attitude toward those forms of popular culture in which they are caught up but which are not often formally or carefully analyzed, and which are usually seen as nonacademic or otherwise inappropriate for the public schools, is central if we are to encourage not only the expression but also the critical evaluation, of those forms. At the same time, an emphasis on certain moral values — equality, tolerance, respect for human life and the need for peace, a commitment to some notion of a common good, for example — will not be significant for students unless they can come to understand the meanings of such lofty ideals within their own day-to-day lives. If we are to facilitate in schools some notion of an ethical culture to which an altered form of aesthetic education might powerfully contribute, it is important that the personal, social, and political implications of moral values for our lives and actions, in and out of school, become a part of the curriculum. This might be encouraged by the production of student forms of popular culture that connects what are often considered more distant moral imperatives and the real-life, flesh and blood experiences of children — in and out of school. The arts, as these capture both the meaning of common events and the possibilities for alternative ways of life, might well make lasting contributions to this effort. (Landon E. Beyer, 2000, pp. 84-85)

A number of visual culture education theorists also contend the study of everyday visual experiences, including those associated with popular culture, is a critical and necessary component of visual culture education (Duncum, 2001a, 2002; Freedman, 2000, 2003; Tavin, 2000, 2002; 2003). Duncum (2002) for instance, claims that many of our common visual experiences, including our regular interactions with popular culture, are significant because they appear to be so ordinary. He asserts these visual encounters are sites of active social and ideological struggle, and claims educators must help their students perceive and thoughtfully assess their everyday visual experiences. Tavin (2002) meanwhile, claims the field of art education has a "pressing responsibility" to help students develop critical and reflexive approaches to interpret-
I need to acknowledge my own personal interests in culture jamming and art activism have influenced this project and the students who participated in it. I have a passion for art activism and culture jamming (I engage in both activities in other parts of my own life) and this certainly came through in my teaching. I have to assume this enthusiasm had an impact on the students. This makes me wonder how this project would have been different were it taught by someone who was less immersed in creative social activism and less committed to connecting the sociocultural with the artistic/visual? By exposing the students to the ideological and sociocultural struggles occurring within the many sites of our everyday visual experiences, I have also exposed them to my own biases and partialities. And even though I have tried to be transparent about my own positionality within this curriculum unit and research project, I fear I have still left a personal imprint on the students’ understandings of art/visual culture. Truthfully, I’m not sure how I could have avoided this.

Still, I do take heart in some of the students’ interview comments. Suzie, for instance, claimed that the purpose of the Head Games project for the students was to “finally say what was important to them and what was on their minds.” She went on to state that the students “weren’t told what had to be done but instead what had to be thought about.” These comments encapsulate (at least partially) my pedagogical approach to the curriculum unit. From the beginning, I was far less interested in telling the students what they needed to create and much more interested in finding social issues they were passionate about exploring through art/visual culture (and then aesthetically and conceptually supporting their explorations). I do have to admit I was partially tempted to direct the students to collectively engage with the same social issue. This would have given us more time to explore that issue in depth and potentially would have made the message of their final installation more powerful. However, by ‘telling’ the students what to do, I also believe I would have eliminated some of the opportunities for developing agency and voice. By encouraging the students to be responsible for their own topics, I feel I was also to foster personal responsibility for their own learning. It seems to me this is an important part of teaching social responsibility. In the end, we were still able to find commonalities in the students’ issues (during a class meeting, the students and I discussed the advantages of producing a unified installation and, after reading all of the students’ individual artist’s statements, I wrote our collective statement – see: Head Games: Artistic and educational interventions). These commonalities were of course reinforced by the fact that all of the students created their projects with mannequin heads.

Recommended Follow-up
I also wonder how my previous pedagogical experiences have impacted this study. Having engaged in various artistic forms of activism with students during my years as a high school teacher, I tend to not be fearful about exploring ‘controversial’ social issues (e.g. racism, homophobia, violence, etc.) with students. This is important to note, as I know many in-service teachers are less inclined to approach these topics in class. Thus, if we are committed to engaging students in controversial issues, it seems imperative to implement in-service (and pre-service) programs that support teachers in effectively addressing sociocultural issues with their students.
ing, critiquing and producing images and objects from visual culture (p. 38). He explains this responsibility includes examining advertisements because of the important roles they play in shaping our identities and determining our perceptions of reality.

Advertisements play a significant role in the symbolic and material milieu of everyday life. Advertisements, as part of the larger visual culture, can help people make sense of themselves and the world around them. They can provide representations and resources that help forge our identities, including notions of ethnicity, race, nationality, sexuality, and citizenship. In this sense, advertisements do more than sell products and represent the world; they can help shape, and often limit, perceptions of reality. (p. 38)

Young people today are growing up within an array of cultural, ideological, social, and aesthetic realities and there seems to be little question that a major influence upon their perceptions and understandings comes from the messages contained within popular culture, including television, music, magazines, blockbuster films, and the Internet. Often embedded within these texts and objects are persuasive messages about what is necessary, normal, or appropriate (Beyer, 2000). And although students actively engage in symbolic and symbiotic relationships of exchange with these texts and related cultural objects, my findings suggest that many of their interactions with and through popular visual culture are uncritical and under-informed. Thus, by providing empirical data that supports and corroborates the conceptual claims made by many critical and visual culture theorists about popular culture and education, I feel that this study offers additional motivation for teachers and curriculum developers to work towards incorporating the examination and analysis of popular culture texts into the ‘official’ curriculum.
HEADS UP:
Students' Understanding and Awareness of the Social Roles and Cultural Functions of Art/Visual Culture

The responses to my corollary research question, 'How might engagement with social issues through the examination and production of visual culture impact students' understanding and awareness of the social roles and cultural functions of art/visual culture?,' were also encouraging. As was evident in the interview transcripts and written responses, six of the students in the study directly reported having emerged from the curriculum unit with a new understanding of the sociocultural roles of art/visual culture. And when combined with the fact that all 13 of the students reported that the curriculum unit directly impacted their understandings and awareness of visual culture itself (specifically popular visual culture, including advertisements and other commercial media), it seems apparent that the students' understandings of the sociocultural roles of art/visual culture were significantly influenced. Of particular interest to me was the fact that 12 of the 13 students' definitions of 'art' at the beginning of the curriculum unit failed to include any significant connections with the sociocultural sphere. In fact, most of the students initially defined art simply as painting and drawing and described artists as experts within these and related disciplines. Considering that all of the students had stud-

Jane Doe:
The Media Head
Princess Dianna, 2004
ied art in high school for at least 2 years prior to the curriculum unit, this result suggests to me that formalistic views of art and artists are alive and well within the public school system. As I discussed in *Art Education for a Change*, the aesthetic formalist approach to art education involves the reduction of form into the elements and principles of design, and encourages the analysis of art objects removed from larger social meanings. According to Freedman (2003), aesthetic formalism has been so influential within [North] American art education that it has become the very definition of aesthetics in some curriculum. She attributes this, in part, to the fact that it is easily reducible into simple categories that can be efficiently evaluated and assessed. She explains that aesthetic formalism can include “the breaking down of visual form into component parts that neatly fit into the structure of curriculum as content is broken up into course and lessons” (p. 27). She goes on to conclude that “[t]his model of aesthetics does not include an analysis of use, function, underlying assumptions, social impact, and so on, because its application does not tend to take into account sociocultural aspects of visual culture” (p. 27).

As an art educator and teacher-researcher who has consciously worked to connect aesthetics with the sociocultural aspects of visual culture, I find the possibility that aesthetic formalism still remains a strong force within the field to be discouraging. Taken to its logical conclusion, relying on aesthetic formalism modes of art education infers the conviction that the visual artifacts and cultural materials of any culture can be adequately assessed, interpreted, and reproduced by reducing them to the elements and principles of design. This applies even if they have been removed from their original social and cultural contexts. Needless to say, this approach strikes me as both inaccurate and socially irresponsible. Therefore, I feel additional research that focuses on the attitudes and beliefs of art educators (and art teacher educators) in relation to the social role(s) and cultural connections of art may be needed to better determine the current scope of aesthetic formalist views within the field. This would appear to be a necessary step in moving beyond aesthetic formalist modes of art education and towards more socially responsible models. Such an area of inquiry might also ultimately serve as a means for better understanding the caesura that often exists between art education and the larger sociocultural goals of public education, an area that I touched on in *Art Education for a Change*. 
I feel there is a strong resonance between a/r/t/ography and visual culture and believe a/r/t/ography has been the perfect methodological approach for inquiring into/with/through visual culture. Both a/r/t/ography and visual culture, for instance, can be considered hybrid and intersecting sites of inquiry. While visual culture is an interdisciplinary site connected to cultural studies, art history, film and media studies, education, critical theory, etc., a/r/t/ography is informed by and infused with multiple methodologies, including hermeneutics, action research, phenomenology, semiotics, etc. Both a/r/t/ography and visual culture are concerned with and acknowledge the complex relationships embedded within our everyday experiences. A/r/t/ographers encourage us to combine inquiry into all aspects of our daily lives while visual culture theorists promote critical examination of our daily visual experiences. A/r/t/ographers and visual culture theorists also share an interest in the contiguous sites where images and texts intersect. By acknowledging the contiguous interactions between the visual and the textual, both a/r/t/ographers and visual culture theorists share a deep interest in understanding and interpreting the interplay and continual movement between and within words, signs, symbols, and pictures. Thus, both a/r/t/ographers and visual culture theorists would certainly agree it remains impossible to effectively separate the corporal act of seeing from the visualizing act of imagining, from the inquisitive act of inquiry, from the cognitive act of understanding. These variations on the act of 'seeing' are intimately connected and perpetually in relation with and through one another.
Talking Heads:  
Creating Agency Through Artistic Interventions

Many of the students in the study expressed amazement during the interview and written response sessions that the class’s art installation had created such a strong impact on passers-by. In fact, 8 of the students (out of a possible 10 who were able to attend the intervention fieldtrip) indicated they were both surprised and pleased by the positive public reception their art received. After carefully considering these students’ reactions, I have deduced that a certain level of skepticism must have remained, prior to the installation, about the efficacy of art (or at least the efficacy of their own art) to convey social messages to a wider audience. This is significant, for it suggests that presenting the students with numerous examples of socially engaged art, as well as with opportunities to discuss this work and to produce their own pieces based on social issues, didn’t necessarily generate a sense of agency amongst the students. In other words, although the three-months that we spent examining, interpreting and producing socially engaged art indelibly affected the students’ understandings and awareness about the connections between visual culture and sociocultural issues, it didn’t fundamentally alter their sense of social agency as producers of visual texts. If it had, then it stands to reason that the students wouldn’t have been so surprised by the impact that their art ultimately had on the community during the installation.

What their reactions of surprise also indicate is that the physical act of placing the sculptures out in public was a transformative experience for the students. This was evident in each of the students’ comments about the artistic intervention and points to the possibility that this event left a lasting impression on the participants. As I will argue below, participating in the art installation empowered the students with a new sense of artistic agency and voice, and may have helped some of them to over-
come the feelings of cynicism and hopelessness that they expressed during the beginning of the curriculum unit.

By providing a venue to share their work and an opportunity to observe and document the reactions of the viewing public, the art installation afforded the students with a positive and empowering experience. This is evident in the comments made by all of the students who participated in the intervention. I feel that this is of particular interest because it demonstrates an acute change in the students’ attitudes towards creative social action. Early into the curriculum unit, many members of the class expressed frustration at the inability of art or any individual social-based action to influence people or to make a real difference in the world. In fact, the general consensus throughout the class was that the social problems we were examining were too large and too overwhelming to adequately address.

The underlying current within the classroom was one of hopelessness. As some theorists maintain, this attitude is common, not only within high school classrooms, but throughout contemporary society (Beyer, 2000; Giroux, 1992; Greene, 1995). As Kingwell (2000) explains, the danger today is that we have succumbed to a resignation that paralyzes and prevents us from acting to bring about meaningful change in the world.

The hazard today is no longer that the future we imagine is too ideal, and therefore likely to encourage heedless revolutionary zeal and violence. It is rather that we have become paralyzed determinists about what is coming. Like TV commercials and globalization and consumerism on the Web, the future is now annoying but inevitable, something that just happens, usually much faster than we’d like. We are in danger of losing the idea that a future is created, bit by bit, out of our political desires and choices. That’s why we need positive visions to balance the fashionably cynical ones, need them now more than ever. (p. 221)

And though I contend that teachers must critically examine sociocultural issues with their students, educators who focus too narrowly on the inequities, injustices and sociocultural deficiencies within the world, risk submerging their students into a sea of moral and social helplessness. Without also providing viable alternatives and spaces for new possibilities to emerge, students are left without a sense of efficacy, knowing what to oppose but not what to embrace. This phenomenon has been described as a discourse of despair by critical pedagogues (Giroux, 1992). By failing to provide students with hopeful opportunities to meaningfully respond to social deficiencies, we as teachers may ultimately lead our students towards what Greene (1995) describes as: a world where it appears that almost nothing can be done to reduce suffering, contain massacres, and protect human rights. The faces of refugee children in search of their mothers, of teen-age girls raped repeatedly by soldiers, of rootless people staring at burnt churches and libraries – all these may strike some as only a “virtual reality.” Still others, who do look more closely, often feel numbed and, reminded over and over of helplessness, are persuaded to look away. (p. 122)

Thus, I consciously worked throughout the curriculum unit to expose students to socially
engaged artists and other producers of visual culture whose work was geared towards community improvement and social enhancement. I also offered students opportunities to directly respond to social issues of personal importance to them through the production of their own artwork. However, once again, it appears that for many of the students, their feelings of disparagement and hopelessness were most significantly impacted by the art installation at the end of our curriculum unit. Besides the interview and written response sessions, the students’ optimism about the success of the artistic intervention was also evident in the enthusiastic manner in which they spoke about it afterwards, both within and outside of class. As Neo-

Max keenly exclaimed on the following day, “It was awesome! People really got into our art. We totally need to do that again!” As Dr. Q explained to a friend from another class, “You should have seen it. So many people stopped to check it out. They took pictures and read through our statements and everything. It was definitely very cool.” The positive transformation in the students’ attitudes towards creative social action is congruent with much of the literature within the field of community cultural development, which correlates social action and community arts activism with increased levels of empowerment and voice (Adams & Goldbard, 2002; Felshin, 1995; Holloway & Krensky, 2001). In speaking about the benefits of engaging in community-based forms of art activism, for instance, Felshin (1995) explains that “[i]ndividuals are empowered through such creative expression, as they acquire a voice, visibility, and an awareness that they are part of a greater whole. The personal thus becomes political, and change, even if initially only of community or public consciousness, becomes possible” (p. 12).
Head Voices: Generating Student Voice

There appears to be little question that the students who participated in the art installation acquired a ‘voice’ during the event. In discussing the importance of student voice during one of our interviews, Susie felt the installation was valuable because “most of the class participated and made their voice heard.” She went on to state that, “I think the purpose of the project, for the students, was to finally say what was important to them and what was on their minds. They weren’t told what had to be done but instead what had to be thought about.” For Vince Smith, the art installation was a success because it allowed him to witness people receiving and listening to his message about the media. He explains that “it was successful because I saw a lot of people looking at it (his sculpture) and thinking about it and I know there was something going through their heads about it. It made me feel proud that people were listening to my message and to know that I touched their lives and they heard me out loud.” Both Susie’s and Vince’s comments are congruent with hook’s (1989) notion of voice, which she claims is an integral part of an education for critical consciousness. She explains that, “[o]nly as subjects can we speak. As objects, we remain voiceless – our beings defined and interpreted by others.” (p. 12). Susie’s and Vince’s thoughts on voice also correspond with Giroux’s (1992) understanding of “oppositional voice,” which he claims can help subordinated individuals to “reclaim their own memories, stories, and histories as part of an ongoing collective struggle to challenge those power structures that attempt to silence them” (Giroux, 1992, p. 170). He contends that:

educators need to approach learning not merely as the acquisition of knowledge but as the production of cultural practices that offer students a sense of identity, place, and hope. To speak of voice is to address the wider issue of how people either become agents in the process of making history or function as subjects under the weight of oppression and exploitation within the various linguistic and institutional boundaries that reduce dominant and subordinate cultures in any given society. (p. 170)

Thus, it seems imperative that educators work to devise ways that allow their students to exercise and experience their own “oppositional” voices. This appears to be an important ingredient in generating student empowerment and a necessary component in overcoming the powerful feelings of hopelessness and despair too often felt by the young people in our classrooms. The artistic intervention at the conclusion of our Head Games unit was certainly one successful approach, though I am confident there are also many others. For visual culture educators, perhaps one of the important lessons to be learned from this experience is that providing students with the opportunity to take and perform their work out in the community can have a positive impact on students’ sense of social agency and empowerment. The fact that the students were able to experience and observe the reactions of passer-bys firsthand seems to have been an important component of this impact, a point that I will address below (see In Your Face: Students as Researchers).
During the interviews and written response sessions, a number of the students attributed the success of the artistic intervention to the fact that it allowed them to fulfill a desire to inform and educate others about important social issues. Dr. X, Princess Diana, Francois, Neo_Max, Vince Smith, Roxanne Cersa, and Zola Damone all felt that communicating their messages with members of the community was an important component of the artistic intervention. Their comments made at the end of the curriculum unit (see Head Games: Artistic and Educational"
Interventions) are congruent with remarks made in class prior to the installation. Having learned how to detect, interpret and deconstruct the sociocultural and ideological struggles embedded within their everyday visual experiences, many of the students obviously felt compelled to teach and enlighten those around them. As Princess Diana remarked to me at the end of one of our classes, “[i]t’s like you gave us a secret decoder-ring or something. All of a sudden I see these, like, hidden messages everywhere! It’s scary. I’ve been telling everybody I know. People really need to know about this stuff!” Towards the end of the curriculum unit, some of the students even reported to me that they were deconstructing magazine advertisements on their own time, occasionally even providing me with their ‘clippings’ in class. Mary-Lee explained that, “[o]ur friends think we’re crazy. We keep going through all of their magazines and making fun of the ads. They think we’re like conspiracy-freaks or something.” Fulfilling the students’ ambitions to inform others about commercial visual culture and other related topics, essentially by taking the role of ‘educators,’ seems to have been an important aspect of the success of the art installation and a critical component of the curriculum unit itself. I feel that an investigation of the connections between student participation as teachers and their corresponding notions of agency and empowerment within the context of art education may prove to be a rich area for continued inquiry.
I have to admit that I personally felt some resistance to the idea of locating our artistic intervention in front of the art museum. When the students first suggested this, I felt the urge to convince them of an alternate site. I was concerned that associating our installation with the art museum would contribute to the conception that art/visual culture must exist within the formal isolation of the art museum. Upon reflection, however, I had to acknowledge this site was also well known as a gathering place for social action and protest and recognized it was located in the midst of a busy commercial shopping district. The site also provided a wide sidewalk and a steady stream of pedestrians (and thus potential viewers).

In retrospect, however, I wonder how this specific site influenced the community's reaction to our installation? Would the public have shown the same interest in the installation if we had placed it in a mall or in a park? Would people have still stopped? How would the public reaction have been different if we had placed the work inside the museum? It seems likely we would have reached a different segment of the population. I wonder if the community felt ‘safer’ or less safe viewing the work out on the sidewalk (versus inside a museum)? While editing the video footage, I noticed that the students who chose to sit and/or congregate near their assemblages looked surprisingly like panhandlers. I suspect this may have contributed to the fact that some of the pedestrians walked past the installation without looking at either the assemblages or the students. I shared this insight with the students after the installation and it spawned some interesting conversations about the 'street.' Although it is beyond the scope of this study, it would certainly be interesting and worthwhile to examine the public’s reaction to art/visual culture in various public settings, including ‘the street.’
The students' positive assessments of the art installation are based largely on their observations of the community's reaction to their work. This suggests that the actual act of observing the public engage with their assemblages was central to the students' positive experiences.

Whereas more conventional exhibitions of student work often include displaying pieces on the walls or in showcases within the school, the Head Games artistic intervention allowed the students to place their work directly within the community. Although there is certainly value in displaying student art works within the confines of the school, it seems that there may also be advantages to moving out into community settings. One of the benefits of choosing a less formal setting (in this case, the busy downtown sidewalks) for the art installation was that it allowed the students to inconspicuously observe others interacting with their work. Camouflaged within the frenetic urban environment, these students were able to 'safely' remain present while others from the community engaged with their assemblages. The less formal setting also provided opportunities for other students within the group to take a more active role during the installation. Princess Diana, Francois, and Dr. Q, for instance, chose to remain close to their work in order to speak directly with those who stopped to view it. Although they occasionally faced difficult questions from skeptical or puzzled view-
ers, each of these students indicated that interacting with the public was a fulfilling and important part of their experiences that day. And though not all of the students in the class were comfortable engaging directly with the public during the installation, the less formal setting of a busy urban sidewalk successfully allowed for differing levels of student participation.

I also believe that my decision to actively include the students as co-researchers within the study may have enriched their experiences during the artistic intervention. By encouraging the students to document the artistic intervention, both through the use of video and digital cameras and by taking mental notes, I feel that the students approached the event with a heightened sense of awareness. Princess Diana, for instance, found herself “really noticing” the advertisements on the sides of buses for the first time as they drove past the art installation. Dr. Q, meanwhile, felt that operating a video camera during the intervention was an important part of the experience that allowed her to be more observant of how others reacted to the classes work. I also believe operating the camera equipment gave students an additional sense of purpose during the installation and may have contributed to their senses of empowerment. Dr. Q, for instance, exhibited a level of assertiveness while videotaping and interviewing community members that she had not displayed before during my three months at the school. Interestingly, she later indicated in one of our interviews that the art installation experience has inspired her to consider video journalism as a possible career direction.

As an aside, engaging the students as co-researchers allowed me to collect video footage and digital still shots that I simply would not have been able to attain on my own. Many of these visuals appear throughout the dissertation and the accompanying Head Games DVD (Appendix A). Thus, besides being a respectful way to conduct research within a secondary school setting, including students as co-researchers has also significantly augmented and improved the visual documentation process. Reviewing and creatively recreating these images has enriched my understandings of the data and provided inspiration for many of the insights within this study.
Things I would do differently next time...

1. Focus more on how the curriculum unit/research project impacted the students' regular classroom teacher. Actually, as a corollary to this study, I would like to investigate art educators' understandings and awareness of the connections between art/visual culture and the sociocultural sphere.

2. Spend more time analyzing the 'data' with the students. Although I worked throughout this project to include the students as co-researchers, I sometimes felt that my efforts were ineffective. Inviting the students to create their own pseudonyms was definitely a successful (and respectful) way of involving them in the research. And involving them in the process of taking photographs and shooting video has been a valuable way of gathering visual data. When I tried to include the students in analyzing the data, there seemed to be a certain resistance to becoming too actively involved. I feel I could have engaged the students more meaningfully in the a/r/t/ographical process (perhaps even becoming a/r/t/ographers themselves), though at the time, I found it difficult to interest them in this aspect of the inquiry process. I wonder how this may have changed if the students were more actively involved in developing the research questions?

3. Conduct a similar study as an extra-curricular project. My own experiences working as a high school teacher indicate that some of the most important learning within schools occurs outside of regular classroom instruction. I wonder how this study may have been different if it had occurred outside of a formal classroom setting?
Little Voices in Our Heads

Although this project was not designed to focus on the experiences of the students’ regular classroom teacher, it seems pertinent to briefly examine one particular encounter that occurred during the curriculum unit. A thoughtful and experienced art educator, Alice was very supportive and accommodating throughout the three months that I spent teaching and researching at the school. I continue to be very grateful for her invitation to locate my inquiry within her classroom. During many of the class periods, Alice remained in the room while I taught, and often found time to share her thoughts and insightful observations with me. Only once, a few days prior to the art installation at the end of the curriculum unit, did Alice express any discomfort with the direction of the project. During that time, Alice indicated to me that there was a ‘little voice in her head’ that was growing apprehensive about the graphic nature and controversial quality of some of the sculptures. She felt that some of the assemblages visually communicated complex messages that extended beyond the students’ original intent. She expressed her concern that displaying the work in public might solicit some negative reactions from and even possibly offend the community. Although, after additional discussions with the students and me (which included a collective decision to include written artist’s statements with each of the assemblages in order to decrease the likelihood of viewers ‘misreading’ the work), she became more at ease with the prospect of installing the sculptures in the community, her initial resistance to the public installation shouldn’t be overlooked. I believe that this hesitation is a very natural and very common response to addressing social issues with students in or beyond the classroom. Although in this case, Alice’s trepidation was related primarily to showing the work in the community, my sense is that many teachers could be anxious about examining social issues (particularly controversial ones) at all with their students. In working to encourage teachers to critically connect the sociocultural sphere and visual culture with their students, it seems important to keep this in mind. Providing pre-service and in-service support for art educators who are less at ease (and/or less experienced) with examining the connections between visual culture and the sociocultural sphere seems imperative. As well, further inquiry that focuses directly on the attitudes and beliefs of art educators in relation to these connections may prove to be an important step in understanding the state of the field and, ultimately, in moving it towards more socially engaged approaches to visual culture education.
THIS STUDY HAS BEEN an enlightening and valuable endeavor for me and I am hopeful the collected data and corresponding interpretations and meditations represented within this document will appreciably impact the field. Though, without following the students over the next number of months and years, it is impossible to accurately assess the long-term impact this curriculum unit had on the participants, it is fair to conclude the students have left the study with a transformed understanding and awareness of popular visual culture, as well as a better sense of the connections between visual culture and sociocultural issues. I believe many of them have also been empowered with a new sense of social agency, voice and hope. Whether any of this translates into a subsequent increase in participation within the sociocultural sphere remains to be seen. However, it is my belief the students who participated in this curriculum unit are now more prepared to attend to the complex connections between culture and politics, and are more adequately equipped to engage as thoughtful and informed citizens within the contemporary cultural sphere. As Fiske (1989) explains, engaging in social action requires that participants possess a degree of empowerment and self-esteem, and explains that “semiotic resistance” can achieve this by providing some control over meanings in one’s life.

Semiotic resistance results from the desire of the subordinate to exert control over the meanings of their lives, a control that is typically denied them in their material social conditions. This, again, is politically crucial, for without some control over one’s existence there can be no empowerment and no self-esteem. And with no sense of empowerment or self-esteem there can be none of the confidence needed for social action, even at the micro level. (p. 10)

Thus, by providing the students in the study with an enhanced sense of empowerment and self-esteem, the Head Games curriculum unit, including the artistic intervention, afforded the students with opportunities to meaningfully engage in the community as informed and transformed citizens. As McLaren (1989) explains, knowledge becomes transformative only “when students begin to use the knowledge to help empower others, including individuals in the surrounding community. Knowledge then becomes linked to social reform” (p. 197). Ultimately I feel this study has provided new insights into the pedagogical connections between visual culture education and secondary school students and has offered new understandings about how to encourage and equip our students to meaningfully participate in public conversations around the social and political relations of art to power, culture and democratic citizenship.
Sample Interview and Written Response Questions

Note: In each interview, the semi-structured format of questions and answers proceeded more like a conversation, with interruptions, pauses, diversions and moments of laughter. Additional interview questions were often asked in response to the participants' specific answers.

1. How long have you been studying art?
2. Do you consider yourself to be an artist? Why or why not?
3. Tell me about your experiences studying art at school.
4. What message(s) are you trying to convey (communicate) through your head sculpture? Why is this message (or messages) important to you?
5. Explain why you believe that your sculpture was successful or not successful.
6. What did you learn while creating this project?
7. What did you observe during our field trip and art installation outside of the Art Gallery?
8. What did you learn from this experience? Explain
9. Do you feel that the installation was successful? Why or why not?
10. Has your understanding of art or artists changed since participating in this project? Explain.
11. Has your understanding of any specific social issues been affected by participating in this project? Explain.
12. Is there anything else that you would like to add or to say?
SALLY CONE VALLEY
Francois

Ideas that I’m trying to convey through my head reflect a world becoming so dependent on technology. Dependence can only be taken so far. I believe that some things in life have to remain somewhat human because otherwise, we’ll be living in a molded robotic society. These ideas are important to me because although I do appreciate technology and its helpfulness, I think eventually it will be applied to so many things that the world won’t be appreciated for what it is, but for what it’s been made to seem.

WAR, BUT WHY?
Dr. X

I tried to explain war. How bad war is. Why is it around us?
Mickey Woman
Mayman

I’m trying to convey that Mickey Mouse is made in a sweatshop. The head represents the people that work in sweatshops.

SOLD
Roxanne Cersa

The message that I am trying to convey is that you are what you consume (much like you are what you eat) whether you believe it or not. I also wanted to use well known products such as Barbie and McDonalds to show how advertisements contribute to consumerism. When people see there symbols everyone will immediately recognize the company product because it is so well known and advertised. It seems to me that kids would rather go to McDonalds, rather than a fine restaurant, because they think McDonalds has the best food – they see it on commercials everyday! If they are taken to fast food establishments, they eat unhealthy food and might continue and become unhealthy later in life. This message is important to me because this is something happening everyday. People buy things because of advertisements and I think it’s something everyone should know.
JANE DOE: THE MEDIA
HEAD
Princess Diana

I'm trying to convey the message that the media takes over a portion of our actual self. We grow up in this advertising community where we are taught that what is shown on TV, billboards and in magazines is what we want, we need or must have to gain some sort of status. The advertising takes over a person, well at least most of a person and where does advertising stop and where does an individual start?

BUY ME FOR 12 CENTS AN HOUR
Neo_Max

I'm illustrating how major successful companies make their money by using sweatshops in 3rd World countries. Companies have been reported to pay their workers 12 cents an hour for work. This issue is important to me because I know for a fact that no one would want to go through a life like that.
THE TWO SIDES OF WAR
(BEFORE)
Susie and Mary-Lee

THE TWO SIDES OF WAR
(AFTER)
Susie and Mary-Lee

The message is the truth about war. Before and after. The mutilated head represents the reality of war; the ‘normal’ head represents the fantasy.
YOU THINK YOU KNOW BUT
YOU HAVE NO IDEA
Zola Damone and Barbie

Through this sculpture, the message we were trying to convey was that of discrimination against women. This message is important to us, because we feel it is important for women to grasp their own identities. I have seen violence against women in my life and family, and I believe it is a very underestimated issue that should have a voice.

MEDIA TODAY
Vince Smith

I was trying to illustrate how teens are pressured to look like their favorite music artist, actor or even favorite band. I see in many places I go, people who have shaved their heads to make a Mohawk like a rock star, the one they saw on TV last night. Teens should be able to have the freedom to dress and act their own way without feeling like they are not fitting in. There seems to be so much pressure to be popular...is this what it takes to be liked?
JESUS
Yell

I am trying to indicate that war and use of weapon destruction destroys everything. I've chosen Jesus to make the message strong. Obviously, no such things can destroy the supernatural. My sculpture is related to my background. I'm Christian and my country had the Korean war and we are still divided.

FOR EVERYTHING ELSE THERE'S MASTERCARD
Dr. Q

I'm interested in investigating how everyone is trying to look like an ideal beauty. Media creates an ultimate image that can only be achieved through buying products. If you're not using or wearing these products, you're not acceptable to society. You can only make it through life happily if you are the ultimate Barbie Doll!
nia Press.


Richardson, L. (1997). *Fields of play: Constructing an academic life*. New Brunswick,
NJ: Rutgers University Press.


